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Ellie Patricia Berkowitz

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INNOVATION THROUGH APPROPRIATION
AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO SEPARATISM:
THE USE OF COMMERCIAL IMAGERY BY CHICANO ARTISTS, 1960-1990

Committee:

Amelia Malagamba, Supervisor

Ann Reynolds

Jacqueline Barnitz

John Clarke

Richard Flores

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by

Ellie Patricia Berkowitz, M.A.

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DEDICATION

To Brendan and Hayden, from whom I learn a little more about life everyday

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Ellie Patricia Berkowitz, Ph.D.
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Supervisor: Amelia Malagamba

Can artists produce socially relevant and politically controversial artwork, which gains strength through subversion and condemnation of mainstream society, while at the same time benefiting from involvement within the traditional art establishment? While this question is not a new one, within the field of Chicano Art, it has had a lengthy yet unexamined history, punctuated by specific events and philosophies linked to the nationalistic political movement of the 1960s and early 1970s. Leaders of this era, such as Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, promulgated an isolationist approach to all aspects of Chicano life, including art production. Self-determination became a hallmark of Chicano Art of this early phase, and Chicano artists, regardless of their personal ideologies, often found themselves placed into a collective categorization of the political Chicano artist.

However, the problem that arose from this generalization was that it overlooked the complexities of the individual Chicano artist who may not have subscribed to a uniform separatist agenda. Particularly once the Chicano Art Movement of the early phase lost its collective zeal, Chicano artists diverged from the communal portrayal of a unified Chicano identity, one culturally nationalistic in tenor. While some Chicano artists, such as Rupert García, willingly endorsed a participatory approach to the mainstream, others like Malaquías Montoya bemoaned an in-system method, claiming that the dominant culture promoted the cooptation of any artist who participated within its arenas.

In the early 1980s, Montoya published his views on this topic in an article he co-authored with his wife. This dissertation examines the Montoyas' philosophies in-depth, as well as explores the counter-debates by scholars Shifra Goldman and Luis J. Rodríguez that the Montoyas' article instigated. Linked to this exploration are economic and political analyses of the late 1970s through the 1990s, which reveal not only a development in the mainstreaming and commercialization of Chicano art, but also a trend among Chicanos away from isolationism towards assimilationism. A case study of Malaquías Montoya, Rupert García, and Mel Ramos in the final chapter further illustrates the broad heterogeneity in viewpoints on the subject.

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INTRODUCTION

Within the isolated art world itself, there were... divisions: between those artists who felt art should remain untouched by social issues, and those who felt artists should enter the fray.¹

In October 1971, Pan American University sponsored the symposium, *New Voices in Literature: The Mexican American*, in which scholar Tomás Rivera presented a paper on the Chicano author as inventor. In his essay “Into the Labyrinth: The Chicano in Literature,” Rivera explained how Chicano writers used their creative energies to verbally demolish negative social stereotypes attributed to Mexican Americans by the mainstream. The Chicano author, Rivera maintained, succeeded at this pursuit not by disengaging himself from his culture, as he had done frequently in the past, but rather by inventing himself specifically as a Chicano. Thus, according to Rivera, Chicano literature had “a triple mission: to represent, and to conserve that aspect of life that the Mexican American holds as his own and at the same time destroy the invention of others of his own life. That is—conservation, struggle, and invention.”² While Rivera’s mission gained credence in the examination of literature from the period, his subsequent observation about financial constraints facing the artist gained less attention. While positing his lecture’s premise, Rivera also revealed how the Chicano writer, at times, amended his invention according to the commercialization

¹ Lucy R. Lippard, *A Different War: Vietnam in Art*, (Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1990): 10.

² Tomás Rivera, “Into the Labyrinth: The Chicano in Literature,” paper presented at *New Voices in Literature: The Mexican American*, symposium, (Department of English, Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas, October 7-8, 1971): 24.

of his product by mainstream publishers. This admission prompted Rivera to ask, “[D]oes there always exist in the writer’s mind the commercial aspect?”³ Is it possible for the Chicano writer to adhere to a belief system critical of the mainstream establishment, while simultaneously sustaining a livelihood within it? Because Rivera’s statement has remained inadequately investigated, particularly as it relates to art, its basic underpinnings became the premise for this dissertation.

While Rivera proposed the Chicano writer’s mission specifically with regards to literature, its tenets were applicable to an assessment of the visual arts as well, including the questioning of the commercial aspect of creative work. Commencing in the 1960s with the Chicano Art Movement, Chicano artists began to visually eradicate derogatory portrayals of Mexican Americans promoted by the mainstream. Like literature, these illustrative works revealed conservation, struggle, and invention on behalf of their creators, albeit in an alternative form for the promotion of a Chicano cultural identity. Particularly during the first phase of the Chicano Art Movement, which began c. 1968, the visual invention of a collective Chicano identity was at its zenith, as Chicano artists struggled to defy the mainstream by promoting affirmative portrayals of Mexican Americans. One of the primary modes of these artists’ struggle was their adherence to a Chicano nationalistic agenda, akin to that proposed by leaders of *El Movimiento*, the Chicano political movement. Strong advocates of Chicano Nationalism shunned the assimilationistic inclinations of Liberalism, and instead promulgated an exclusionary

³ Ibid., 22.

cultural agenda. Stringent Chicano Nationalists, like Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, touted attitudes of isolationism, which they recorded in contemporary proclamations. For instance, within several prominent manifestoes emerging at the onset of *El Movimiento*, such as *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, these authors claimed that Chicanos not only had to withdraw from any participation within the establishment, but they had to refrain from using tactics or strategies produced by it as well. *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* urged Chicano artists to be cultural educators, to focus their efforts specifically within their own communities and to refrain from participation within the U.S. mainstream. This self-deterministic promotion became the hallmark of Chicano Art of this early period, and Chicano artists, regardless of their personal philosophies, often found themselves placed into a collective categorization of the radical Chicano artist.

The problem that arose, however, from this generalizing tendency was that it overlooked the complexities of the individual Chicano artist, who may not have subscribed to a uniform agenda. Particularly once the Chicano Art Movement of the early phase lost its collective zeal, Chicano artists diverged from the communal portrayal of a unified Chicano identity, one culturally nationalistic in tenor. The isolationist strategies preached by principal leaders, like Gonzales, proved largely unrealistic, both in their rejection of the heterogeneity of Mexican American society and their failure to acknowledge the inevitable economic realities of the future. As highlighted by Rivera, and revealed through a societal analysis of the late 1970s through the 1990s, the mainstreaming and commercialization of Chicano art made its

interpretation as a collective entity highly problematic. As the political and economic climate changed throughout the decades following the early phase of the Movement, many Chicano artists found themselves caught between their cultural allegiances and their economic realities.

While most Chicano artists recognized the inconsistencies inherent to making politically challenging art, while profiting from participation within the very system they criticized, some artists, like Rupert García, resigned themselves to these innate contradictions. García even challenged the Movement's rhetoric of isolationism, by choosing instead to venture into the mainstream. For García, entrance into the art establishment fostered multicontextuality, namely the exhibition in numerous contexts as a method to dismantle exclusionary discourses. His mainstream participation, he claimed, did not negate his cultural ideologies, since he continued to produce images with a social agenda. Instead of separatism, García adopted strategies of appropriation as one of his primary forms of innovation. For the artist, appropriation allowed him to pursue a dialogue with the mainstream, while simultaneously criticizing its social practices.

Yet, García's philosophies on integrationism concerned those nationalistic artists, like Malaquías Montoya, who feared for the commodification of their culture by the Anglo establishment. For Montoya, acquiescence into the art establishment was unacceptable, and all socially-responsible Chicano artists had to support an isolationist

approach.⁴ Montoya's views on this subject emerged passionately in the early 1980s, when his renowned, yet uninvestigated written discourse surfaced in *Metamorfosis*, a grassroots Chicano periodical. His article elicited a series of responses, reflecting the unresolved nature of the topic. As a result, the magazine sequentially published several articles that debated the state of Chicano Art. In the first article, a collaborative work titled "A Critical Perspective on the State of Chicano Art" (1980-1981), Malaquías Montoya and Lezlie Salkowitz-Montoya argued for "separatism" of Chicano art from the stronghold of the dominant culture. For these authors, the dominant culture espoused detrimental philosophies, which contradicted those of Chicanos. Similarly, they contended that mainstream culture promoted the co-optation of any artist who participated within its arenas, among which included university shows, gallery or museum exhibitions, and/or the mass media.⁵ The Montoyas also argued that the adaptation of mainstream artistic practices or techniques, such as those utilized within various establishment-sanctioned art movements, also countered the agenda of *El Movimiento*, by co-opting the legitimacy of its artists. This mainstream influence offset the efficacy of an artwork's message, rendering it essentially futile to *La Causa*.⁶

⁴ Malaquías Montoya and Lezlie Salkowitz-Montoya, "A Critical Perspective on the State of Chicano Art," *Metamorfosis: Northwest Chicano Magazine of Literature, Art, and Culture*, (vol. 3, no. 1, Spring/Summer, 1980): 3-7.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Within this context, the term, *La Causa*, refers to the Chicano Political Movement. As explained in *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation*, "La Causa (the Cause) was one of the many terms, including el Movimiento (the Movement) and La Lucha (the Struggle), that identified the Chicano civil rights movement." In this dissertation, I will be using it and *El Movimiento* interchangeably. See *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*, eds. Richard Griswold del Castillo, Teresa McKenna, and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1991): 234.

The arguments proposed by Montoya and Salkowitz-Montoya elicited contrary opinions from other scholars in subsequent editions of the periodical. Art historian Shifra Goldman, in her essay, “Response: Another Opinion on the State of Chicano Art,” contested the perspectives of the Montoyas by claiming that Chicano art would never attain “separatism” from the dominant cultures since it was inevitably linked to a capitalist system of artistic production. To substantiate her sentiments, Goldman proposed a Marxist analysis of art production within the United States as the paradigm through which she fervently argued against the plausibility of Chicano cultural separatism. According to Goldman, “separatism (unlike resistance) is an illusion...for Chicano artists, as for others, separatism in the production and consumption of art has never been possible.”⁷

While Luis J. Rodríguez, in the third commentary of the debates, commended his fellow scholars for their insights, he proposed a more pragmatic evaluation of the reality of cultural separatism amongst artists of the 1980s. Rather than bemoan the validity of isolationism, Rodríguez instead highlighted the difficulties of separatism after the 1960s, claiming that isolation merely diminished one’s voice within the mainstream, rather than carried a vociferous political message. For Rodríguez, the socio-political and economic situation in the United States often dictated the plausibility of a separatist agenda among marginalized peoples. More frequently than not, circumstances limited the actual efficacy of isolationism.

⁷ Shifra Goldman, “Response: Another Opinion on the State of Chicano Art,” *Metamorphosis: Northwest Chicano Magazine of Literature, Art, and Culture*, (vol. 3, no. 2, and vol. 4, no.1, 1980-1981): 3.

Though these debates continue to solicit academic scrutiny, they remain unexamined in any systematic manner. My intention within this investigation, therefore, is to evaluate their contextual validity, both at the time when they were written and at other key moments during *El Movimiento*. By exploring not only their contemporary meaning, but also their significance as applied to other periods of the Movement, I will demonstrate how these ideologies themselves were in fact largely rhetorical, improbable when applied to practical experience.

While the debates play a crucial role within my examination, I begin my assessment by providing the contextual framework around which these debates emerged. Chapter one offers a detailed historiography of the Mexican American struggle within the United States, highlighting certain trends occurring as early as the 19th century. At the center of this discussion is the legacy of separatist and assimilationist strategies, each of which gained popularity within distinct moments in U.S. history. Through this presentation, I provide the framework from which readers can better comprehend the mindset of Chicano artists, who endorsed either separatist or accommodationist philosophies. While a history of voluntary separatism helped promulgate agendas, like the Montoyas, a proclivity toward assimilation also hindered them. The notion of whether to assimilate or to separate was inextricably tied to the question of whether mainstream participation compromised cultural ideologies. Also within this chapter, I trace the history of both voluntary and forced separatism of

Chicano artists by mainstream art institutions, specifically museums, examining whether or not these establishments opened their doors to marginalized artists.

Building upon the histories laid out in chapter one, chapter two analyzes in depth the written debates presented by the Montoyas, Goldman, and Rodríguez in *Metamorphosis*, focusing upon the validity of their arguments. After examining these articles comprehensively, I investigate the economic, political, and social currents occurring within the United States during the late 1970s through the 1980s. These factors, I will argue, significantly impacted the ability of Chicano artists to adhere to a separatist agenda.

The third chapter, a case study of these ideologies in action, presents a constellation of the art and philosophies of three contemporary Northern California artists. Although artists Malaquías Montoya, Rupert García, and Mel Ramos all lived and worked within similar regions of the Northern California Bay Area, each artist maintained a distinct outlook with regards to his degree of participation within the mainstream art establishment as well as within the Chicano Political Movement. Involvement, or lack thereof, in the art world was inextricably linked to each artist's specific ideologies regarding assimilation and separatism.

While Montoya and García prove two excellent candidates for personifying the dueling sides of the separatism/assimilation question, Bay Area artist, Mel Ramos, adds an interesting tangential perspective. While neither Chicano nor political, Ramos has assimilated so completely into the U.S. mainstream art establishment that his actual

Portuguese heritage was obscured. Within the scholarship written on the artist, Ramos never overtly provided clues to his ethnic background to dispel misidentification. The dilemma that surfaced as a result of his accommodationism was that certain critics and scholars allocated a specific identity, namely Chicano, to him. These critics, whom I discuss in chapter three, analyzed Ramos' works according to this misidentification, incorrectly interpreting Ramos' subjects as though they were created from a Chicano perspective. Artists, like Ramos, who have decided to take a strictly assimilationist approach to their art production may still find themselves placed into a specific cultural categorization, with critics assuming a social agenda where one was not intended. I include Ramos within this dissertation to emphasize the complexity of assimilation within the United States, and to highlight the non-binary nature of the separatist/assimilationist question.

While the featured question of this text is straightforward—Can Chicano artists participate within the mainstream art establishment without compromising their political ideologies?—the answer is much more complex. Underscoring this explanation are the multifaceted influences affecting Chicano artists, such as their adherence to cultural nationalistic philosophies, their susceptibility to diverse socioeconomic forces, and their responsiveness to the legacy of separatist/assimilationist strategies. Through a thorough dissection of these complexities, I hope to reveal that superficial terms, like “cooptation” and “selling out,” oversimplify and trivialize the difficult choices that Chicano artists have to make

regarding cultural allegiance and economic reality, particularly when the two are at odds.

CHAPTER ONE:

El Movimiento, Chicano Nationalism and the Move towards Separatism

CULTURAL values of our people strengthen our identity and the moral backbone of the movement. Our culture unites and educates the family of La Raza towards liberation with one heart and one mind. 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.¹

The challenge that lies at the heart of politically active Chicano artists working within the mainstream establishment began with the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, *El Movimiento*, and its ideologies regarding Chicano Nationalism. *El Movimiento* originated in the 1960s as a manifestation of Chicano Nationalism. One major aspect of this nationalism was the revision of American history as it related to Mexican Americans. Chicanos advocating this reevaluation of mainstream U.S. history claimed that Mexican Americans frequently had been placed in negative roles, and “the teaching of such perceptions had served to perpetuate stereotypes and thus kept mainstream society unsympathetic and often hostile toward Mexican Americans.”² These portrayals typified Mexican Americans as “passive, unmotivated, and responsible for accepting much of their own suffering.”³ Figure 1.1 offers an excellent visual example

¹ “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” *Documents of Chicano Struggle*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971): 6. This text was also reprinted in various secondary sources, including Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco Lomelí, eds., *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989): 1-5.

² Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997): 47.

³ *Ibid.*

of one of these many early pejorative representations of Mexican Americans, namely the portrayal of the Mexican American as the indolent worker who lazily sleeps under his large sombrero. Moreover, not only did these stereotypes pervade historical accounts of Mexican Americans, but they also permeated contemporary anthropological studies as well. According to Américo Paredes, many non-Chicano/a anthropologists, through “unconscious bias,” reinforced these distorted views of Chicano groups within their ethnographies, by fitting “data to preconceived notions and stereotypes.”⁴ As a reaction to these disparaging characterizations, Chicanos sought to reassess events from their own perspective, shifting both agency and subjectivity from the outside to the inside. By tracing and documenting their cultural past, Chicanos empowered themselves, breaking out of the submissive role to which they had often been relegated by mainstream U.S. society.

From Liberalism to Chicanismo

In “Liberalism: The Chicano Movement and Its Organizations from the 1960s to the 1970s,” Juan Gómez-Quiñones explained how, by the 1960s, Chicanos began to eschew the widely espoused concept of Liberalism by deeming it inefficacious.⁵ During the previous era, the period from the 1920s until the 1960s, frequently identified by scholars like Mario T. García as “The Mexican-American Era,” Mexican Americans

⁴ Américo Paredes, *Folklore and Culture on the Texas-Mexican Border*, ed. Richard Bauman, (Austin: University of Texas, 1993): 74.

⁵ Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality & Promise, 1940-1990*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1990): 101.

promoted a liberal agenda, which endorsed equality through assimilation and integration into the mainstream.⁶ To achieve egalitarianism, Mexican Americans “attempted to resolve problems with faith in education, electoral politics, litigation and a claim to being white Americans.”⁷ This lattermost goal stemmed from the recognition that a racial classification as colored could subject Mexican Americans to mainstream practices of segregation. Some Mexican Americans partially denied their Mexican identity, claiming to be of “Spanish descent” or of mixed European ancestry, to increase their chances for social mobility.⁸

As a means of accelerating their objectives of egalitarianism, various groups materialized, such as El Orden Hijos de América (The Order of the Sons of America), El Orden Caballeros de América (The Order of the Knights of America), and the League of Latin American Citizens, whose primary political aim was equality through means of integration into the American social and cultural mainstream.⁹ Describing the measures taken by these organizations to achieve this end, Mario Barrera explained:

Various activities were undertaken by these groups in pursuit of that goal [equality], including lobbying, lawsuits, publicity, voter registration, political endorsements, the provision of services, and

⁶ In his chapter, “The Mexican-American Generation,” Mario T. García termed the “Mexican-American Era” as one of several historical stages within which Chicanos have evolved. He also provided the history behind the origin of the term the “Mexican-American Generation,” the generation of ethnic leadership to emerge during the Mexican American Era. See García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 1-2, 308.

⁷ F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1997): 90.

⁸ Gómez-Quiñones, *Roots of Chicano Politics, 1600-1940*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994): 308.

⁹ David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 75-76.

general organizing. Whatever the approach, the common goal was the reduction of racial inequality by bringing down the barriers to upward mobility for Chicanos. The approach, then, was essentially an integrationist one, in that it attempted to increase Chicano representation in the schools, the labor unions, the corporations, the government, and the other major institutions.¹⁰

This assimilationist strategy deviated from the more militant unionism of the early 1900s and the leftist politics of earlier groups, like the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), whose Mexico-oriented philosophies lead to an increase in nativism and discrimination by Anglo Americans.¹¹ These earlier alliances did not endorse assimilation, and instead promoted working-class activism, largely to the exclusion of the middle-class. By the 1920s, middle-class reformers sought integration as a chief means of attaining equality, stressing Americanization over cultural roots.

The political policies of El Orden Hijos de América, El Orden Caballeros de América, and the League of Latin American Citizens all reflected a basic assimilationist agenda, contending “that the best way to advance in American society was to convince other Americans that they [Mexican Americans] too were loyal, upstanding American citizens.”¹² In an effort to battle fractionalization between the triad, leaders of these organizations decided to fuse all three associations together to form the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). This merge occurred at a unity convention in Corpus Christi, Texas, on February 17, 1929, after two years of negotiation and

¹⁰ Mario Barrera, *Beyond Aztlán: Ethnic Autonomy in Comparative Perspective*, (New York: Praeger, 1988): 31.

¹¹ Gómez-Quíñones, *Roots of Chicano Politics*, 342-346.

¹² Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 76.

heated debate, primarily over the qualifications for membership to the neophyte association. In the face of criticism by some delegates without U.S. citizenship, LULAC leadership resolved the issue by including a bylaw in the constitution that limited membership to native-born or naturalized citizens of the United States.¹³ As a civic organization, the group desired to fight for U.S. citizenship rights of its members.

LULAC became one of the primary middle-class organizations to endorse an in-system strategy. Describing the basic goals of the new association, David Gutiérrez explained:

Foremost among these objectives was a pledge to promote and develop among LULAC members what they [leadership] called the ‘best and purest’ form of Americanism. They also resolved to teach their children English and to inculcate in them a sense of their rights and responsibilities as American citizens...In many ways the new organization exemplified the integrationist strains of thought that had slowly evolved among some Mexican Americans over the previous years...LULAC leaders consciously chose to emphasize the American side of their social identity as the primary basis for organization.¹⁴

Rather than adhering to radical measures, LULAC sought reform within the confines of the law. According to Mario T. García, “Americanization for LULAC meant struggling within the system not outside of it and certainly not against it...Fundamental to LULAC’s reform initiatives was the stress on Americanization, or LULAC’s interpretation of Americanization, for the purpose of preparing Mexican Americans for their roles in American society and proving to other citizens the assimilable character of people of Mexican descent. Americanization for LULAC revolved around the

¹³ Alma M. García, *The Mexican Americans*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002): 134.

¹⁴ Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 77.

following issues: (1) adjustment to American values and culture, (2) political socialization, (3) cultural pluralism, (4) desegregation, and (5) education.”¹⁵ LULAC’s initial embrace of Americanism eclipsed support of immigration for Mexican nationals, particularly during the Depression. Claiming that the unrestricted immigration of impoverished Mexican workers reinforced negative stereotypes of Mexicans among Anglo Americans, LULAC leadership, such as Alonso Perales and M.C. González, sought to distinguish U.S. citizens of Mexican descent from Mexican nationals.¹⁶ Reforms would only occur, leadership contended, if Mexican American citizens exercised their rights within the establishment.

By the late 1930s, this small, blossoming generation began to identify themselves firstly as American. With the emergence of WWII, many Mexican Americans enlisted in the war, distinguishing themselves as one of the country’s most decorated minority groups.¹⁷ According to Ignacio García:

Their war experience had increased their own certainty that they were Americans and should be seen as such by others. Still, most of them sought to attain this prosperity and upward mobility without giving up their culture completely. They were Americans, but they would not stop being Mexican....They preferred the dual role of American and Mexican.¹⁸

By the 1950s, however, the dualism of this role diminished, as anti-Communist sentiments grew in the United States. García claimed that groups, like LULAC, the G.I.

¹⁵ M.T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity*, 31, 33-34.

¹⁶ Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 84-85.

¹⁷ Annette Oliveira, “Origins,” *Espejo: Reflections of the Mexican American*, text contributions by Bert N. Corona, Joan Murray, and Annette Oliveira, (Oakland: The Oakland Museum, 1978): 7.

¹⁸ I.M. García, *Chicanismo*, 20.

Forum, and other middle-class organizations, emphasized Americanization over culture to counteract possible red-baiting.¹⁹ LULAC maintained its position that Americanization would empower Mexican Americans in the struggle for their rights. Although these middle-class reformers confronted issues of discrimination, segregation, and Anglo American antipathy, “they would refrain from challenging the fundamental ideals of American society.”²⁰ Moreover, García contended that widespread repatriation and deportation campaigns, occurring from the Depression through the 1950s, further enforced the Americanization process, as “Mexican Americans recognized their tenuous position in American society as they saw their neighbors, both those with legal and those with illegal status, become victims of American nativism.”²¹

Yet, towards the end of the 1950s, assimilationist strategies, endorsed by the Mexican American Generation, summoned modification by more aggressive Mexican American leadership. As F. Arturo Rosales described:

Mexican Americanization was in large part dominated by middle-class reformers who advocated assimilation and working within the system as the solution to problems facing Mexicans in the U.S. But by the end of the 1950s middle-class prescriptions began to change as Mexican Americans witnessed the successes Blacks were registering by using demonstrations and picketing and charging white America with racism. As the bolder Mexican American leaders turned to these tactics, they undoubtedly served as examples to the young Chicano generation which was coming of age during this period.²²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ignacio M. García, *Viva Kennedy: Mexican Americans in Search of Camelot*, (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2000): 28.

²¹ I.M. García, *Chicanismo*, 21.

²² Rosales, *Chicano!*, 109.

With the easing of both McCarthyism and the cold war in the early 1960s, the Chicano Generation arose, built upon the successes of the Mexican American Generation. While this new generation benefited from the advancements attained during the previous era, including progress in education, jobs, political representation, and public accommodations, it also recognized that “the failures of the Mexican-American Generation meant that the paradox of progress and poverty, of progress for some but poverty for many, continued to characterize the Mexican-American experience.”²³ As a result, the Chicano Generation sought to remedy these inequities by moving beyond the perceived ideological handicaps of the Mexican American Era, among which included Americanization and Liberalism.

As a riposte to Liberalism, Chicanos of the 1960s adopted Chicanismo. This “radically political and ethnic populism” emphasized a Mexican cultural heritage and consciousness, pride, self-worth, and dignity.²⁴ From this ideology “came the preoccupation with participation in community affairs, the securing of democratic rights and justice for the community, a commitment to developing parallel institutions and to opening existing ones to Mexican Americans, and a global solidarity with oppressed groups.”²⁵ According to Carlos Muñoz, students formed the backbone of this drive for social change among Chicanos in their ideological tendencies and their search for an

²³ M.T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity*, 299.

²⁴ Gómez-Quíñones, *Chicano Politics*, 103.

²⁵ I.M. García, *Chicanismo*, 6.

identity.²⁶ By adopting the term, “Chicano” over “Mexican American,” members of the Chicano Generation shifted their emphasis away from past tenets of Americanization. Moreover, by self-identifying themselves as “Chicano,” rather than “tejano” or “californios,” they identified with the national issues and national leaders. Many of these new leaders, who arose from the communities, shunned assimilation and integrationist tendencies, and promoted a nationalist working class ethic.²⁷

According to Ignacio M. García, this early philosophy manifested itself in the form of separatism. One of the strongest advocates of this pro-autonomous cultural nationalism was national leader Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, former liberal Democrat and member of the G.I. Forum, whose influence was especially profound among barrio youth and college students. In the mid-1960s, he organized the Crusade for Justice, which advocated cultural consciousness and the formulation of a society based upon humanism rather than on competition.²⁸ The notions of “La Familia” and self-determination were of primary interest to the group. Describing the sentiments of the Crusade for Justice, García claimed:

The Crusade took the basic yearnings for respectability of the Mexican American middle class and radicalized them into an ethnocentric surge of racial pride. This pride required an identity independent and separate from that of the Anglo-American. In fact, separatism and antagonism became an unspoken prerequisite to the attainment of this identity.²⁹

²⁶ Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*, (London: Verso, 1989): 15-16.

²⁷ I.M. García, *Chicanismo*, 7.

²⁸ Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 113.

²⁹ I. M. García, *Chicanismo*, 7.

Promulgating these ideologies, Gonzales sought to establish “cultural nationalism and a vague notion of separatism.”³⁰ In addition to his distinction as the author of the epic poem, *I am Joaquín*, Gonzales achieved recognition for his involvement with the production of *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. In March of 1969, the Chicano Liberation Youth Conference convened in Denver, attracting more than one thousand young people from across the country. At this assembly, Chicano leaders, including Gonzales, proposed *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, a cultural and political manifesto, which delineated specific goals and objectives for the unification of Mexican Americans. To attain these goals, according to the document, Chicanos needed to take control of the institutions, which directly affected their lives and livelihood.

In his book, *Beyond Aztlán: Ethnic Autonomy in Comparative Perspective*, Barrera highlighted this initial impulse towards self-governance. He commented:

For the first time in a major programmatic statement, community identity and ethnic equality have been not only raised simultaneously but intimately linked. While the plan did not really make explicit whether it was calling for secession from the United States, it was very clear that it foresaw no possibility of ending oppression without Chicano control of the institutions that directly affected community life. This was very different from the preceding generation’s emphasis on achieving equality through gaining access to the dominant institutions of the society, and thus becoming integrated into those institutions.³¹

To promote this move towards separatism, the manifesto presented the concept of Aztlán, the lost homeland of the Aztecs, as a means of providing Chicanos with an

³⁰ Rosales, *Chicano!*, 179.

³¹ Barrera, *Beyond Aztlán*, 3, 39.

alternative nation to the United States. Before the proclamation of Aztlán as the mythological separatist nation at the Denver conference, the concept remained relatively unarticulated.³² However, through the inspiration of the Chicano poet, Alurista, in 1968, the concept of Aztlán experienced a rebirth, providing Chicanos with an historical and a nationalistic symbol, to which they all ideally could relate.³³

The introduction to *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* summoned Chicanos to unify and to mobilize around the concept of cultural heritage. The brief opening passage aroused Chicanos to reaffirm their identity as a distinct race, through the reclamation of their ancestral homeland. Specifying Northern Aztlán as the land of the Chicanos' forefathers, these authors promoted this mythological locale as a defined nation, a rallying point for Chicano unity. Moreover, in addition to endorsing this legendary geographical region, these authors also included all lands on which Chicanos toiled daily. The manifesto stated that:

We are 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. Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent.³⁴

³² For a further discussion of the theories behind the rediscovery of the concept of Aztlán, see footnote # 102.

³³ Luis Leal, "In Search of Aztlán," in Anaya and Lomelí, eds., *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, 11.

³⁴ "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán," *Documents of Chicano Struggle*, 4.

The legacy of land to Chicanos, not only through ownership but also through labor, emerged as the foundation of Chicano Nationalism. The reclamation of Aztlán was one of the consolidating mechanisms which initially united Mexican Americans.

In addition to land as a prominent solidifier of Chicano unification, Chicano racial identity, “a bronze people with a bronze culture...in the bronze continent,” further promulgated the nationalistic notion of a chosen people within Aztlán.³⁵ This concept also reflected the separatist attitudes of the manifesto. Specifically, the mission statement of the plan excluded the participation of any non-Mexican American, particularly those involved in land acquisition. “Por la Raza todo. Fuera de la Raza nada,” as stated in the conclusion of the plan, clearly reflected the two key ways that the manifesto expressed its isolationist rhetoric. First, since the statement concluded the document, the message of anti-Anglo sentiments was reinforced. Secondly, by using strictly Spanish within this phrase, the authors “accentuate[d] its exclusionary nationalistic theme.”³⁶

Ideologies of separatism also surfaced in the organizational goals of the plan, which emphasized the dire need for self-determination among Chicanos. Unity, Economy, Education, Institutions, Self-Defense, Cultural, and Political Liberation were the seven delineated categories for these objectives. Within each of these sections, the authors proposed a distinct, Chicano-based approach, one which deviated from

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ellie Patricia Berkowitz, *Uncovering the Layers: Los Four and the Artistic Interpretation of Chicano Nationalism*, Master’s Thesis, (Austin: University of Texas, 1998): 15.

mainstream culture. For instance, the manifesto claimed that the economic goal must achieve “economic control of our lives and our communities...by driving the exploiter out of our communities, our pueblos, and our lands and by controlling and developing our own talents, sweat, and resources.”³⁷ While much of the rhetoric included within the document clearly mirrored Marxist ideals, the notions on separatism reflected the ideologies of other Civil Rights Movements, which were occurring simultaneously. Certain factions of the Black Power Movement, lead by individuals, such as LeRoi Jones, adamantly subscribed to these notions of autonomy.

According to Emily Alman, the goal of separatism during the Black Power Movement was not simply the act of demanding specific requests, but rather the acquisition of control and self-determination. When describing the separatist approach within the academic sphere, Alman contended:

Reflecting the ideological concepts of black power and black pride which were developing among large segments of the black community... the young people organized a campaign to wrest power-rather than concessions from the University. The struggle was bitter. The action was led by blacks, with activist whites left uninformed as to plans, timetables, or demands. Friendships between black and white students and faculty faltered...[B]lack students declared their independence of all whites, and this included innovators as well as the resisters to change...Separatism became the order of the day.³⁸

Excluding members of Anglo society within its organizations, the Black Power Movement maintained a militant stance in its exclusionary philosophies, and positioned

³⁷ “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” *Documents of Chicano Struggle*, 5.

³⁸ Emily Alman, “Desegregation at Rutgers University,” *Black Life and Culture in the United States*, ed. Rhoda L. Goldstein, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1971): 229.

itself against the inclusive doctrines of Martin Luther King, Jr. and other liberal African American organizations, such as the NAACP. The basis of the radical nature of this separatist perspective stemmed from “[d]isillusion with the liberal ideal of color blindness and the adoption of a strategy of color consciousness...[This] is characteristic of the Negro militants and is, indeed at the heart of what ‘black power’ is all about.”³⁹

Cultural nationalists, such as LeRoi Jones, contended that blacks could only free themselves by “the adoption of a unified, cohesive black culture which is completely divorced from that of the white man.”⁴⁰ While revolutionary nationalists embraced Marxism-Leninism, fighting for all oppressed people, cultural nationalists stressed the importance of the black experience, with culture itself becoming its primary ideology. In addition, cultural nationalists rejected the need for coalitions or alliances with white revolutionary groups.⁴¹

The separatist philosophies and rhetoric demonstrated within the Black Power Movement surfaced within *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. In the same manner as the Black cultural nationalists, the advocates of the plan emphasized cultural heritage as its primary ideology. The document also stressed the significance of self-determination and of self-reliance. Interestingly, however, the plan also endorsed a Marxist rhetoric, calling for “[l]and and realty ownership [to] be acquired by the community for the

³⁹ David Danzig, “Black Power and ‘the Movement’: Two Views...in Defense of ‘Black Power,’” *Perspectives on Black America*, eds. Russell Endo and William Strawbridge, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970): 185.

⁴⁰ Alphonso Pinkney, “Contemporary Black Nationalism,” in Goldstein, ed., *Black Life and Culture in the United States*, 253.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 254.

people's welfare."⁴² Thus, rather than reflecting strictly the ideologies of Black cultural nationalism, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* also utilized tenets endorsed by Black revolutionary nationalism.

The similarities between the ideologies endorsed in the Black Power Movement and those included within *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* reflected the political and social climate of the mid-to-late 1960s. This period, characterized by turbulence and flux, fostered change because of the rejection of the status quo by peoples of diverse classes and cultures. The inertia and paranoia of the 1950s dissipated during the Vietnam era, paving the way for social change, as well as cultural expression. Many people of diverse races and ethnicities were receptive to the tenets and actions, which surrounded the various civil rights and cultural movements, and as a result, these movements flourished.

Within the political realm of the Chicano Movement, cultural nationalistic tenets of separatism also extended to the political parties. Disenchanted by the lack of progress achieved by mainstream Democratic and Republican parties with regards to Chicano advancement, Chicano leaders in Texas decided to create their own independent Chicano party, La Raza Unida Party (El Partido de la Raza Unida), headed by José Angel Gutiérrez. Born out of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), noteworthy for its school walkouts in protest of futile school practices, La Raza Unida Party (LRUP) emerged on January 10, 1970 initially in Zavala, La Salle,

⁴² "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán," *Documents of Chicano Struggle*, 5.

and Dimmit counties in Texas as a means of wresting school-board and city council seats from ineffective incumbents. The situation in South Texas barrios, among the poorest Mexican areas in the United States, “was propitious for organizing,” and LRUP sought to maximize Mexican political representation as a means of redirecting political, social, and economic resources to benefit its residents.⁴³ Describing the need for LRUP in a speech he delivered on May 4, 1970, Gutiérrez explained:

The formation of this party came about because of the critical need for the people to experience justice. It’s just like being hungry. You’ve got to get the food in there immediately, otherwise you get nauseous, you get headaches and pains in your stomach. We were Chicanos who were starved for any kind of meaningful participation in decision making, policy making, and leadership positions. For a long time, we have not been satisfied with the type of leadership that has been picked for us. And this is what a political party does, particularly the ones we have here. I shouldn’t use the plural because we only have one, and that’s the gringo party...These parties, or party, have traditionally picked our leadership...[M]exicanos need to be in control of their own destiny. They need to make their own decisions... We have been complacent for too long.⁴⁴

Between 1970 and 1972, Gutiérrez’s words morphed into reality, as LRUP became a rising force in South Texas, winning local elections and changing the dynamics of the past political process. According to Gutiérrez, “[t]he zeal among Texas activists for the creation of a statewide political party and the subsequent building of Aztlán was

⁴³ Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 128-129.

⁴⁴ José Angel Gutiérrez, “Mexicanos Need to Control Their Own Destinies,” excerpts from the speech given on May 4, 1970 at a meeting in San Antonio, Texas. Reprinted in *La Raza Unida Party in Texas: Speeches by Mario Compean and José Angel Gutiérrez*, a Merit Pamphlet, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970): 11-12.

tremendous...The entire complexion of politics in Texas and across the country was changed by La Raza Unida Party.”⁴⁵

Not only did the concept of La Raza Unida Party, as an independent Chicano political party, garner support within Texas, it also gained popularity within numerous other states, like California and Colorado. Many members of local, regional, and state political groups desired to attach themselves to a national party, El Partido Nacional de la Raza Unida. Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, who had established La Raza Unida Party in Colorado, called for a national convention, which assembled on September 1, 1972 in El Paso, Texas. While the convention decided not to endorse a specific Presidential candidate, it succeeded in defining a national agenda for Chicanos. Despite rivalries that developed amongst leaders of different geographic areas, such as between Gutiérrez and Gonzales, La Raza Unida Party became a third party force with the traditional two party system. Describing the impact of this organization, Ignacio García explained:

No other Movement organization had as many chapters and as many identifiable leaders as the *partido*. For many Anglo-Americans, the party became the most threatening political organization of the Chicano Movement because it sought to displace them from power and to restructure the American political system. It was separatist in orientation, if not in practice, and for a time it seemed capable of attracting thousands to an open electoral and social rebellion on a scale never before seen among the so-called passive Mexicans of the Southwest.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ José Angel Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998): 190, 215.

⁴⁶ I. M. García, *Chicanismo*, 101.

With LRUP, separatism was now legitimised on a national scale, with activities sponsored in various states across the country.

The Chicano Art Movement, Separatism, and the Mainstream

The affinity between cultural identity and nationalist discourse visible in politics also prospered in the visual arts during the early phase of the Chicano Art Movement. The period between 1968-1975 witnessed “a high sense of idealism,” which Shifra Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto maintained emphasized non-commercial, community-oriented and public art forms, like poster making and mural painting, and the development of artistic collectives. The phase also revealed a surge in political and ethnic themes.⁴⁷ “Art was part of a whole movement to recapture a people’s history and culture,” Goldman argued, “albeit at times romantically, as part of the struggle for self-determination.”⁴⁸ Goldman and Ybarra-Frausto cited *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* as the starting point from which artists, writers, poets, and musicians took their inspiration. The manifesto spoke to these creators directly by postulating that they “produce literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture.”⁴⁹ These early Chicano artists and writers centered upon the

⁴⁷ Shifra Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “The Political and Social Contexts of Chicano Art,” *Chicano Art, Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*, eds. Richard Griswold del Castillo, Teresa McKenna, and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1991): 84.

⁴⁸ Shifra M. Goldman, “A Public Voice: Fifteen Years of Chicano Posters,” *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994): 163. Originally published in *Art Journal*, 44, no. 1, (Spring 1984): 50-57.

⁴⁹ “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” *Documents of Chicano Struggle*, 6.

search “to identify the images that represented their shared experiences.”⁵⁰ A new stable of iconography emerged, with which Chicano artists began to formulate their visual lexicon. In her essay on Chicano Muralism in California, Goldman enumerated the early themes that surfaced in the works of Chicano artists, among which included: religious imagery (Pre-Columbian and Christian), indigenous motifs, modern portraits of political and revolutionary figures, political and social imagery, non-religious symbols, landscapes, urban culture, legendary or mythical figures, and text.⁵¹ The majority of these themes reclaimed subjects discarded by or excluded from mainstream histories.

According to Ybarra-Frausto, this codifying of images and symbols proved beneficial in the adversarial countering of mainstream representations. He defined these visual images as “nuevo arte del pueblo,” which was created from a shared experience and based on communal art traditions.⁵² Through their collaborative and often anonymous actions, Chicano artists melded social practice with cultural production, creating a repository of symbols which presented a collective Chicano cultural identity from an inside perspective.

⁵⁰ Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnet-Sánchez, “Introduction,” *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, eds. Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnet-Sánchez, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993): 17.

⁵¹ Shifra Goldman, “How, Why, and When It All Happened: Chicano Murals of California,” in Cockcroft and Barnet-Sánchez, eds., *Signs from the Heart*, 29-30.

⁵² Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art,” *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996): 172.

In addition to formulating a new vocabulary of relevant cultural imagery, Chicano artists also sought appropriate venues for the communication or dissemination of their representations. Using their communities as alternative spaces to institutional gallery walls, these Chicano artists painted public murals on the sides of their neighborhood buildings and distributed silkscreen posters at rallies. As requested by *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, these cultural educators often took an isolationist approach to their artistic exhibitions. Yet, the reasoning behind this isolationism was multi-faceted, and not simply the result of an adherence to the tenets of Chicano Nationalism. While many white, male artists, including those whose artworks challenged the hegemony of the traditional art establishment, gained acceptance within mainstream institutions, Chicano artists had a markedly dissimilar relationship with these organizations, one that was tenuous at best. Even though the country called for a scrutiny of prejudice and partiality within its societal structures, Chicano artists remained isolated from mainstream art institutions during the 1960s, and their artistic productions stayed fundamentally separatist. Thus, overt marginalization by the white mainstream establishment, as well as a stringent segregationist agenda on the part of many Chicano activists and artists both contributed to the isolationism of Chicano art. I will trace these two primary impulses, forced and voluntary separatism from Anglo mainstream art institutions, in the following pages.

Forced Separatism of Chicano Artists from Mainstream Art Institutions

Even though the Civil Rights Era endorsed an interrogation of the status quo, the mainstream art establishment persisted as an elitist structure, excluding Chicano artists, women artists and other artists of color. Regardless of mainstream museums and galleries' new predilection towards the exhibition of more contentious images and exploits, like those of Pop and Beat artists, whose works frequently elicited heated debates and academic symposia regarding their legitimacy, Chicano artists remained marginalized for two primary, and interrelated, reasons.⁵³

Firstly, as clearly indicated in the theoretical framework of Michael Omi and Howard Winant, the social structure within the United States was, and still is, fundamentally racialized. According to these authors, the social formation of the U.S. since the earliest days of colonialism has been defined principally by race. In their book, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*, Omi and Winant challenged previous paradigms of ethnicity-, class-, and nation-based theories, and instead proposed “[a]n approach based on the concept of racial formation [which] should treat race in the United States as a fundamental *organizing principle* of social relationships.”⁵⁴ Based upon this perspective, they contended that the “major

⁵³ The art world met countless times to discuss and debate the validity of Pop Art. One such symposium occurred on December 13, 1962 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Panelists included Peter Selz, Henry Geldzahler, Hilton Kramer, Dore Ashton, Leo Steinberg, and Stanley Kunitz. A partial segment of the debate was published as “A Symposium on Pop Art,” *Arts*, (April 1963): 35-45. Also reprinted in Steven Henry Madoff, ed., *Pop Art: A Critical History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997: 65-84).

⁵⁴ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul Inc., 1986): 66.

institutions and social relationships of U.S. society—law, political organizations, economic relationships, religion, cultural life, residential patterns, etc.—have been structured from the beginning by the racial order.”⁵⁵ This racialized social structure restricted Chicano/as from entering the museum sphere, and consequently reinforced a social hierarchy.⁵⁶

Chicano artists were keenly aware of the discriminatory practices of artistic institutions. Despite the “rebelliousness of art in this century, museums and the mainstream art establishment remain[ed] the arbiters of style and the validators of art,” which consequently relayed into the exclusion of artists of color and women during this time period.⁵⁷ It was not until the early 1970s that the Chicano artistic collective, ASCO, would challenge these hegemonic practices. Describing their attack on the art establishment, ASCO member Harry Gamboa, Jr. recalled:

In '71 I went to the [Los Angeles] County Museum and I guess I was very naïve, but I wanted to talk to the curator about Chicano art and the guy told me, ‘Hey, there are no Chicanos that are doing any art,’ and I got kicked out. So we thought about it and we thought, ‘Well, fuck them. The first piece of Chicano art they’ll ever have will be themselves, we’ll just sign this as being our own conceptual piece.’⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁶ Virginia Escalante, “The Politics of Chicano Representation in the Media,” *Chicano Renaissance: Contemporary Cultural Trends*, eds. David R. Macial, Isidro D. Ortiz, and Maria Herrera-Sobek, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000): 134-135.

⁵⁷ Mary Jane Jacobs, “An Unfashionable Audience,” *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995): 51.

⁵⁸ Harry Gamboa, Jr., “Harry Gamboa, Jr. and ASCO,” *High Performance*, (Issue 35, 1986): 51. Although Harry Gamboa, Jr. began this assessment by claiming it was 1971, numerous other sources, including those by Gamboa himself, attested that this event in fact occurred in the final week of 1972.

The piece to which Gamboa was referring was in fact the Los Angeles County Museum of Art itself. In reaction to this negative response by the LACMA museum curator, ASCO members, Gronk, Willie Herrón, and Gamboa spray-painted their signatures onto all of the entrances of the County Museum (Fig. 1.2). ASCO had “momentarily transformed the museum itself into the first conceptual work of Chicano art to be exhibited at LACMA.”⁵⁹ Gamboa and Patssi Valdez returned the subsequent day to the site to document their work in photographs. Later that evening, the museum thoroughly whitewashed their signatures.

Despite ASCO’s guerrilla art method, it was not until 1974, when LACMA finally opened its doors to the Chicano artistic collective, Los Four, that Chicano Art legitimately made its way into the mainstream art establishment. According to Los Four member, Frank Romero, their exhibition at LACMA was enormous, breaking attendance records and steadily growing in square footage to accommodate the show’s increasing popularity.⁶⁰ Yet, in spite of the public’s favorable reception, the exhibition received inauspicious critiques from local and national art critics, who patronizingly disparaged the show, assessing it through the use of traditional Western standards of aesthetic critique, namely a formalist paradigm. Consequently, reviews condemned the

⁵⁹ Harry Gamboa, Jr., “In the City of Angels, Chameleons, and Phantoms: Asco, a Case Study of Chicano Art in Urban Tones (or Asco Was a Four-Member Word),” in *Chicano Art, Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*, eds. Richard Griswold del Castillo, Teresa McKenna, and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1991): 125. Reprinted in Gamboa, Jr., *Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa, Jr.*, ed. Chon A. Noriega, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 71-87.

⁶⁰ Frank Romero, interview by author, tape recording, at his studio in Elysian Park, California, 10 February 1998.

exhibition for its lack of quality, as well as for its absence of authenticity. For instance, *Los Angeles Times* columnist William Wilson, stereotypically describing the gallery space, maintained that “[h]alf of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art’s contemporary gallery [was] its usually sleek and sophisticated self. The other half look[ed] like the setting for a fiesta, a ‘West Side Story’ rumble or, possibly, a revolution.”⁶¹ Peppered with deprecating connotations, Wilson’s statement incorrectly equated the exhibit with a party or a movie set, (which often lacked cultural accuracy), thereby relegating the show to a realm of both frivolity and artifice.⁶² Likewise, *Artforum*’s Peter Plagens alleged outright that “‘Los Four’...[was] one of those patronizing, Cheviot Hills liberal shows which, if you’ve got any quality sense (and who operates with none?) puts your conscience on the spot,” while *Southwest Art*’s Clark Polak unabashedly asserted that the show’s “inferior work [was] unquestioned.”⁶³ By utilizing a strictly Eurocentric model of standards, all three critics failed to look beyond the narrow confines of aesthetics and quality.

⁶¹ William Wilson, “A Bit of the Barrio at County Museum,” *The Los Angeles Times*, (Part IV, February 27, 1974): 8.

⁶² The majority of research for my Master’s Thesis centered upon the Los Four exhibition at LACMA in 1974 and its reception. In addition to William Wilson, there were multiple critics of the show, who challenged the work of Los Four by using formalistic methods. See Ellie Patricia Berkowitz, *Uncovering the Layers: Los Four and the Artistic Interpretation of Chicano Nationalism*, Master’s Thesis, (Austin: University of Texas, 1998): 36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5. For original articles, see Peter Plagens, “Los Four, Los Angeles County Museum of Art,” *Artforum*, (September 1974): 87; Clark Polak, “A Question of Style- Los Four and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art,” *Southwest Art*, (July-August, 1974): 56.

Moreover, as the critics debunked the quality of Los Four's work, they also discredited its members' roles as genuine artists. Claiming that university training robbed these artists of their credibility as "real" Chicano artists, Wilson maintained:

...[T]he last decade saw alterations in accepted notions of what constituted art. Aestheticians, including me, recognize that socially generated forms like Chicano art are artistically viable, just like folk music is viable. Why not then do an exhibition of Chicano art, the real article, unfiltered by the interposition of four college-trained artists who, by the very act of leaving the barrio, ceased to be authentic folk artists?⁶⁴

For Wilson, art occupied specific categories, such as high art or folk art, and these divisions remained fixed. Chicano Art, as the cultural productions of indigenous or non-Western peoples, gained an authenticity deemed legitimate for museum display. In "On Collecting Art and Culture," James Clifford traced the West's historical fascination with non-Western artifacts and disclosed how Western modes of culture collecting have always been "strategic and selective."⁶⁵ Clifford's diagram titled "The Art-Culture System," (Fig. 1.3), placed ethnographic or folk arts within "the zone of authentic artifacts," revealing their sanctioning as objects of value.⁶⁶ For critics like Wilson, however, the artworks of Los Four did not occupy this zone, as their college-educated producers lacked the authenticity of untrained folk artists. According to Wilson, Los

⁶⁴ Ibid., 39. For the original article, see William Wilson, "'Los Four' a Statement of Chicano Spirit," *The Los Angeles Times*, (Calendar Section, March 10, 1974): 64.

⁶⁵ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1988): 231.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 223-224.

Four's work was not aesthetically high art, and since the artists were formally trained, was not folk art either.⁶⁷

The second major reason that Chicano artists remained marginalized from mainstream institutions was that, until only recently, Western museums have historically viewed the art, artifacts, and peoples of non-European cultures as distinctly “Other.” The museum, fundamentally a Western phenomenon, existed as a vehicle through which the Western world could examine, and mediate, cultures other than its own. Evolving within the context of 19th century imperialism, natural history museums, like the Musée d’Ethnographie de Paris (now the Musée de l’Homme), played a crucial role in connecting the histories of Western nations and civilizations to those of other peoples, but only by interrupting any continuity between the two and by creating an insider/outsider, “we/them” dichotomy.⁶⁸

Expounding upon this museological practice, Tony Bennett explained that these spaces of representation formulated a temporally organized order of peoples and things. This order was “a totalizing one, metonymically encompassing all things and all peoples in their interactions through time. And an order which organized the implied public—the white citizenries of the imperialist powers—into unity, representationally effacing divisions within the body politic in constructing a ‘we’ conceived as the

⁶⁷ Berkowitz, *Uncovering the Layers*, 39.

⁶⁸ Edward W. Said’s seminal works on Orientalism largely laid the foundation for the deconstruction of Western colonial discourse, in which the West constructed itself as the “we,” the Occident, a place of civilization, in contrast to the “other,” the Orient, “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.” See Said, *Orientalism*, (1978; reprint, with an afterward by Said, New York: Vintage Books, 1994): 1.

realization, and therefore just beneficiaries, of the process of evolution and identified as a unity in opposition to the primitive otherness of conquered peoples.”⁶⁹ By constructing an essentially distinct “Other,” these exhibitions served as conduits for the schooling of a national public and for the fortification of its imperialistic superiority.⁷⁰

Describing the established modes for the constitution of “Otherness,” Homi Bhabha proposed that colonialist discourse enabled the perpetuation of such a designation through the underscoring of difference. According to Bhabha, “the construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse demand[ed] an articulation of forms of difference—racial and sexual.”⁷¹ Stereotyping was the major discursive strategy of this discourse, allowing the colonizer “to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.”⁷² One of the fundamental modes for the underscoring of racial stereotyping was through the practice of racial classification.

Mary Louise Pratt, in her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, meticulously documented the discourse of racial classification beginning as early as the 18th century in Europe, citing examples of the Enlightenment’s

⁶⁹ Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, eds. Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 144.

⁷⁰ Ibid. For this concept, Bennett built upon the work of Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, (London: Methuen, 1986): 42.

⁷¹ Homi K. Bhabha, “The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism,” *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russell Ferguson, et. al., (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990): 72.

⁷² Ibid., 75.

systematization of nature. For Pratt, Carl Linné's (or in Latin, Linnaeus) 1735 publication, *Systema Naturae*, which "scientifically" established a classificatory system designed to categorize all of the world's plant forms, formed one of the basic elements for the construction of modern Eurocentrism.⁷³ As his taxonomy took root, Linnaeus' supporters began their positivist quest of collecting, measuring, annotating, and preserving not only plants, but animals and insects as well. These classificatory schemas united to form the discipline of natural history. Yet, according to Pratt, "natural history called upon human invention (intellectual, mainly) to compose order. The eighteenth-century classificatory systems created the task of locating every species on the planet, extracting it from its particular, arbitrary surrounding (the chaos), and placing it in its appropriate spot in the system (the order—book, collection, or garden) with its new written, secular European name."⁷⁴ The appropriate spot for colonized cultures, according to Bhabha, was within the place of "Otherness." The zoological classification of humans into four distinct quadrants—white, yellow, black, and red—fixed this cultural division, thereby naturalizing European racism through the establishment of white biological superiority.⁷⁵ Eighteenth century racial theory also used the thesis of degeneration to explain the differences between the races, claiming "that the pure origin of man was the white man...—and that all other forms were

⁷³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 1992): 15.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁵ Mino Moallem and Iain A. Boal, "Multicultural Nationalism and the Poetics of Inauguration," *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, eds. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Mino Moallem, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999): 243.

deterioration from this ideal, on account of either gender or geography, or both.”⁷⁶ As indicated earlier, it was this eighteenth century racial taxonomy that would persist throughout the following centuries and provide the foundation for the colonialist invention of “Otherness” within the exhibition halls of mainstream museums and institutions.

The successful creation of the notion of the “Other” within the museum often depended upon the fabrication of authenticity. Douglas Crimp’s essay, “On the Museum’s Ruins,” explored this museological ritual, citing the research of Eugenio Donato. According to Crimp, Donato claimed that the objects presented in the museum display were “sustained only by the fiction that they somehow constitute[d] a coherent representational universe...Such a fiction [was] the result of an uncritical belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments, [could] produce a representational understanding of the world.”⁷⁷ Susan Stewart expounded upon this perspective, by noting that museum collections created the illusion of representation of a world by lifting objects from their specific contexts and by

⁷⁶ Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, (London: Routledge, 1995): 64-65.

⁷⁷ Douglas Crimp, “On the Museum’s Ruins,” *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, (New York: The New Press, 1998): 57; For Eugenio Donato’s essay, see “The Museum’s Furnace: Notes Toward a Contextual Reading of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*,” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979): 214.

making them “stand in” for the culture in its entirety. The object became an ethnographic metonym for the total culture.⁷⁸

Yet, museums did not reserve this metonymical practice strictly for the display of ethnographic artifacts. The fabrication of cultural wholeness also operated with regard to human exhibition as well. According to performance artist and cultural critic Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “[a]uthentic primitives’ were exhibited as human artifacts and mythical specimens in cages, taverns, gardens, salons, and fairs, as well as in museums of ethnography and natural history, often next to samples of their homeland’s flora and fauna, with costumes and ritual artifacts that were designed by the impresario and had little or nothing to do with reality.”⁷⁹ The contrived nature of these exhibitions, however, did not weaken their success as valid representations of cultural wholeness, since their favorable reception was contingent upon their perceived, rather than their actual, authenticity. In fact, these exhibits succeeded immensely, regardless of their lack of accuracy, and served a range of purposes, including those described by Coco Fusco. Discussing the motivation behind the practice of the human exhibition, Fusco explained:

Designed to provide opportunities for aesthetic contemplation, scientific analysis, and entertainment for Europeans and Northern Americans, these exhibits were a critical component of a burgeoning mass culture whose development coincided with the growth of urban centers and populations, European colonialism, and American expansionism....

⁷⁸ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984): 135-136.

⁷⁹ Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems & Loqueras for the End of the Century*, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1996): 97.

The exhibits also gave credence to white supremacist worldviews by representing nonwhite peoples and cultures as being in need of discipline, civilization, and industry. Not only did these exhibits reinforce stereotypes of “the primitive” but they served to enforce a sense of racial unity as whites among Europeans and North Americans, who were strictly divided by class and religion until this century.⁸⁰

While Fusco’s quotation alluded to the historical impact of human exhibitions, the negative and pervasive effects of cultural stereotyping within museum displays continued to persist well into the twentieth century, having both personal and societal consequences.

Reflecting upon the museum’s codification of “Otherness” within the second half of the twentieth century, Chicano cultural historians Karen Mary Davalos and Richard Flores both independently acknowledged perceiving alienation as children during elementary school field trips to historical institutions. For instance, after visiting the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles in 1972 and viewing the “California History” exhibition, Davalos recalled that:

The narrative-visual and textual material-of the California Hall defined difference in my home state and country, making me-a girl of Mexican descent with dark brown skin, hair, and eyes-both a threat to the Nation and a waste of time. In the Natural History Museum, and *because* of places like it, I was something “other,” alien and foreign to Los Angeles, to my classmates, and to nation. I remember pressing

⁸⁰ Coco Fusco, “The Other History of Intercultural Performance,” *English Is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas*, (New York City: The New Press, 1995): 40-41. As research for this essay, performance artist Coco Fusco melded her interest for human exhibition into practice, as she and fellow artist, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, partook in “The Other History of Intercultural Performance,” in 1992-1993. For this project, the artists manufactured “The Guatinaui World Tour,” disguising themselves as “undiscovered Amerindians” from the fictional island of Guatinaui and exhibiting themselves in art and history museums worldwide. Their performance revealed that even within contemporary society, 18th century taxonomic stereotypes continue to persist, as over 40% of their audience believed the exhibition to be real and acceptable.

my nose against the glass boxes to see this history of California only to feel disappointed and alienated but ultimately betrayed by the distorted images of Mexicans and Indians.⁸¹

Davalos' recollection of feeling estranged, while personal, was not unique to this scholar. Flores, in his essay "Memory-Place, Meaning, and the Alamo," recounted experiencing a similar incident on his initial visit to the Alamo as a grade school child. Filled with the exhilaration of seeing this embodiment of Texas history, Flores could hardly suppress his desire to witness the location where renowned "heroe" had died. Recalling the initial pleasure of his experience, Flores recollected:

My every expectation was met. The stones cried out to me with their sense of history. I looked at the wall, searching for pockmarks, imaging muskets displacing rock with each shot. The silence of the main room, what I learned was the mission church, filled me with awe and heightened my senses. There, beneath the floor that I and my classmates tread upon, was the site where legends fell in martyrdom for my freedom. Bowie. Travis. Crockett. Texan heroes all of them.⁸²

Yet, the elation that Flores felt towards the monument soon subsided. Directly after leaving this historic site, Flores' best friend nudged him and declared, "You killed them! You and the other 'mes'kins!"⁸³ Flores, who had believed himself to be allied with his fellow classmates and part of a shared collective experience, consequently felt alienated, deemed both an outsider and a traitor.

⁸¹ Karen Mary Davalos, *Exhibiting Mestizaje: Mexican (American) Museums in Diaspora*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001): 5.

⁸² Richard Flores, "Memory-Place, Meaning, and the Alamo," *American Literary History*, (Vol. 10, No. 3, 1998): 428.

⁸³ Ibid.

These contemporary accounts exposed the long-term impact of the Eurocentric meta-narratives promulgated by Anglo mainstream institutions. Even in the second half of the twentieth century, the “exclusionary space of the mainstream museum,” termed by Alicia Gaspar de Alba as the “Master’s House,” persisted as an inhospitable environment for peoples whose histories differed from those of the cultural elite.⁸⁴ By sharing her childhood experience, Davalos underscored the fact that mainstream museums remained highly contested spaces.⁸⁵

Voluntary Separatism of Chicano Artists from Mainstream Art Institutions

While the Anglo mainstream establishment practiced the marginalization of Chicano artists from its institutions, the early advocates of *El Movimiento* also encouraged separatism of its artists and activists from the mainstream, albeit for completely different reasons. Like other civil rights movements of the period, *El Movimiento* initially fostered an environment of separatism, an arena for Chicano/as to cultivate self-determination and self-definition, without the influence of stereotyping, classification, or co-optation by the mainstream. Explaining the reasoning behind this need for self-definition, Marcos Sánchez-Tranquilino argued that:

Prior to the Movement, the national image of the Chicano community... had been primarily defined by non-Chicanos within the public arena. As a result, the image of that community was reduced to exotic and romantic portrayals. On the one hand, U.S. Mexicans were perceived

⁸⁴ Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art, Inside/Outside the Master’s House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*, (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998): xv.

⁸⁵ Davalos, *Exhibiting Mestizaje*, 5.

as reliable unskilled laborers, family centered, religious, festive, courteous and humble; on the other hand they were seen as representative of the least desirable elements of society...Of course, neither of these caricatured sets of images would allow U.S. Mexicans to be recognized as a community integral to 'American' life and culture. It was evident to Chicanos in the early stages of the Movement (mid-1960s) that national self-definition was a primary tool of their efforts towards liberating the U.S. Mexican community from *de facto* internal colonization.⁸⁶

Part of this proud assertion of a new self-identity by Chicano/as demanded an isolationist stance, defying the earlier assimilationist approach of previous generations. For Sánchez-Tranquilino, even the term "Chicano" had significant connotations within the context of mainstream Americanization practices. He explained that "[t]he implications of the term 'Chicano' as representing a new American identity were not apparent to outsiders. Instead the separatist implications of the term (not Anglo and yet also not Mexican) caused concern for social stability because it further 'undermined' the 'cultural melting pot' concept of American society."⁸⁷

By originally espousing a culturally nationalistic inclination for separatism, many Chicano artists initially sought to remain distinct from any mainstream commitments. They "had been well integrated into the various political fronts of El Movimiento, within which they were gestating a Chicano art movement that would be national in scope and develop outside of the dominant museum, gallery and arts-publication circuit. Fluid and tendentious, the art produced by this movement

⁸⁶ Marcos Sánchez-Tranquilino, "Murales del Movimiento: Chicano Murals and the Discourses of Art and Americanization," *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, eds. Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnet-Sánchez, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990): 87-88.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

underscored public connection instead of private cognition."⁸⁸ These artists forged a new cultural consciousness, which was riddled by a sense of optimism and fostered predominately within an intra-cultural environment. As stated previously, this idealism was intrinsic to the 1968-1975 period.

The whole notion of art itself underwent a transformation. Disregarding the Greenbergian notion of autonomous art, Chicano artists sought to meld social practice with cultural production. As Tomás Ybarra-Frausto explained:

An initial task was to re-think representation, the role of the artist, and the social function of art. In opposition to the dominant culture, the Chicano had been conceived as the 'other' and reduced to a system of ideological fictions in North American culture. Configurations of the 'other' always included themes of backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality. As Chicano visual artists countered external visions and commenced to create vital and positive visions of themselves and their environment they provide[d] a challenge to orthodox, hierarchical culture by positioning a more democratic forum with open participation. Individuals could be both workers and artists. In fact, the visual artist was seen as a sort of cultural worker. Art was necessary but not privileged or special....Remaining outside of the official cultural apparatus, Chicano artists organized alternative circuits to create, disseminate, and market their artistic production....Going against the normative traditions of art as escape and commodity, a prevalent attitude towards Chicano art objects was that they should provide aesthetic pleasure and delight while also serving to educate and edify.⁸⁹

As the two primary modes of edification, muralism and postermaking proved the most effective means of visual communication during the first phase of the Movement.

⁸⁸ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art," *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996): 172.

⁸⁹ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "Arte Chicano: Images of Community," in Cockcroft and Barnet-Sánchez, eds., *Signs from the Heart*, 56.

Chicano artists utilized these art forms to inform both the Mexican American communities and the existing power structures of specific protests and demands, as well as to promote positive cultural expressions of identity, which “signaled the pride, cultural values, hopes, and aspirations of Mexican community activists.”⁹⁰

Beginning as a grassroots endeavor, muralism flourished primarily within the community setting. Given that the “high art” system “with its norms of privilege and exclusion would be intolerant to Chicano art, a non-art centered network of support and information was established. Exhibitions were not to be mounted in museums or galleries but rather in community sites such as parks, storefronts or meeting halls.”⁹¹ One of the main reasons for Chicano artists’ emphasis on community, apart from the exclusionary practices of the mainstream and the lack of any governmental monetary sponsorship, was audience. According to Ybarra-Frausto, the Mexican American mass public was “unaccustomed and little inclined to visit museums and art galleries,” and thus, its communities became ideal alternative spaces for Chicano artists to display their productions.⁹² Within these neighborhood settings, the practice of muralism itself became a social act, “not only because of its direct relation to audience, but because most mural painting [was] to one degree or another a collective act in which community

⁹⁰ Shifra Goldman, “How, Why, Where, and When It All Happened: Chicano Murals of California,” in Cockcroft and Barnet-Sánchez, eds., *Signs from the Heart*, 23.

⁹¹ Ybarra-Frausto, “Arte Chicano: Images of Community,” 56.

⁹² Ybarra-Frausto, “The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art,” 176.

residents [were] the creators as well as the audience.”⁹³ By working with neighborhood residents and youths, Chicano artists not only emphasized the final products of their social expressions, but also accentuated the process of social activism.

Like street muralism, postermaking of the first phase of the Chicano Art Movement was also non-commercial and community oriented, serving much the same purpose and audience as its outdoor counterpart. However, unlike muralism’s predilection for permanency, postermaking allowed its creators to disseminate their representations on a wider scale. Posters were inexpensive to create, portable, and easily reproducible, thereby allowing for increased accessibility to audiences, who could either purchase these works at minimal cost or receive them free at a range of venues. Influenced by renowned Mexican printer and political satirist José Guadalupe Posada, Chicano artists created posters within two primary categories, political posters and event posters.⁹⁴ Printed in editions of several hundreds to several thousands, the poster provided an excellent form of communication and social commentary. The poster also proved to be a medium utilized by both community-based artists with limited artistic schooling and artists with advanced academic instruction.

Given the drive during this period towards cultural separatism, how did those Chicano artists who received formal training within U.S. colleges, art schools, and universities reconcile this mainstream education with the nationalistic social activism

⁹³ Eva Cockcroft, John Pitman Weber, and James Cockcroft, *Toward a People’s Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement*, (1977; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998): 107.

⁹⁴ Ybarra-Frausto, “The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art,” 176.

endorsed by the early phase of the Movement? According to Goldman, “Chicano art students resisted their professors in art school, and ignored their lessons after they graduated. They drew together for mutual support, encouragement, and strength in their oppositional stance. From this communalism came *chicanidad* and *hermandad* (Chicano consciousness and brother/sisterhood) and the organization of mural groups, art galleries, centers, and alternative publications.”⁹⁵ Many Chicano artists of this early phase united to form a collective base, one which emphasized self-determination and a shared cultural identity.

In becoming the producers of their shared cultural identities, these artists, simultaneously, destroyed the invention of their lives by others.⁹⁶ They became the agents of their own history. Yet, by stressing the commonalities and communal experiences of their collective culture as a means of encouraging unification and self-determination amongst Chicanos, how much did these artists omit their own distinct identities as individuals? Did the representation of a homogeneous Chicano culture endorsed during the initial years of *El Movimiento* accurately depict the reality of the Chicano experience?

⁹⁵ Goldman, “How, Why, Where, and When It All Happened,” 25.

⁹⁶ Tomás Rivera, “Into the Labyrinth: The Chicano in Literature,” paper presented at *New Voices in Literature: The Mexican American*, symposium, (Department of English, Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas, October 7-8, 1971): 24.

The Move Toward “In-System” Participation

According to J. Jorge Klor de Alva, most current scholars of Chicano history correctly identified the cultural nationalist movement of the early period as a “romantic and parochial era.”⁹⁷ Although the unifying strategies of these formative years initially proved to be beneficial, attempting to blend cultural identity and nationalist discourses to create a cohesive and collective movement, “the utopian buoyancy” that sustained the initial national movement inevitably began to wane.⁹⁸ The idealist movement was fraught with problems and contradictions, such as a failure to allow for intracultural differences among such a heterogeneous group of people. With the polemics of the mid-seventies, “the national question” began to gain attention.⁹⁹ Gómez-Quiñones maintained that “‘Nationalism’ as a rubric was not explained or perhaps understood by more than a few as a political agenda throughout the sixties,” and often, Chicano leaders embraced it in the form of radical rhetoric, rather than actual practice.¹⁰⁰ Scholars, such as Daniel Cooper Alarcón, have addressed the tensions and obstacles that arose from the linkage of cultural identity with nationalist ideology.

In his book, *The Aztec Palimpsest: Mexico in the Modern Imagination*, Alarcón devoted an entire chapter to this very problem, by examining what he termed “El Plan

⁹⁷ J. Jorge Klor de Alva, “Aztlán, Borinquen and Hispanic Nationalism in the United States,” in Anaya and Lomelí, eds., *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, 145.

⁹⁸ Ybarra-Frausto, “The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art,” 178.

⁹⁹ In 1982, Juan Gómez-Quiñones analysed the history and accuracy of the “national question” in his essay “Critique of the National Question, Self-Determination and Nationalism,” *Latin American Perspectives: A Journal on Capitalism and Socialism*, Issue 22, Vol. IX, N. 2, (Spring 1982): 62-83.

¹⁰⁰ Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 141.

Espiritual de Aztlán’ and the Paradox of Unity/Diversity.”¹⁰¹ He commenced his discussion by explaining how Aztlán, which had disappeared in the public discourse until it was revived during the 1960s, was proclaimed as a primary symbol of Chicano nationalist ideology. Alarcón traced the rediscovery of this concept to the Denver Chicano Youth Conference, and its promotion by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales in *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*.¹⁰² After highlighting the key points of the manifesto, Alarcón raised three main issues surrounding the Chicano homeland and a unified Chicano community that, he insisted, was ignored or distorted in the characterizations of Aztlán.

First, he claimed that the manifesto justified its goals on the basis of European and Anglo American colonization and oppression, but it did not address mestizo colonization and the appropriation of Native American lands in the Southwest during the Spanish colonial period. The colonization was converted into a legitimization of Chicano territorial rights based on Chicanos’ roles as “civilizers of the Northern land of Aztlán.”¹⁰³ Competing claims to the same region by Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and mestizos of these cultures were not addressed in conjunction with assessments of Aztlán.

¹⁰¹ Daniel Cooper Alarcón, *The Aztec Palimpsest: Mexico and the Modern Imagination*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997): 22-25.

¹⁰² Alarcón actually raised the question of when the exact re-entry of the concept of Aztlán was, by citing the debates on the subject. He claimed that Luis Leal attributed it to Alurista in 1968, and Jack D. Forbes claimed that the term’s first use was in “The Mexican Heritage of Aztlán (the Southwest) to 1821,” a manuscript which was circulated in 1962 by members of the Movimiento Natio-Americano to Chicanos in the Southwest. Yet, Alarcón maintained that most scholars agree that the notion of Aztlán as a Chicano homeland developed in *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* and from there was cast into the public domain. See Alarcón, 22-23.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 24.

Secondly, he attested that Chicano nationalism could not override the internal differences among Chicanos, even if it was in pursuit of group solidarity to fight against oppression by the dominant culture. Different voices, ranging from Marxist to feminist groups, began questioning the role of Aztlán within their own ideologies. Various Marxist critics argued that the cultural nationalism endorsed by Aztlán interfered with the class-consciousness needed for the workers' revolution. Similarly, Feminist Chicanas began to question the patriarchal tone of the nationalist rhetoric, and whether or not they should accept sexism in the name of cultural unity.

For instance, in "Beyond Indifference and Apathy: The Chicana Movement and Chicana Feminist Discourse," Denise Segura and Beatriz Pesquera explored the tensions felt by Chicanas during *El Movimiento*. This friction stemmed from the differences in ideologies between Chicano cultural nationalism and American Feminism. Segura and Pesquera surveyed Chicanas regarding their attitudes towards Chicana Feminism, and as a result, developed the following typology: Chicana Liberal Feminism, Chicana Insurgent Feminism, and Chicana Cultural Nationalist Feminism.¹⁰⁴ While Chicana Liberal Feminism and Chicana Insurgent Feminism focused primarily on the advancement of women and Chicanas, respectively, Chicana Cultural Nationalist Feminism centered on the advancement of all Mexican Americans, not solely on Chicana women. Its objective included "a feminist vision within the ideological rubric

¹⁰⁴ Denise A. Segura and Beatriz M. Pesquera, "Beyond Indifference and Apathy: The Chicana Movement and Chicana Feminist Discourse," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, (v. 19, n. 2, Fall 1988-1990): 86.

of *la familia* and advocates struggle[d] for justice and gender equality while adhering to Chicano cultural traditions, forms, and ideologies.”¹⁰⁵ For many Chicanas in the former groupings, the patriarchal rhetoric of *El Movimiento* alienated them from its overt endorsement. Many of these Chicanas did not desire to adhere to the fixed roles of “La Familia” advocated within nationalist discourses.

Likewise, several essays within the recent publication, *Beyond Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, specifically discussed the estrangement felt among Chicanas in relation to the early phase of *El Movimiento* and its endorsement of cultural nationalism. For example, in “*El Desorden, Nationalism, and Chicana/o Aesthetics*,” Laura Elisa Pérez explained that the patriarchal nationalism endorsed at events, such as the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver in 1969, was a deterrent for many Chicanas, who consequently contested its insular nature. Citing a 1974 essay by Adaliza Sosa Riddell entitled “Chicanas and El Movimiento,” Pérez claimed that the article “constituted an important challenge to the patriarchal underpinnings of the movement expressed five years earlier in Denver—a challenge that [had] crucial implications for the general disordering effects of the Chicana/o movement. ‘El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán’ reproduced the theoretical paradigm of the division and hierarchical ranking of simultaneous struggles below one principal-cultural/‘racial’ oppression. The rest, class and gender, for example, was presumably to be attended to after the resolution of the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 85.

key struggle.”¹⁰⁶ Although Chicana Feminists desired the cessation of cultural/racial oppression, they also longed to divest the Movement of its chauvinistic tendencies, citing the comments and attitudes of its key leaders. For instance, in 1970, when Chicanas asked specifically about female representation within the Movement, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales responded that:

[O]ne of the problems that I see, as one of the grassroots people that came out of the *barrios*, as someone who worked in the fields, is that I recognize too much of an influence of white European thinking in the discussion. I hope that our Chicana sisters can understand that they can be front runners in the revolution, they can be in the leadership of any social movement, but I pray to God that they do not lose their *Chicanisma* or their womanhood and become a frigid *gringa*. So I’m for equality, but still want to see some sex in our women.¹⁰⁷

Although Gonzales attempted to assuage Chicanas’ apprehensions by emphasizing the potentiality of their activity within the Movement, his caveat about women losing an aspect of their femininity undercut the integrity of his message, while simultaneously reinforcing their major concerns. Sentiments, like these, estranged Chicana Feminists, who desired to be recognized as integral rather than as subordinate to the Movement and to its male members.

¹⁰⁶ Laura Elisa Pérez, “El Desorden, Nationalism, and Chicana/o Aesthetics,” *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalism, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, eds. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Mino Moallem, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999): 25. For Adaliza Sosa Riddell’s original article, see Sosa Riddell, “Chicanas and El Movimiento,” *Aztlán: Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and the Arts* 5, nos. 1-2, (Spring-Fall 1974): 155-165.

¹⁰⁷ Rodolfo Gonzáles (normally spelled as Rodolfo Gonzales), “Chicano Nationalism: The Key to Unity for La Raza,” *Chicano: The Evolution of People*, compiled by Renato Rosaldo, Robert A. Calvert, and Gustav L. Seligmann, (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1973): 424-425; Excerpt taken from “What Political Road for the Chicano Movement?” in *The Militant*, (March 30, 1970).

For his final point, Alarcón claimed that even with its link to the past, the ideology symbolized by Aztlán was monolithic and unresponsive to many of the members it sought to encompass. Alarcón cited the writings of Angie Chabram and Rosa Linda Fregoso, who declared that Chicano nationalism envisioned Chicano identity in a “static, fixed, and one-dimensional foundation...[that]...failed to acknowledge our historical differences in addition to the multiplicity of our cultural identities as a people.”¹⁰⁸ Chabram and Fregoso built upon the work of Alex M. Saragoza, who contended that the conceptualization of Chicano history failed to consider the diversity of the Chicano experience, emphasizing a collective Chicano experience that minimized gender, class, and regional differences, while endorsing a romanticized notion of the past.¹⁰⁹

Gloria Anzaldúa was a prime example of a Chicana whose “difference” prompted her to promote the development of ideologies and histories that stressed intracultural differences in class, sexuality, and gender. Women were not the only ones to feel alienated from patriarchal and revolutionary rhetoric of the early nationalist discourses. Homosexuals, members of the middle class, and individuals of mixed racial backgrounds were among some of the Mexican Americans who felt isolated from this discourse. In *Bordlerlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa described the

¹⁰⁸ Alarcón, *The Aztec Palimpsest*, 7. This notation presented Alarcón’s discussion of these authors. For the original statement, see Angie Chabram and Rosa Linda Fregoso, “Chicana/o Cultural Representation: Reframing Alternative Critical Discourses,” *Cultural Studies* 4 (1990): 205.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 6. For the original statement, see Alex M. Saragoza, “Recent Chicano Historiography: An Interpretive Essay,” *Aztlán*, 19.1, (1988-1990): 1-77.

hardships that she endured within her own culture as a lesbian Chicana. She commented about how, for a lesbian of color, her most extreme rebellion to her native culture was through her sexual behavior. In traditional Mexican culture, she acted against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality. As a result of her sexual difference, she feared being abandoned by her culture, La Raza, for being “unacceptable, faulty, damaged.”¹¹⁰ She explained how she and her friends believed that if they were to reveal this aspect of themselves, their culture would reject them. To avoid this, Anzaldúa admitted that they conformed to the values of their culture, and pushed their unacceptable parts into the shadows. Yet, as a result, she became caught between “los intersticios,” the spaces between the different worlds that she inhabited.¹¹¹ She felt that her culture shackled her in the name of protection. Anzaldúa cited men as the creators of this intolerant culture, claiming that males made the rules and laws, while women transmitted them. Yet rather than conforming to these predetermined standards for her cultural identity, Anzaldúa professed that her “Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman’s history of resistance,” rather than the univocal history promoted by a patriarchal discourse.¹¹²

According to Chon Noriega, in his introduction to *The Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts*, the work of this intermediary generation, within which the writings of scholars like Anzaldúa fit, “sought to reform Latino cultural nationalism by divesting it of its

¹¹⁰ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987): 20.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 16-17, 21.

patriarchal, homophobic privileged agency.”¹¹³ This struggle proposed disordering the content of patriarchal and Eurocentric notions of subject, family, community, and nation.¹¹⁴ Among the ways it accomplished this was by shifting away from issues of collective-representation to issues of self-representation, including explorations of gender and sexual identities with Latino culture. The writings of Chicana authors, like Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Sylvia Alicia González, and Chela Sandoval, and the artworks of Chicana artists, like Ester Hernández and Yolanda López, spoke directly to this disordering.

Hernández’s etching, *Libertad/Liberty*, 1976, proved an excellent example of self-representation in relation to cultural nationalism, as the artist depicted herself transforming the United States’ *Statue of Liberty* into a gendered embodiment of Aztlán (Fig. 1.4). Commissioned by a feminist group to develop the cover for its first magazine, Hernández produced *Libertad/Liberty* both as a self-portrait and as a representation of feminist liberty. Within the image, the artist placed herself atop of scaffolding, chiseling out her own vision of independence. She revamped the static image of the western female, as portrayed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi’s *Statue of Liberty* from 1886, by incorporating Pre-Columbian motifs and icons into her representation. Her portrayal of a dynastic Maya queen powerfully contrasted with Bartholdi’s inert *Liberty*, and also established Hernández’ feminist relationship to her

¹¹³ Chon Noriega, “Introduction,” *The Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts*, eds. Chon A. Noriega and Ana M. López, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): ix.

¹¹⁴ Pérez, “*El Desorden*, Nationalism, and Chicana/o Aesthetics,” 25.

ancestral past. Moreover, by incorporating the term, “Aztlán,” at the base of the statue, Hernández revealed her newly constructed female sculpture as the ideal representation of a homeland with freedom for women. Rather than conforming her concept of “nation” to the homogenous Aztlán endorsed in the early phase, Hernández created a state relevant to a Chicana population, divesting it of its patriarchal undertones. For Hernández, Aztlán was no longer a fixed patriarchal conception. As Laura Elisa Pérez maintained, *Libertad/Liberty* was “perhaps the first symbolic representation of Aztlán and the United States as spaces of potential female empowerment, and among the first to represent the hybrid ethnic origins and identity of nation(s).”¹¹⁵ For Hernández, Aztlán represented a community that accepted, protected, and nurtured all of its inhabitants, regardless of their differences.

While the secondary generation promoted a cultural nationalism that encouraged intracultural diversity, evidenced by, among other things, a more intimate and individual relationship to Aztlán, Noriega maintained that by the mid-1990s to the present, “the new generation of scholars is more likely to be critical of the underlying nationalist premises themselves—that is, of the discourses of belonging.”¹¹⁶ As a result, contemporary scholars introduced theories, such as cultural citizenship, which extended beyond the issues of nationalism. Cultural citizenship “names a range of social practices which, taken together, claim and establish a distinct social space for Latinos in this country. Latino social space is evolving and developing new forms,

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹¹⁶ Noriega, “Introduction,” *The Ethnic Eye*, ix.

many of them contributing to an emergent Latino consciousness and social and political development.”¹¹⁷ Cultural citizenship spoke directly to issues of belonging, by allowing for excluded groups to establish themselves as independent communities within distinct social claims, while still placing themselves within the broad context of mainstream U.S. society. It also allowed for the assertion of difference, as William Flores explained:

Cultural citizenship can be thought of as a broad range of activities of everyday life through which Latinos and other groups claim space in society, define their communities, and claim rights. It involved the right to retain difference, while also attaining membership to society. It also involves self-definition, affirmation, and empowerment.¹¹⁸

Cultural citizenship advocated for the fluctuation of culture and the inclusion of difference, a contrast to the static and exclusionary expression of the early nationalist rhetoric. Allied to the theories of Renato Rosaldo, cultural citizenship allowed for “putting culture in motion,” rather than seeing it as a fixed entity.¹¹⁹ Entry into the mainstream eclipsed separatism, as self-determination encouraged the celebration of difference rather than its isolation.

The 1960s Chicano Movement emerged as a retort to approximately 40 years of a predominately assimilationist agenda, promoted by the Mexican American

¹¹⁷ William V. Flores and Rita Benmayor, “Constructing Cultural Citizenship,” *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*, eds. William V. Flores and Rita Benmayor, (Boston: Beacon Books, 1997): 1.

¹¹⁸ William V. Flores, “Citizens vs. Citizenry: Undocumented Immigrants and Latino Cultural Citizenship,” in Flores and Benmayor, eds., *Latino Cultural Citizenship*, 262.

¹¹⁹ Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989): 91-108.

Generation. After years of Americanization, separatism as endorsed by nationalist leaders, like Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, offered Chicanos a space to develop self-determination and identity, previously abandoned in favor of social mobility through accommodation. Yet, the separatism fostered by the first phase of the Movement waned by the mid-1970s, as intracultural differences overshadowed unity. Individuals, such as Chicanas, middle-class Mexican Americans, homosexuals, and mestizos, to name only a few, felt alienated from the romanticized rhetoric of the early Chicano leadership. This fractionalization contributed to the demise of the idealism initially sensed at the beginning of the Movement.

Yet not all Chicano activists lauded this shift away from the ardent cultural nationalism of the early period. In chapter two, I will explore the debate incited by Chicano artist and activist, Malaquías Montoya, and his wife, Lezlie Salkowitz-Montoya, in the early 1980s, when they voiced their opposition to the shifts occurring within *El Movimiento* and the subsequent Chicano Art Movement.

CHAPTER TWO:

The State of Chicano Art: A Sequential Debate on the Effectiveness of Separatism by Chicano Artists

To address 'access to the mainstream' in the arts is to address the topic of success in the market. For this reason the subject has always elicited contrary emotions- primarily desire and resentment- and these emotions have been particularly strong among those artists who do not belong to the social group that produces and supports what is considered 'mainstream' art. Although the term 'mainstream' carries democratic reverberations, suggesting an open and majority-supported institution, it is in fact rather elitist, reflecting a specific social and economic class. In reality, 'mainstream' presumes a reduced group of cultural gatekeepers and represents a select nucleus of nations. It is a name for a power structure that promotes self-appointed hegemonic culture. For this reason the wish to belong to the 'mainstream' and the wish to destroy it often arise simultaneously in the individuals who are, or feel, marginal to it. Depending on origin and background, individual access is more difficult for some than others.¹

The inclination for Chicano artists to work within the mainstream art establishment while simultaneously attempting to adhere to Chicano Nationalistic ideologies varied over different periods following the onset of *El Movimiento*. As indicated in the previous chapter, during the initial commencement of the Chicano Political Movement, the majority of Chicano artists gravitated towards the production of activist imagery, creating artworks with a critical, and often counter-cultural, edge. *El Movimiento* provided a foundation, as well as a network, for artists to successfully produce activist art, while at the same time remaining largely removed from overt co-optation by the mainstream art establishment. Their Chicano Nationalistic views

¹ Luis Camnitzer, "Access to the Mainstream," *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996): 218.

meshed with their actions to remain relatively separate from the mainstream, thereby mitigating any perceived inconsistencies between theory and practice.

Yet, as indicated in chapter one, the Movement progressed through various stages, and as its strength as a cohesive development waned, the proclivity for Chicano artists to take an isolationist approach to their artistic production diminished as well. By the mid-to-late 1970s, the degree of separatism of Chicano artists from the mainstream art establishment dramatically decreased. Among the Chicano population, intracultural differences began to overshadow previous utopian visions of a unified *La Raza*, and mainstream tenets of individualism gained prominence over prior appeals for collectivity. By the 1980s, assimilationist ideologies akin to those of the Mexican American Era increasingly regained leverage, as both mainstream neo-conservative and progressive liberal ideologies of racial colorblindness took root. According to Lani Guinier, Gerald Torres, and Jodi Dean, these theories of colorblindness endorsed a politically coercive approach that celebrated the individual at the expense of the harmony or well-being of the group.² Not only were these proclamations of individualism promulgated by the establishment, they were also advanced by conservative Chicanos, like Linda Chavez, who believed that Chicanos, like the multitude of European immigrants before them, could (and should) successfully integrate into mainstream culture and attain the “American Dream” through the process

² Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*, (Cambridge: Mass., Harvard University Press, 2002); Also discussed in Jodi Dean, *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism after Identity Politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)

of assimilation. Although many Chicano activists continued to denounce these integrationist tactics, the political climate of the Reagan Era, 1980-1988, as well as a recessive economy, supported a push towards “in-system” conformity.

Yet, this gradual move towards integration did not occur without contestation. As indicated by his quotation at the onset of this chapter, Luis Camnitzer revealed the dilemma experienced by many artists, who felt ambivalent towards participation within the mainstream. In his essay, “Access to the Mainstream,” Camnitzer labeled minority artists, like himself, “a schizoid and insecure group,” because of their circumspection with respect to mainstream participation. Describing their (and his own) irresolution, the author claimed:

On the one hand, we are dying to exhibit in a museum or in the best galley. If we don't make it, we see ourselves as failures. On the other hand, if somebody else makes it we smell co-optation. If a white Anglo commentator makes comments about 'minority issues', we perceive those comments as ignorant or patronizing, no matter how well-informed or well-intended. If the comments are made by a minority member within the context of the market, we discount it as the calculated latitude permitted someone who is fulfilling a quota; we don't completely accept the statement as evidence that the mainstream has been truly redefined.³

Directly linked to this indecisiveness and vacillation was the issue of assimilation practices. According to Camnitzer, “[a]ccess to the mainstream really [meant] a mainstreaming of the artist,” and successful acquisition of membership to the mainstream could only occur through a thorough process of assimilation.⁴ Camnitzer

³ Camnitzer, “Access to the Mainstream,” 220-221.

⁴ Ibid.

attributed the desire by minority artists to find their niche within hegemonic culture as the product of colonization. Once these mainstreamed minority artists effectively entered the market, they became the perceived possessors of equal opportunities. Yet, as Camnitzer explained, this access frequently came with a price tag, namely the substitution of cultural values.

Fear of deculturalization and co-optation by the establishment plagued Chicanos, like artist and activist Malaquias Montoya, who adamantly believed that involvement within the mainstream artistic arena nullified the efficacy of an artist's social message. Seeking to explain the general decline of activism by the mid-1970s amongst ostensibly dedicated artists, Montoya pointed "to the susceptibility of economically depressed and recognition-starved artists...[to] fall prey to establishment ploys: strategies abound[ed] for siphoning off, absorbing and even abandoning creative energies."⁵ To placate his growing sense of indignation at the rising propensity of Chicano artists willing to partake in the system, Montoya decided to voice his dissent in a printed critique, which subsequently elicited counter-commentaries in the form of a sequential written debate. This debate, and its in depth analysis, will form the basis of this chapter, shedding light upon the issue of artistic separatism and the plausibility of its sustainability amongst Chicano artists.

Inciting this debate in 1980, Malaquías Montoya and his wife, Lezlie Salkowitz-Montoya, collaboratively composed "A Critical Perspective on the State of Chicano

⁵ Joseph Zirker, *Malaquias Montoya*, exhibition catalogue, (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Institute, 1997): 17.

Art,” an idealistic essay published in the Seattle community-based periodical *Metamorfosis*. In this article, the Montoyas bemoaned the state of Chicano Art in the early 1980s, citing its transformation from an art of social and political protest to an art of increased co-optation by the establishment. The couple began their commentary by reviewing the principles highly extolled during the early phase of *El Movimiento*, praising the move away from ineffective assimilation practices towards separatist liberation strategies, which included the production of political art, art of protest, and art of liberation. These newly developed Chicano art tactics deviated from the traditional tendency by Mexican American artists to develop individual relationships with the mainstream art establishment. According to the Montoyas, the Chicano Art Movement, underscoring the importance of identity, initiated the belief among Chicano artists that “La Raza should be recognized by its uniqueness and... differences should be separated from the dominant culture. Chicano pride, and the right to express it, became important.”⁶ In addition to the culturally specific content of their artwork, Chicano artists also disconnected from the mainstream by moving their studios into their own communities, rather than keeping them within mainstream arenas, such as universities.

Yet, as charged by the Montoyas, middle-class oriented Chicanos in the art world eventually challenged these populist goals, failing to recognize the significant political implications of this type of communal art form. Once contested, the potency of

⁶ Malaquías Montoya and Lezlie Salkowitz-Montoya, “A Critical Perspective on the State of Chicano Art,” *Metamorfosis: Northwest Chicano Magazine of Literature, Art, and Culture*, (University of Washington, Seattle) 3, no. 1, (Spring/Summer 1980): 4.

this art practice began to dissipate. Describing the shift within the Chicano Art Movement, the Montoyas claimed:

...[M]any Chicanos started to emulate Anglo society, and thus started to divert the Movement and what was basic to it....After two or three years of protesting against the institutions that controlled art-museums, and galleries, colleges, governmental agencies and publishers-because they perpetuated a philosophy that Chicano artists were struggling against it, these same artists agreed to become involved with them. When the doors of the museum and galleries opened and invitations were extended, artists went running, despite the fact that Raza communities, which had been the original emphasis of the Chicano Art Movement, rarely frequented museums. The magnitude of the monster that had been the oppressor was not understood and capitalism once again was able to conquer and reduce the ascending power that the Chicano artist had begun to acquire to an aesthetic and academic viewpoint.⁷

In the lattermost part of this statement, the Montoyas were referring to the mounting tendency by mainstream institutions to characterize any artwork produced by an artist with a Spanish surname as “Chicano Art,” regardless of its subject matter or style.

Artworks without political, social, or cultural content gained legitimacy as manifestations of *chicanismo*, simply due to the racial background of their creators. As a result, Chicano Art lost its initial and fundamental purpose, and instead transformed into a popular trend, designated by the Montoyas as “Chican-Anglo.”⁸

The Montoyas largely placed the blame for this transformation of Chicano Art on the establishment. According to the authors, “[t]he system, recognizing the strength as well as the weaknesses of the Movement, put into operation the necessary

⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸ Ibid.

mechanisms to conquer and control it...Although many of the topics, themes, and images of Chicano artists are still coming from a Chicano perspective, they no longer have the same meaning as they did when *chicanismo* was first on the rise.”⁹ While the Montoyas acknowledged the fifteen years that had passed since the inception of the Movement, they claimed that the struggle for self-determination was still ongoing and that it had reached a plateau. According to the authors, the primary factor for the non-progression of the Movement was the co-optation of Chicano artists by mainstream institutions.

Exploring the recent status of Chicano artists, the authors created two primary categories into which Chicano artists fell. The first group of artists lacked a political agenda, believing that the acceptance of its art through traditional avenues benefited all Chicanos. Montoya and Salkowitz-Montoya maintained that “this ingenuous approach has caused their work to be consumed and its effectiveness is minimal according to the original goals [of the Movement].”¹⁰ The second group, on the other hand, understood the detrimental effects of any participation within the system, and therefore, minimized its involvement within it. The Montoyas praised these artists for their separatist stance, their political activism, and their continued creation of “art responsible to this purpose.”¹¹ The artists worked within their own communities, serving as cultural educators through visual means. The Montoyas also commended these artists for

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

bringing the Chicano Movement into an international focus, citing their unification with Latin America and other nations of the Third World. While this notion seemingly was in direct contradiction to the earlier separatist ideas of cultural nationalism, “Por la Raza todo. Fuera de la Raza nada,” as expressed in *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, separatism of the 1980s as espoused by the Montoyas appeared to be limited to the white mainstream, including university shows, gallery or museum exhibitions, and the mass media. According to the authors, separatism was necessary because the co-optation of Chicano art occurred not only by Chicano artists without a political agenda, but also by those who made a conscious effort to oppose art of the ruling class. The Montoyas contended that the art of these individuals inevitably “lost its effectiveness as visual education working in resistance to cultural imperialism and the capitalist use of art for its market value.”¹² To battle this ineffectuality, the authors urged Chicanos to defy the “propaganda of the ‘American Dream’” promoted by the media, and posited a final proposition for the alliance of oppressed peoples to separate from the stronghold of the establishment.¹³

To counter the assessments set forth by this polemic essay, Shifra Goldman, in a 1981 edition of *Metamorphosis*, produced “Response: Another Opinion of the State of Chicano Art.” Opening her essay with a quotation by Fidel Castro, Goldman began with the claim that the issue of co-optation was a prominent problem confronting the radical artist within a capitalist context, and any final solutions “depend[ed] upon basic

¹² Ibid., 6.

¹³ Ibid., 7.

structural changes in the society itself,” a point which I feel is key to an analysis of the problems of separatism and co-optation in the United States.¹⁴ Yet, rather than present an assessment of the specific changes occurring within the U.S. economic and political realm in the 1980s, which may have contributed to the antagonism evident in the Montoyas’ article, Goldman delved into a discussion of the futility of separatism in a capitalist society. According to Goldman, “separatism (unlike resistance) is an illusion...[F]or Chicano artists, as for others, separatism in the production and consumption of art has never been possible even if it were desirable.”¹⁵ Goldman modified this statement by claiming that in the recent history of minority and oppressed groups, a brief period of separatism was required for self-articulation. I assume that for Chicanos, Goldman was referring to the mid-to-late 1960s, when separatism flourished more readily, as it did within other Civil Rights Movements. However, Goldman claimed that by the 1980s, the Chicano Movement attained many of its objectives and could “confront the mainstream from a position of strength and self-awareness.”¹⁶

Unfortunately, Goldman did not investigate what historical conditions of the 1960s might have fostered the viability of separatism, in contrast to those of the 1980s. Rather she seemed to collapse historical moments, by proposing a rather deterministic Marxist analysis of the characteristics of art production within a capitalist society.

¹⁴ Shifra M. Goldman, “Response: Another Opinion on the State of Chicano Art,” *Metamorphosis: Northwest Chicano Magazine of Literature, Art, and Culture* (University of Washington: Seattle) 3, no. 2, and 4, no. 1, 1980-1981): 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

According to Goldman, these properties of production included technology, formal expression, and ideology, which “can be controlled by the individual artist (or even an artistic collective) to a limited extent since neither the individual nor the collective can function completely outside of the social/economic structure of the society in which they live and its dominant ideology. The artist can legitimately assume a stance of *resistance*, but not of separation.”¹⁷

While Goldman was correct in this assessment, her analysis seemed overly simplistic. Although the Montoyas’ argument proposed a purity that was too idealistic for practice, Goldman’s response overlooked a number of key issues relevant to this debate. By presenting a univocal, deterministic characterization of the U.S. capitalist system, Goldman 1) failed to note the economic, political, and cultural transformations occurring within the United States during the last quarter of the twentieth century, and 2) neglected the role of agency in her examination of separatism, a point upon which I will expound towards the end of the chapter.

In illustration of my first point, Luis J. Rodríguez, in the third commentary of this divisive debate titled “Yet Another Response on the State of Chicano Art (Or...Is Being Mexican Really As Good As RainboBread?),” briefly touched upon what should have been fundamental to Goldman’s, or any, rigorous Marxist analysis of the Montoyas’ article, the underscoring of disparate historical moments. Characterizing the period of the 1960s and early 1970s as collectively active, Rodríguez contrasted the late

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

1970s and contemporary 1980s as socially passive. Yet, he modified this characterization by stressing that any criticism of this passivity must be seen in light of present-day societal conditions. Rodríguez noted:

[It] is not to say that we should discourage the criticism of those artists who have abandoned whatever community-based aspiration which previously existed. But it should be done at least in the context of the ever-changing twists and turns of the political and economic life which we all endure. Currently [1982], we are faced with the worst economic crisis since the 1930s one that lacks the usual avenues of maneuverability that capitalism has historically used to overcome past economic turmoil.¹⁸

Rodríguez' statement briefly hinted at the economic transformations occurring within U.S. society by the early 1980s, a factor which should have drastically complicated Goldman's clear-cut Marxist analysis of art production within a capitalist context. These economic transformations included a move away from Fordism towards what postmodernist scholar David Harvey termed a "flexible accumulation."

As Harvey maintained, structural economic changes occurring within "[t]he transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation, has... posed serious dilemmas for Marxists," causing many scholars to abandon any pretense of theory.¹⁹ In his comprehensive study on the postmodernist condition, Harvey provided elaborate analyses of the inherent changes between Modernism and Postmodernism, discussing the characteristics of each phase and paralleling the major distinctions between the two. According to Harvey, "...the long postwar boom, from 1945 to 1973, was built upon a

¹⁸ Luis J. Rodríguez, "Yet Another Response on the State of Chicano Art," *Metamorfosis: Northwest Chicano Magazine of Literature, Art, and Culture*, (vol. 4, n.2, and vol. 5, n. 1, 1982-1983): 6.

¹⁹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990): 145, 173.

certain set of labour control practices, technological mixes, consumption habits, and configurations of political-economic power, and...this configuration can reasonably be called Fordist-Keynesian. The break up of this system since 1973 has inaugurated a period of rapid change, flux, and uncertainty...The 1970s and 1980s have consequently been a troubled period of economic restructuring and social and political readjustment.”²⁰ Defining flexible accumulation as a direct confrontation to the rigidity of Fordism, Harvey characterized this new system of production and marketing by more flexible labor processes and markets, by geographical mobility and rapid shifts in consumption practices, by the revival of entrepreneurialism and of neo-conservatism, and by a cultural turn to the postmodern.²¹

Expounding upon the symptoms of this structural shift, Harvey cited the steep increase in both the unemployment and inflation rates in the U.S., beginning in the mid-1970s through the 1980s, a point that underscored Rodríguez’ previous declaration about the growing economic crisis (Fig. 2.1). However, Harvey furthered his investigation by showing the impact of the shift towards flexible accumulation, not only economically, but also politically and culturally, citing cultural fragmentation, pluralism, and the undermining of national identities as results of the changes in capitalist production. Karen Mary Davalos proposed cultural fragmentation as one of

²⁰ Ibid., 124.

²¹ Ibid., 124, 147.

the reasons for Chicanos' growing lack of unity during the 1980s, and accurately criticized both the Montoyas and Goldman for ignoring it within their essays.²²

While, as Rodríguez stated, increased economic hardships contributed to the ineffectuality of separatism in the 1980s, so did the prevailing neo-conservative agenda. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, even by the 1970s, neo-conservatives challenged minority demands for “group rights,” not on the grounds of reverse discrimination, but rather as “their critique on the illegitimacy of state policies which engaged in ‘race thinking.’”²³ By the 1980s, neo-conservatives proposed a vision of a “colorblind society,” denouncing previously enforced social programs and reforms, and instead, promulgating a position of “individualism, market-based opportunity, and the curtailment of excessive state interventionism,” an ideological stance adopted by some Chicanos.²⁴

In their essay, “A Critique of Colorblindness,” Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres discussed the colorblind paradigm amongst both neo-conservatives and progressive liberals in the last part of the twentieth century, citing race as a primary factor for its instigation as an ideology. According to the authors, conservative critics, such as Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom, rejected race as a significant political or social classification. Guinier and Torres claimed that:

²² Karen Mary Davalos, *Exhibiting Mestizaje: Mexican (American) Museums in the Diaspora*, (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2001): 82.

²³ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986): 127.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 127.

Whether this [rejection] is from a fear of race, from the privilege of their own racelessness, from a strategy of public invisibility that limits the celebration of difference to the private sphere, or from assimilation of race as the remnants of a peculiar social and scientific pathology makes little difference. Race, for these conservative critics and others, can only produce identity politics, balkanization, and a world where government control of social life and its benefits is premised on arbitrary and pathological ascriptive categories.²⁵

The authors continued to explain that neo-conservative advocates of colorblindness defined equality in terms of the autonomous individual, who “has no historical antecedents, no important social relationships, and no political commitments. By structuring the primary concerns around the idea of freedom for an everyman or everywoman, proponents of colorblind analysis locate that atomized individual in an abstract universe of rights and preferences rather than within an obdurate social structure that may limit or even predetermine a person’s choices.”²⁶ These supporters legitimatised their perspective by assuming a set of rules perceived to be fair within a colorblind society. These included the belief that 1) race was about phenotype, rather than about social status, history, or power; 2) recognizing race was the equivalent to adhering to unscientific notions of racial biology; and 3) racism was a personal problem, lacking power or privilege, and thus was simply the result of actions by “people with a bad heart.”²⁷ Neo-conservative proponents of a colorblind society reinforced these rules, even when such regulations concealed and often ignored ingrained relationships of privilege and inferiority.

²⁵ Guinier and Torres, *The Miner’s Canary*, 37.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

Yet, according to Torres and Guinier, neo-conservatives were not entirely alone in their advocacy for the colorblind agenda. Due principally in part to conservatives' successful attack on race-consciousness, some liberal progressives similarly began to adopt the principles of race neutrality, but purportedly as a means of improving conditions for both peoples of color and poor whites. While some of them asserted that any recognition of race was intrinsically disadvantageous, others offered a more constructive stance on race neutrality, maintaining that social programs would more readily advance if they had a universal appeal. Universalism gained leverage as a strategy perceived as necessary for building progressive coalitions and for avoiding balkanization among various races.

While liberal Chicanos, like Montoya, rebuked the colorblind paradigm for its ability to camouflage entrenched racial discrimination and subordination, not all Chicanos readily dismissed the shift towards neo-conservative principles of individualism. Sociologist Martín Sánchez Jankowski identified the neo-conservative attitude of the 1980s as one of the factors that contributed to Chicanos' move away from nationalist and separatist Chicano ideologies of the 1960s. In his essay "Where Have All the Nationalists Gone?," Jankowski explained that during the 1960s, Chicanos held two primary political positions: 1) those who supported the U.S. political system, but wanted the government to assist with ensuring the civil rights of Chicanos and their economic mobility; and 2) those who called themselves Chicano Nationalists and openly displayed disdain for the existing socioeconomic and political structure in the

United States.²⁸ Acknowledging that by the 1980s there appeared to be virtually no Chicanos left who supported nationalist politics, even though sociologists consistently identified nationalism as one of the most difficult political attitudes to abandon, Jankowski began to scrutinize the state of Chicano Nationalism in the U.S. Through his exploration, he discovered that the “air of the times,” the “life-cycle effects,” and the “effects of one’s generation” largely contributed to Chicanos’ maintenance of or withdrawal from cultural or political nationalism.²⁹ Although his investigation revealed that Chicano Nationalism, particularly political nationalism, still resonated amongst many Chicanos during the period between 1976-1986, especially among those who lived in more liberal and tolerant regions, it also uncovered that some Chicanos abandoned their ties to nationalist politics in favor of “self interest.”

For instance, in an interview that Jankowski conducted with Rueben, a 28-year old Chicano business manager from Albuquerque, the respondent claimed:

Back ten years ago I supported nationalism because it was necessary in order for Chicanos to get their rightful opportunities to improve their economic position in life...I supported the Raza Unida Party because they were the most active in pressing for civil rights for Chicanos... After the Raza Unida Party died, I supported the Republican Party because Democrats were still stressing civil rights for minorities and we didn’t need that anymore, and the Republicans were helping business and I was now involved in that.”³⁰

²⁸ Martín Sánchez Jankowski, “Where Have All the Nationalists Gone?: Change and Persistence in Radical Political Attitudes in Chicanos, 1976-1986,” *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. David Montejano, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999): 201.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 228.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 225.

Jankowski's interview with Lisa, a 27-year old assistant Bank manager, elicited a similar response, as she declared:

...Now I am a Republican [because] after dropping any attachment I had for Raza Unida, I didn't want to support the Democrats because I didn't think they really help Chicanos, they just get them to be happy with welfare. But the Republicans had policies that help people help themselves. I helped myself, and other Chicanos should do the same. I think Republicans help you to do that and I support them.³¹

Both of these responses plainly revealed the interviewees' ideological embrace of individualism, markedly distinct from the cultural nationalist rhetoric of the past generation and strikingly similar to the model endorsed by the mainstream neo-conservatives of the current day.

Yet, these respondents' stance towards individuality, particularly Lisa's belief that liberal social programs perpetuated Chicanos' disadvantaged status, was not merely reflective of an adherence to mainstream political ideology of the 1980s. According to Juan Gómez-Quiñones, Mexican participation in the Republican Party reached roughly 30% by 1980, and conservative "notably assimilated persons" began to accept Republican national appointments.³² Some neo-conservative Chicano leaders, such as Linda Chavez, aggressively endorsed the colorblind paradigm, lauding Chicanos'

³¹ Ibid., 224.

³² In his chapter, "Conservatism: New Players and Strategies," Juan Gómez-Quiñones listed the most visible Chicano Republican participants in the national political arena, including Henry Ramirez, head of the Cabinet during the Nixon administration; Fernando Baca, special assistant to President Gerald Ford; Ramona Banuelos and Katherine Ortega, U.S. Treasurers; Nestor D. Sanchez and Cathi Villalpando, Chicano appointees to President Ronald Reagan. He cited Linda Chavez as the "most outspoken Republican appointee... who responded in negative terms to nearly every single government policy intended to support Latinos." See Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality & Promise, 1940-1990*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990): 161-162.

adherence to mainstream assimilation while condemning their nationalistic resistance to it.

Chavez, former Staff Director of the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights under Ronald Reagan (1983-1985) and former President of U.S. English (1987-1988), an organization formed in 1983 to promote English as the official language of the United States, exemplified one of the staunchest supporters of a traditional assimilationist paradigm for Chicanos in the United States. In her 1991 publication, *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation*, Chavez chronicled her experiences and viewpoints regarding assimilationist and isolationist practices among Chicanos in the U.S. over the past decade, arguing that:

[t]he story of Hispanic progress and achievement is largely untold. Hispanics are still regarded and treated as a permanently disadvantaged minority. Their leaders seem more intent on vying with blacks for permanent victim status than on seeking recognition for genuine progress by Hispanics over the last three decades....[A]ttempts to keep Hispanics outside the mainstream of this society-speaking their own language, living in protected enclaves, entitled to privileges based on disadvantage-could derail the progress.³³

The colorblindness doctrine laid the primary foundation for Chavez's pro-active theories on traditional assimilation for Chicanos, as she vehemently believed that Chicanos were simply another American ethnic immigrant group in the United States, who should follow the same path towards complete integration as the countless European émigrés before them. For Chavez, Chicano Civil Rights leadership served as

³³ Linda Chavez, *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation*, (New York: Basic Books, 1991): 6.

one of the major obstacles towards Mexican American progress, since its stance against assimilation represented a major shift in the history of American ethnic groups. Chavez explained:

It would mean that for the first time a major ethnic immigrant group, guided by its leaders, had eschewed the path of assimilation. Every previous group-Germans, Irish, Italians, Greeks, Jews, Poles-struggled to be accepted fully into the social, political, and economic mainstream, sometimes against the opposition of a hostile majority. They learned the language, acquired education and skills, and adapted their own customs and traditions to fit into an American context.³⁴

Chicanos, on the other hand, purportedly hampered by the “entitlements” of the Civil Rights Era, preserved their culture, language and separate identity, in return for what Chavez claimed was the reward of being acknowledged as a minority. According to Chavez, “[t]he effect of this change was twofold: it strengthened Hispanic ethnic identity, since entitlement was based upon membership in an officially designated minority group; and it placed a premium on disadvantaged status.”³⁵ To support her latter point, Chavez charged that Chicano leaders expressed a vested interest in showing Chicanos as perpetually downtrodden regardless of their actual progress, since this positioning allowed for the maximum privileges.

In order to forestall the continuation of these practices, Chavez promoted the elimination of educational and social programs, such as bilingual education, affirmative action, and welfare. In addition, she urged against extending the Voting Rights Act, a law that granted certain voting rights protection, to Chicanos by claiming that the Act

³⁴ Ibid., 2.

³⁵ Ibid., 5.

regarded Mexican Americans as permanent victims of political discrimination.

Building upon the scholarship of Abigail Thernstrom, Chavez instead postulated that lack of citizenship and motivation, not universal harassment, contributed to low voter turnout among Chicanos.³⁶ Moreover, she argued that even prior to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, Mexican American officials occupied numerous elected positions at both state and national levels. This latter point underscored the recurrent theme woven throughout Chavez' text, namely that Chicanos progressed through accommodation practices, and any indications of Chicanos' lack of progress stemmed from the continual influx of first generation immigrants from Mexico, who have yet to assimilate. By presenting herself as opposed both to discrimination and to anti-discrimination policies based upon "group rights" principles, Chavez, like her fellow neo-conservatives, "refocus[ed] the debate on the question of what *means* [were] best for achieving equality."³⁷

Despite the fact that Chavez' stance gained moderate support amongst conservative Chicanos, scholars like Omi and Winant argued that ethnicity-based theories, like those of Chavez, ignored the key issue of *race*, a fact that may have fueled Montoya's anti-assimilationist views. As a steadfast proponent of colorblindness, Chavez based her premises upon the assumption that Mexican immigrants entered into the United States on equal footing to their European ethnic counterparts. If they

³⁶ For the primary account of Abigail Thernstrom's research on the Voting Rights Act, see Thernstrom, *Whose Votes Count? Affirmative Action and Minority Voting Rights*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

³⁷ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 128.

learned English and adapted to American culture, like Germans, Irish, Italians, Greeks, and Jews, Mexican Americans could similarly achieve upward social mobility. Yet, by discounting race, Chavez overlooked one of the fundamental variables hindering Chicano assimilation. As Kevin Johnson asserted, “the assimilation experiences of Latinos tell us much about race, ethnicity, and nationhood in the United States. Mexican Americans in the Southwest, and Latinos throughout the country, have been defined as a race of people different from and inferior to whites. Latinos are viewed as foreign to the nation’s Anglo-Saxon core. Difficulties of assimilation for Latinos persist in part because of their definition as the other.”³⁸ This perception of Chicanos as a racial other has kept them from full integration into the mainstream. According to Johnson, the anti-immigrant backlash against peoples of Mexican ancestry, regardless of citizenship or centuries lived in the United States, testified to the difficulties of assimilation for Chicanos.

In an effort to reveal the complexity of Chicano assimilation into the U.S. mainstream, Edward Murguía published *Assimilation, Colonialism, and the Mexican American People*. Clarifying his rationale behind the study, Murguía explained that:

...[T]he Mexican American people seem to lie in that area between those groups that are so culturally and racially similar to the dominant society that they will assimilate completely in time, and those groups that are so racially and culturally divergent from the majority society that, given present attitudes and behavior, they will never assimilate

³⁸ Kevin R. Johnson, “Melting Pot or Ring of Fire,” *The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader*, eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, (New York: New York University Press, 1998): 429. Originally published in its entirety as “‘Melting Pot’ or ‘Ring of Fire’? Assimilation and the Mexican American Experience,” *La Raza Law Journal*, v. 10, n. 1, (Spring 1998): 173-227.

with the dominant society, but instead will proceed with a decolonization movement of cultural nationalism and separatism.³⁹

Therefore, as the fundamental premise of his study, Murguía sought to establish how accurately assimilation and colonial models fit the reality of the Mexican American experience. Systematically dissecting each of these two traditional paradigms, Murguía began by describing Milton Gordon’s canonical study on ethnic assimilation, listing Gordon’s seven elements of assimilation in order of significance: cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identificational assimilation, attitude receptional assimilation, behavior receptional assimilation, and civic assimilation.⁴⁰ Explaining how immigrants traditionally achieved these various levels of accommodation, Murguía enumerated three American assimilation models developed to define the process of assimilation in the United States. These included: 1) the Anglo-Conformity Model, 2) the Melting Pot Model, and 3) the Cultural Pluralism Model.⁴¹ According to Gordon, the Anglo-Conformity Model, by which the English language, English oriented cultural patterns, and English institutions remained dominant, most readily reflected the American ethnic experience. For Bill Ong Hing, the term “Euro-American Conformity” more appropriately described the Anglo-Conformity Model, given the melding of European immigrants over the years and its position that being an

³⁹ Edward Murguía, *Assimilation, Colonialism, and the Mexican American People*, (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1975): 57.

⁴⁰ Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁴¹ Murguía, *Assimilation, Colonialism, and the Mexican American People*, 18-20.

American “connote[d] white, Christian, European ancestry.”⁴² Regardless of the fact that scholars, such as Richard Alba and Victor Nee, rebuked the validity of Gordon’s analysis of the Anglo-Conformity Model for its emphasis on the “one-sided nature of the assimilation process,” neo-conservative proponents, like Linda Chavez, appeared to support this specific model wholeheartedly.⁴³

Murguía continued his analysis by elaborating upon the colonization model, building upon the scholarship of Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi.⁴⁴ According to the author, many of the processes outlined by the two scholars of Algerian colonization mirrored the experiences of the Mexican American peoples within the United States. Citing Fanon’s belief that the colonial model depended upon the forceful imposition of one group over another dissimilar group, Murguía deduced that Mexican Americans could fit into this paradigm by virtue of their own historical conquest and colonization. As stated by Murguía:

Not only were the Mexican American people conquered, but they were also violently colonized. There is a tendency to disregard the period after 1848 in Mexican American history, a tendency

⁴² Bill Ong Hing, “Beyond the Rhetoric of Assimilation and Cultural Pluralism: Addressing the Tension of Separatism and Conflict in an Immigration-Driven Multiracial Society,” *California Law Review*, (July 1993). *Lexis-Nexis*. <http://web.lexus-nexus.com/universe> (accessed July 10, 2004).

⁴³ In their book, *Remaking the American Mainstream*, Richard Alba and Victor Nee sought to establish a new assimilation theory, one which debunked classical assimilation models and outdated views on ethnicity. In their chapters, “Rethinking Assimilation” and “Assimilation Theory, Old and New,” the authors revisited previous assimilation paradigms, including Milton Gordon’s, challenging the past models’ biases and failings. See Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003): 1-16, 17-66.

⁴⁴ Murguía and other social scientists explored the colonial perspective originally developed by Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi in relation to Algeria, and appropriated it to Mexican Americans within the United States. See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1968); Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965).

to believe that the 1846-1848 war with Mexico was the sum total of Anglo-Mexican hostilities...The stereotyping and denigration of the traditional culture so necessary to justify a conquest occurred in the 1800's and carried over to those who came later from Mexico.⁴⁵

According to Murguía, after Anglo Americans conquered Mexicans, they used cultural and biological inferiority as a justification for persistent suppression. For instance, Anglo teachers made Mexican American children feel intellectually inferior within the classroom, chastising them for speaking Spanish while simultaneously ridiculing them for their inaccurate command of the English language. Moreover, Mexican Americans resided in barrios, controlled but not lived in by Anglos, “who pretend not to notice the unpaved streets, inadequate playgrounds, [and] inferior school buildings...”⁴⁶

The fact that these experiences occurred, not solely in the past but also in the present, triggered scholars of Chicano history to explore the colonial model more rigorously, particularly the paradigm of internal colonialism, in relation to Chicanos of the twentieth century. By the early 1970s, internal colonialism as an analytic model for understanding Chicanos' status within the U.S. gained increasing popularity among academics. The theory first emerged into Chicano history through the research of Berkeley sociologist Robert Blauner and his student, Tomás Almaguer.⁴⁷ As Chicanos

⁴⁵ Murguía, *Assimilation, Colonialism, and the Mexican American People*, 79.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴⁷ Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Chicano History: Paradigm Shifts and Shifting Boundaries,” *JSRI Occasional Paper*, #15, (East Lansing, Mich.: The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, July 1997): 4. For Robert Blauner and Tomás Almaguer's early writings on internal colonialism, see Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Tomás Almaguer, “Toward the Study of Chicano Colonialism,” *Aztlán- Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and the Arts*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (Spring 1971): 7-21; “Historical Notes on Chicano Oppression: The *Dialectics* of Racial and Class Domination in North America,” *Aztlán- Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and the Arts*, Vol. 5, No.

increasingly recognized themselves as an internally colonized group, segregated economically, socially, and culturally by Anglo Americans, other scholars soon adopted the theory to their academic disciplines. These academics included Rodolfo Acuña and Ramón Gutiérrez in history, Joan Moore in sociology, and Mario Barrera, Carlos Muñoz and Charles Ornelas in political science.⁴⁸

In 1972, Barrera, Muñoz and Ornelas developed the notion of the Chicano barrio as a colonized space in their publication, “The Barrio as an Internal Colony.” The authors began their essay by listing what they perceived as the five key ingredients of the assimilationist model, points which they viewed as erroneous. The model stated that:

- 1) the situation of Chicanos is similar in most essential ways to that of European immigrants;
- 2) the Chicano’s disadvantaged political, economic, and social position is the result of factors inherent in Chicano culture and social organization; discrimination is mentioned as a secondary factor;
- 3) through assimilating-that is, taking on the culture and ways of behaving of Anglo society-Chicanos will be able to achieve equal status with other groups in the United States;
- 4) individual mobility through education is a central mechanism in this process;
- 5) the process can be speeded up through organizing into pragmatic, instrumental political groups and engaging in bargaining behavior for marginal gains...⁴⁹

1-2, (Spring-Fall 1974): 27-56; “Class, Race, and Chicano Oppression,” *Socialist Revolution*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (July-September 1975): 71-99.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁹ This listing was directly quoted from “The Barrio as an Internal Colony.” See Mario Barrera, Carlos Muñoz, and Charles Ornelas, “The Barrio as an Internal Colony,” *La Causa Política: A Chicano Politics Reader*, ed. F. Chris Garcia, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974): 285. Originally published in Harlan Hahn’s (ed.) *Urban Affairs Annual Reviews*, v. 6, (1972): 465-498.

To contest these misconceptions about Chicano cultural assimilation and political accommodation, Barrera, Muñoz and Ornelas offered an alternative view for explaining the Chicano urban experience, namely the barrio as internal colony. By adopting this perspective, the authors alleged that the disadvantaged status of Chicanos in the United States was the result of persistent oppression by the dominant Anglo society, a subjugation not restricted to the past, but continued into the present. Rejecting the “latest-urban-migrant theme,” which viewed Chicanos as a newest immigrant group in the long history of the Anglo assimilation process, the internal colony model claimed that “in many cases Chicanos have existed in urban areas for a long period of time and that their disadvantaged position is actively maintained today through the workings of set mechanisms of domination.”⁵⁰ Politically, this status affected Chicanos at two levels: 1) at the institutional level, and 2) at the personal level.

At the institutional level, Chicanos existed as a racial/cultural group in exploited conditions. Like Murguía, the authors claimed that since outsiders controlled the barrios’ businesses, schools, and public institutions, Chicanos continually found themselves in a general condition of disadvantage, including poor housing, low incomes, low education levels, and inadequate health care.⁵¹ The powerlessness felt among Chicanos due to their lack of ownership exacerbated their position, affecting them at the personal level. At the individual level, Chicanos faced obstacles to economic, social, and political mobility, due to their identification with their culture.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 286.

⁵¹ Ibid., 290.

Simultaneously, they felt themselves “under psychological assault from those who are convinced of [their] inferiority and unworthiness.”⁵²

Rodolfo Acuña, in his 1972 publication *Occupied America*, expounded upon a similar point, by describing how Chicanos’ immigrant status failed to improve regardless of generations spent within the United States. He claimed:

In reality, there is little difference between the Chicano’s status in the *traditional colony* of the nineteenth century and in the *internal colony* of the twentieth century. The relationship between Anglos and Chicanos remains the same- that of master-servant. The principal difference is that Mexicans in the traditional colony were indigenous to the conquered land. Now, while some are descendents of Mexicans living in the area before the conquest, large numbers are technically descendents of immigrants. After 1910, in fact, almost one-eighth of Mexico’s population migrated to the United States, largely as a result of the push-and-pull of economic necessity. Southwest agribusinessmen ‘imported’ Mexican workers to fill the need for cheap labor, and this influx signaled the beginning of even greater Anglo manipulation of Mexican settlements or *colonias*.⁵³

Acuña’s reference to the push-and-pull economy hinted to what Murguía claimed made Mexican immigrants different from their European émigré counterparts. According to Murguía, the colonization model viewed the need for cheap and exploitable labor as the primary reason for Mexican immigration into Anglo controlled territories. To bolster this viewpoint, Murguía listed various episodes in U.S. history when the United States admitted Mexicans into the country, but then subjected them to mass deportation after their services were no longer required. First, he cited the period directly following the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle Toward Liberation*, (first edition; San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972): 4.

stock market crash, which marked the beginning of the Great Depression, until 1934 as one of the times that Mexicans were repatriated. Likewise, Murguía referenced the Bracero Program, started with World War II, as a “clear example of the Mexican’s being viewed by the Anglo as fundamentally a cheap expendable implement of labor...They were not candidates for any kind of social equality with Anglos but were merely used as things are used and discarded when no longer useful.”⁵⁴ For the Bracero Program, the United States contracted Mexican nationals to harvest agricultural products, and once their job was completed, returned them to Mexico. Programs like these, according to Murguía, made the assimilation process even more difficult for Mexican Americans, since many Anglos failed to distinguish between Mexican nationals, braceros, and Chicanos. By June of 1954, “Operation Wetback” began, and for the next five years, the U.S. repatriated 3.8 million Mexican illegal immigrants. Murguía attributed this action to the post-Korean War economic recession, but claimed that “[of] all ethnic and racial groups in America only Mexicans and Mexican Americans have been subjected to massive deportation. Even long time American citizens of Mexican descent have been suspected by immigration and border control personnel of being illegals...”⁵⁵ Scholars of the colonial model viewed these prejudicial immigration practices as another instance of colonial exploitation.

While the early 1970s observed the development and staunch support of the internal colonialism model, the late 1970s and 1980s witnessed its deconstruction.

⁵⁴ Murguía, *Assimilation, Colonialism, and the Mexican American People*, 71.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Scholars, like Acuña and Almaguer, revised their theory of the internal colony, under the premise that it was “motivated primarily by the desire to challenge the dominant assimilationist model of the 1950s...[and] was an ideological distortion of the past, fashioned to fit the tenor of the day.”⁵⁶ In February 1981, the Mexican American Studies Program at the University of Houston sponsored *Occupied America: A Chicano History Symposium* for the purpose of contrasting Acuña’s first and second editions of *Occupied America*, the latter which discarded the internal colony approach instead focusing on the role of Mexican and Mexican American labor. Acuña, himself, attended the conference as the keynote speaker.

In the introductory lecture of the conference, Director of the Mexican American Studies Department at the University of Houston, Tatcho Mindiola, Jr., questioned colonialism as an accurate description of the Chicano experience for several reasons. These included: 1) The fact that there was collaboration between Mexicanos and Anglos during the conquest of Texas; 2) The size of the conquered Mexican population in the Southwest was small and concentrated; 3) Most Chicanos living in the United States were descendents of Mexican immigrants who migrated to the United States under their own volition; 4) Chicanos have resisted and rejected Anglo culture, even when it was

⁵⁶ Gutiérrez, “Chicano History: Paradigm Shifts and Shifting Boundaries,” 7-8. For modifications to both Acuña and Almaguer’s initial writings on Internal Colonialism, see Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, (second edition; New York: Harper and Row, 1981); *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, (third edition; Cambridge: Harper and Row, 1988); See Almaguer, “Ideological Distortions in Recent Chicano Historiography,” *Aztlán- Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and the Arts*, 18, (1989): 7-27; *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

imposed upon them, and thus have not been entirely powerless; 5) The Mexican American community has its own class structure, including a petite bourgeoisie and a middle class, which could not have flourished if Chicanos were indeed a completely conquered peoples; and 6) The internal colony, as initially proposed by Acuña, overemphasized race issues to the detriment of class issues.⁵⁷ Likewise, during his lecture, Arnolde De León noted that some critics of the internal colony model argued that the theory failed “to explain gains in light of [Chicanos’] disabilities,” while other opponents pointed out that the model did “not recognize that Chicanos are part of a complex working population comprised of a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, and not solely of colonized Chicanos.”⁵⁸ Even Acuña himself declared that *Occupied America II* represented a break with the thrust of Chicano scholarship, as a reaction “to the ‘Paradigm Fever’ that Chicanos suffered during the 1970s. Chicano scholars pick[ed] a model and then they read selected works to prove their damn paradigm.”⁵⁹ Internal colonialism, viewed in the 1970s with nationalistic fervor, met increasing criticisms by the 1980s, fostering conjecture and new hypotheses on the history of Chicanos, such as the one posed by Chavez.

Moreover, Gonzalo Santos maintained that the internal colony theory was not the only model to lose its momentum. According to Santos, the heated debates of the

⁵⁷ Tatcho Mindiola, Jr., “Introduction,” *Occupied America: A Chicano Symposium*, ed. Rodolfo Acuña, (Houston: Mexican American Studies Program, University of Houston Central Campus, 1982): 6-7.

⁵⁸ Arnolde De León, “*Occupied America I* and *Occupied America II*: A Comparison of the Nineteenth Century,” in Acuña, ed., *Occupied America: A Chicano Symposium*, 28-29.

⁵⁹ Rodolfo Acuña, “The Making of *Occupied America*,” in Acuña, ed., *Occupied America: A Chicano Symposium*, 19.

1970s were increasingly preempted in the 1980s by the widespread labeling of Chicanos as “Hispanic,” and by the treatment of all Latinos as “generic constituents of a single ‘ethnic minority.’”⁶⁰ The 1980s witnessed the “Hispanization” of Chicanos, and the political establishment even characterized the era as the “Decade of the Hispanic.” Yet, according to David Maciel and Isidro Ortiz, this classification lacked validity, as this period reflected a regression from the progress of the past decades. They claimed:

...[W]ith the demise of liberalism and radicalism in the late 1970s and 1980s came a conservative backlash. The advent of a Republican presidential administration in 1980 signified a retreat and the initiation of a dismantling by the federal government of many of the triumphs of the Chicano Movement and other progressive movements. Civil rights, affirmative action, bilingual education, labor organizing, Chicano Studies, feminism, political empowerment, job-training programs, financial aid, and immigration came under attack during the 1980s, years ironically characterized by the print media and political establishment as the ‘Decade of the Hispanic.’ As the decade evolved, it became apparent that it would be many things, but certainly not the ‘Decade of the Hispanic.’ Instead of being years when a consolidation of earlier achievements and successes occurred, the 1980s threatened to become a period of retrenchment and regression in conditions that had taken decades to change for the better.⁶¹

Describing the curtailment of programmatic gains of the previous decade, Ortiz attributed the growing federal cutbacks in 1981-1983 to Reaganomics, which he also cited as the reason for the loss of over 4,000 staff positions in Chicano and Latino

⁶⁰ Gonzalo Santos, “Somos RUNAFRIBES? The Future of Latino Ethnicity in the Americas,” paper originally presented at the XVII Annual Conference of the National Association of Chicano Studies, Los Angeles, CA, (March 29-April 1, 1989), www.csub.edu/~gsantos/runa-article.html (accessed March 5, 2006). Revised version published in Mary Romero and Cordelia Candelaria, eds., *Community Empowerment and Chicano Scholarship: Selected Proceedings of the 1989 NACS Proceedings*, (Colorado Springs: National Association for Chicano Studies, 1989).

⁶¹ David R. Maciel and Isidro D. Ortiz, “Introduction,” *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads: Social, Economic, and Political Change*, eds. David R. Maciel and Isidro Ortiz, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996): x.

organizations throughout the country.⁶² How did the leadership of national Chicano advocacy organizations deal with the change in political climate?

According to Ortiz, associations, such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), and the National Network of Hispanic Women (NNHW), to name only a few, assumed a strategy of accommodation, rather than separatism, to contend with the new era of retrenchment. They “adapted to the hostile political environment and to Reaganomics by, among other things, turning to the corporate sector for funding for organizational activities and creating coalitions with selected corporations,” a move which prompted Ortiz to designate the 1980s as “the decade of the corporation’ rather than as the ‘Decade of the Hispanic.’”⁶³ In fact, in 1981, over fifteen Chicano and Latino organizations proposed grants to 135 corporations of the Fortune 500.⁶⁴

By the 1980s, the Chicano art world also witnessed changes in its stance towards accommodation and in its funding patterns. Public funding to the arts, which had been the mainstay of support for many Chicano artists, was cut under the Reagan administration.⁶⁵ For instance, while many early Chicano films gained financing

⁶² Isidro D. Ortiz, “Chicana/o Organizational Politics and Strategies in the Era of Retrenchment,” in Maciel and Ortiz, eds., *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads*, 108.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 110. For his statistical data, Ortiz cited Kurt Whisler, “How Hispanic Organizations Have Fared with the Cutbacks: A Survey,” *Camino* 3, (1983): 54-55.

⁶⁵ Within his essay, Chon A. Noriega wrote specifically about the decrease in funding for Chicano-produced film and video. See Noriega, “Between a Weapon and a Formula: Chicano Cinema and its

through public means, such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts, “[t]he ascent of Reaganomics marked a turning point for alternative filmmaking. As public funds for alternative cinema were curtailed by the Reagan regime, filmmakers sought to secure other means, from ‘private’ sources, in order to finance their cultural productions.”⁶⁶ City and corporate sponsorship gained prominence, creating a distinct dynamic for the Chicano artist.

In her essay “Contradiction or Progression: The Mainstreaming of a Mural Movement,” Eva Sperling Cockcroft explained how by the mid-1970s, artists who had engaged in militant work began to move towards more personal expressions, assimilating into the gallery system. The Chicano mural movement also witnessed a move towards integration strategies, as Cockcroft explained:

As muralists moved away from militant imagery (following the general mood of a post-Vietnam society) towards portrayals of self-pride and unity, the nationalist phase of the mural movement ended and the institutional phase began. Murals had become respectable...By the mid-1980s, with the decline of an activist political base and the introduction of significant funds to public art (as more and more cities passed laws mandating that up to one percent of the costs of new city construction and renovation be spent on art), community muralists began to compete for projects. This movement out of the neighborhoods and into the mainstream corresponded to the increasing professionalism of muralism, and the desire of artists to have the opportunity to create major and permanent works.⁶⁷

Contexts,” *Chicanos and Film: Representation and Resistance*, ed. Chon A. Noriega, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 146.

⁶⁶ Rosa Linda Fregoso, “The Mother Motif in *La Bamba* and *Boulevard Nights*,” *Building with Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies*, eds. Adela de la Torre and Beatriz M. Pesquera, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 130.

⁶⁷ Eva Sperling Cockcroft, “Contradiction or Progression: The Mainstreaming of the Mural Movement,” *Distant Relations: Chicano, Irish, Mexican Art and Critical Writing*, ed. Trisha Ziff, (Santa Monica, CA: Smart Press, 1995): 203-205.

Once public art gained success within the mainstream, artists began to vie with one another for mainstream commissions. As competition for public space grew, Judith Baca maintained, public art policies became calcified and increasingly bureaucratic. Sanctioned art “lost the political bite of the seventies murals.”⁶⁸

Along with the shift in funding practices, as well as the “Hispanization” of the Chicano, in the 1980s, Chicano Art became increasingly classified by the mainstream within the larger framework of multiculturalism. Defined by Robert Stam as a “pluri-dimensional project,” multiculturalism called for “decisive changes, changes in the way we write history, the way we teach literature, the way we make art, the way we program films, the way we organize conferences, and the way we distribute cultural resources.”⁶⁹ Multicultural exhibitions, such as *Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters and Sculptures*, and publications, such as Lucy Lippard’s *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, revealed the increased popularity of this pluralistic paradigm.⁷⁰

Yet, while this move towards multiculturalism fostered the acknowledgment of diversity, the manner in which it manifested itself within the mainstream establishment, for instance within academia and the art world, during the 1980s elicited criticism from

⁶⁸ Judith F. Baca, “Whose Monuments Where? Public Art in a Many-Cultured Society,” *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995): 136.

⁶⁹ Robert Stam, “Multiculturalism and the Neoconservatives,” *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Political Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 188-189.

⁷⁰ Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990).

numerous scholars. Critics, such as Amalia Mesa-Bains, claimed that it failed to recognize “the categorical differences in race, class, and gender that are below the surface and need to be addressed in order to deal in an appropriate and responsive way with...diversity.”⁷¹ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto similarly challenged this paradigm for its ability to make “a peripheral place for new possibilities without allowing them to challenge the central idioms of ‘Euro-centered art.’”⁷² Explaining how the art establishment used pluralism to accommodate Chicano Art, Ybarra-Frausto claimed:

It [Chicano Art] can be welcomed and celebrated under the rubric of pluralism, a classification that permissively allows for a sort of supermarketlike array of choices among styles, techniques, and contents. While stemming from a democratic impulse to validate and recognize diversity, pluralism serves to commodify art, disarm alternative representations, and deflect antagonisms. Impertinent and out-of-bounds ethnic visions are embraced as energetic new vistas to be rapidly processed and incorporated into peripheral spaces within the arts circuit, then promptly discarded in the yearly cycle of new models. What remains in place as eternal and canonical are the consecrated idioms of Euro-centered art. Seen from another perspective, the power structure of mainstream art journals, critics, galleries, and museums selectively chooses and validates what it projects, desires, and imposes as constituent elements of various alternative artistic discourses. For ‘Hispanic’ art, this selective incorporation often foregrounds artwork deemed ‘colorful,’ ‘folkloric,’ ‘decorative,’ and untainted with overt political content.⁷³

⁷¹ Amalia Mesa-Bains, “The Real Multiculturalism: A Struggle for Authority and Power,” *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. Gail Anderson, (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, c. 2004): 99-109.

⁷² Steven D. Lavine, “Art Museums, National Identity, and the Status of Minority Cultures: The Case of Hispanic Art in the United States,” *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991): 83.

⁷³ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art,” in eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures*, 145-146. Also republished in Gerardo Mosquera, ed., *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996): 165-182.

Gloria Anzaldúa concurred with the sentiments espoused by Ybarra-Frausto, by claiming that Anglos who took on cultural and multicultural plurality issues meant well, but often pushed to the margins the very cultures and ethnic groups about whom they longed to disseminate knowledge.⁷⁴ For Anzaldúa, focusing upon terms like “diversity” and “multiculturalism,” which she claimed was “a euphemism for the imperializing and now defunct ‘melting pot,’” was a way to avoid dismantling Racism.⁷⁵ Those who assumed multiculturalism to be about identity, or sameness among cultures, were “in truth advocating for assimilation and the erasure of differences,” without analyzing power relations or making efforts to alleviate power differentials.⁷⁶

While the initial move towards multiculturalism was a means of acknowledging ethnic and racial differences, it inevitably minimized unique aspects of individual cultures, relegating the robust characteristics of unique peoples to the periphery. These neo-conservative trends, along with severe economic shifts, produced an environment in which Montoya’s program for separatism could not self-sustain. Goldman, in her assessment of the state of Chicano Art, should have acknowledged these historically pertinent developments.

⁷⁴ Gloria Anzaldúa, “Haciendo Caras, Una Entrada,” *Haciendo Caras/ Making Face, Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute foundation, 1990): xxi.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, xxii.

⁷⁶ In her conclusion, “The Mutation of Multiculturalism,” Alicia Gaspar de Alba provided an in-depth analysis of the different critiques on multiculturalism during the 1980s. See Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art: Inside/Outside the Master’s House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998): 199-200.

In addition, as stated earlier within this chapter, by proposing the Chicano artist as bound to the technology, formal expression, and ideology of the dominant culture, Goldman removed agency from her analysis, eliminating the individual will of the Chicano artist. While obviously it is an illusion that individuals can have complete free will, Goldman did not address the resolve of the Chicano to separate as a means of *intervention* into the status quo of mainstream society. According to Malaquías Montoya, Goldman's very literal interpretation and deconstruction of his article's plea for separatism missed its deliberate function to serve as a rallying call and failed to acknowledge various degrees of separatism. As illustrated by figure 2.2, Goldman's vision of separatism removed the individual from the normal functions of everyday society completely, a position deemed unrealistic even by Montoya himself. When asked specifically about Goldman's literal interpretation, Montoya responded:

I couldn't believe it...[S]he brought up...`Where did you learn how to silkscreen if it wasn't from [the establishment].' It had nothing to do with that. It had to do with what were the directions we were going and...do you want to be recognized by the same system that you find so oppressive...[I]f you want to call it separation, yes, you separate yourself in any kind of struggle...If you really believe in the Chicano Art Movement and the Movement to change the conditions in which we live in, then it is a struggle. And within that, you set guidelines for what it is that you want to do...⁷⁷

For Montoya, these guidelines were not fixed, and separatism was not a black and white construct. As revealed by the figure, Montoya spoke not of total withdrawal from

⁷⁷ Personal Interview with Malaquías Montoya, Hart Building, University of California at Davis, October 30, 2001, 4:00 pm.

society, but of particular separatism, episodes that intervened with the status quo of the mainstream.

The Montoyas' ideologies were reminiscent of the early work of Audre Lorde, whose 1979 lecture, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," eloquently articulated a separatist stance as a deliberate strategy to provoke action among "minorities." Disenchanted by the lack of input in feminist theory from poor women, black and third-world women, and lesbians, Lorde challenged the existing patriarchal model of academia by urging those who stood "outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women" to embrace their difference.⁷⁸ Citing mere tolerance of difference between women as gross reformism, Lorde urged minority women to learn how to "stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those other identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.* They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."⁷⁹ As with the Montoyas', Lorde's proclamations reverberated with anti-assimilationist overtones, a retort to the passivity that would soon characterize the upcoming decade.

⁷⁸ Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House: Comments at 'The Personal and the Political' Panel (Second Sex Conference, October 29, 1979)," *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, eds. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, (second edition; New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983): 99.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

After the fervor of the early Civil Rights Movements ceased, activists, like the Montoyas and Lorde, consciously utilized extremist tactics to reverse the social passivity of the late 1970s and 1980s. Unfortunately, Goldman failed to recognize these articulations as calculated strategies, and instead, interpreted them literally, as declarations of faith. Had Goldman been meticulous about her application of Marxism, she would have considered these ideologies within their appropriate historical contexts, comprehending them for their tactical intent. Likewise, had Montoya been forthright about the economic realities of the Chicano artist, perhaps his unrelenting stance would not have been so unilateral. Finally, if both authors had acknowledged the structural shifts occurring both economically and politically in the U.S., they might have produced a more accurate view of the state of Chicano Art in the early 1980s.

Although Montoya's argument proved overly idealistic, was it completely invalid? Did the artist himself follow his own endorsement of separatism? What about his fellow artists? In the next chapter, I explore answers to these questions, by examining three contemporary California Bay Area artists and their unique perspectives on participation within the mainstream establishment. Through this case study, I reveal the extreme philosophical heterogeneity among the triad, even though they share similar backgrounds.

CHAPTER THREE:

To Separate, Assimilate, or Appropriate: A Constellation of Three Artists

What exactly defines a Chicano/Chicana varies greatly and depends largely on the critical posture, the particular camp that each individual of Mexican ancestry has joined. Historically the Chicano/a is the child of originally Mexican parents who are in turn the offspring of Indian & Spanish ancestors. They are Americans and have been on this continent for centuries, they live in the U.S. and not in Mexico. The Chicano journalist Ruben Salazar has spoken of the Chicano in terms of a Mexican American with a non-Anglo image of himself. The Chicano/a who is committed to the social struggle of his community, defies assimilation...¹

As discussed in the previous two chapters, the degree of participation within the mainstream art establishment varied amongst Chicano artists since the 1960s, particularly depending upon the cultural and political climate of the decade. During the first phase of the Chicano Art Movement, Chicano artists more easily adopted an isolationist stance, adhering to the established tenets of cultural nationalism. However, by Phase Two of the Movement, with the onset of both external economic and political shifts and intracultural fractionalization, an increased number of Chicano artists began participating within the mainstream establishment. This move towards assimilation was not, however, wholly deterministic. Involvement within the mainstream, or lack thereof, largely depended upon the political and cultural identification of each individual artist, and his/her ideologies regarding Chicano nationalism.

¹ Carla Stellweg, "Rupert García: Chicaneidad, Art, and Cultural Politics," *Aspects of Resistance: Rupert García*, exhibition catalogue, (New York: Alternative Museum, 1994): 7.

In this chapter, I will be juxtaposing three contemporary North Californian artists, Malaquías Montoya, Rupert García, and Mel Ramos, within a constellation as a means of investigating the different degrees of each artist's participation within the art establishment and *El Movimiento* between the period of the 1960s through 1990. By proposing this case study, I intend to illustrate the extreme heterogeneity of philosophies among Chicano artists, like Malaquías Montoya and Rupert García, who often shared the classification of "radical poster maker." Although mainstream culture bestowed upon them this title, they each have had entirely distinct attitudes regarding assimilation and separatism practices within the United States, making any unification of these two artists under this categorization a generalization.

Mel Ramos provides an intriguing third candidate within this constellation, since he himself is neither of Mexican origin nor heritage. In her study of the artist, Belinda Grace Gardner maintained that the painter is actually the son of a racing driver of Portuguese descent.² One might ask, therefore, what is the basis of his inclusion within this study? If Mel Ramos has no connection to a Mexican ancestry, why did he declare himself to be Chicano? The answer to this question is that he never did. In fact, Mel Ramos has never claimed to be of Mexican descent, nor has he openly subscribed to any ideologies that would associate him with *El Movimiento*. However, Ramos, who considers himself to be unreservedly apolitical, chose a path of such complete

² Belinda Grace Gardner, "Wonder Women, Heroines, Goddesses, Beauty Queens: Mel Ramos' Erotic Pop Power Princesses," *Mel Ramos: Heroines, Goddesses, Beauty Queens*, ed. Thomas Levy, (Bielefeld, Germany: Kerber Verlag, 2002): 7.

assimilation that his true lineage was obscured. Within the abundance of literature written on the artist, Ramos never readily provided his actual heritage to dispel any misidentification. The dilemma that emerged from this accommodation was that some mainstream critics and academics, who will be discussed later in his chapter, assigned him to a specific identity, namely Chicano. By including him within this study, I intend to reveal one unique facet of assimilation, the conferring of an incorrect ethnic identity on an individual. While the United States boasts a melting pot tradition, it leaps at any opportunity to compartmentalize the unassigned.

Finally, my exclusion of female artists within this exploration stems from their exclusion from overt involvement in the early Chicano Art Movement. As discussed briefly in chapter one, Chicana artists felt displaced from the early movement, cast out of specific art positions due to their gender. Shifra Goldman explained that the public phase of Chicano art was “not conducive to much female participation. The problems of working outdoors on a large scale, of being subject to the comments of the passing public, and the strenuous nature of the work in light of how women [were] socialized for physical effort, militated against their participation.”³ Although the Movement called for an end to oppression, it overlooked basic changes in male-female relations and in the status of women. Not until the “privatization” of Chicano art, in which the

³ Shifra M. Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, *Arte Chicano: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Art, 1965-1981*, (Berkeley: Chicano Studies Library Publications Unit, University of California, 1985): 43. This section entitled “Feminism and the Chicana Artist” was originally published in Shifra M. Goldman, *Chicana Voices & Visions: A National Exhibit of Women Artists*, (Venice, California: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1983).

Chicano gallery structure expanded, did Chicana artists increase in numbers. Moreover, for the purpose of this exploration, Montoya, García, and Ramos all share very similar backgrounds within regards to age, gender, and geography, thus making a comparison of their philosophies more parallel.

MALAQÚÍAS MONTOYA: The Cultural Educator

Among the three artists to be portrayed within this case study, Malaquíás Montoya represented the most radical among the triad, consistently espousing both a nationalistic and a pedagogical agenda towards his art production. As revealed by the discussion in chapter two, Montoya's own feverish essay on the state of Chicano Art in the 1980s attested to these specific ideologies. The cultural politics that he endorsed and incorporated into his art works evolved from his own experiences growing up as a Mexican American in the United States. Art historian Ramón Favela claimed that for Montoya, "'this kind of art' had its origins in his childhood spent in the Chicano agrarian heartland of the United States in the 1940s: 'el campo' or 'el campito,' the migrant agricultural labor camp of the Southwest and Pacific Coast."⁴

Born in 1938 in Albuquerque, Montoya recalled that his first encounters with art began with his mother. Montoya, the son of migrant worker parents, attested that his

⁴ Ramón Favela, "Malaquíás Montoya: Postermaker to El Pueblo Chicano," pre-published manuscript, copyright 1985: 4, Malaquíás Montoya Papers, Archives of Amelia Malagamba Ansótegui, Austin, Texas. Printed in Spanish as "Malaquíás Montoya: Artista del Pueblo Chicano," in *Del Muralismo Revolucionario al Arte Chicano: Exposición de la Obra de Malaquíás Montoya*, (México: Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, 1987).

early childhood was materialistically barren, as he lived with his family in makeshift houses in the mountains of New Mexico. While he described these dwellings as “tents...[m]igrant, little shacks,” Montoya maintained that his mother “always somehow made it [their residence] look real nice, real homey...with just found objects.”⁵ By relying upon both natural and man-made materials that she located within her surrounding environment, Montoya’s mother discovered the potentiality and economy of the “found object.” Recounting how his mother adapted her natural findings, Montoya explained that she uncovered rocks in the mountains, which she subsequently mashed to produce white gesso. With this puree, she either painted the interior of their house in its entirety, or combined it with pure earth tones that she scraped from the local creek beds. These new mixtures produced reds and ochres, which Montoya’s mother applied to the walls using fragments of sheepskin. As a means of producing more diverse colors and adding inventive details to her home, she converted man-made found objects into artistic instruments. Montoya recollected:

[T]o tint the colors, you know, she’d go to the dances with my father, and after the dance, she’d bring home all of the crepe paper, and she’d put the yellows here, the blues over here, and all the water would change, because of the dye from the crepe paper. And that water, she would add to the colors to sort of change them. And then...she’d find abandoned inner-tubes, and she would cut little squares and then she’d cut out little images of birds and fish and flowers and then glue it to a piece of cardboard, and she’d make like printing blocks... And then the kitchen...what I thought was like wallpaper was actually the actual tire treads. She would saw the

⁵ Malaquías Montoya, interview with the author, Hart Building, University of California at Davis, October 30, 2001, 4:00 pm.

tires up, and then she [would] just do like a step and repeat, step and repeat.⁶

For Montoya's mother, the power of creation, as well as financial stringency, eclipsed her need for commercial art products, motivating her to adhere to the Chicana rasquache, *domesticana*.

According to Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "rasquachismo is an underdog perspective—a view from los de abajo, an attitude rooted in resourcefulness and adaptability, yet mindful of stance and style...Resilience and resourcefulness spring from making do with what is at hand (*hacer render las cosas*). This use of available resources engenders hybridization, juxtaposition, and integration. Rasquachismo is a sensibility attuned to mixtures and confluence, preferring communion over purity."⁷ Artist and intellectual Amalia Mesa-Bains, further developing Ybarra-Frausto's notion of rasquachismo, created the category of Chicana *domesticana*. For Mesa-Bains, "*Chicana rasquache (domesticana)*, like its male counterpart, has grown not only out of both resistance to majority culture and affirmation of cultural values, but also from women's restrictions within the culture...*Domesticana* begins to reposition the *Chicana* through the working of feminine space."⁸ By utilizing found objects to rejuvenate the familial space, Montoya's mother adhered to the tenets of *domesticana*, an approach that

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility," *Chicano Art, Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*, eds. Richard Griswold del Castillo, Teresa McKenna, and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1991): 156.

⁸ Amalia Mesa-Bains, "*Domesticana: The Sensibility of Chicana Rasquache*," *Distant Relations: Cercanías Distantes/Clann I Gcéin, Chicano, Irish, Mexican Art and Critical Writing*, ed. Trisha Ziff, (Santa Monica, CA: Smart Press, 1995): 160, 162.

fundamentally influenced Montoya both artistically and ideologically. According to the artist, his mother's resilience and inventiveness motivated him at an early age to pursue his interests in the arts.⁹

As episodes at home, such as his mother's ingenuity at domestic renovation, shaped Montoya's philosophies on resourcefulness within the art realm; events at school and within the fields contributed to his ideologies regarding racism, oppression, and classism.¹⁰ Montoya recalled his very early elementary school years in New Mexico as being without linguistic conflict, since the majority of his teachers, even his Anglo educators, spoke bilingually in both English and Spanish. However, as the son of migrant laborer parents, who made frequent trips to work within the fields of California, Montoya attended several different grammar schools in the coastal state, including ones in Kingsburg, Parlier, and Fowler, towns just south of Fresno.¹¹ Unlike the bilingual environment cultivated in New Mexico's elementary schools, the atmosphere in California was largely English-only, which fostered insecurity and embarrassment for Montoya, whose mastery of the English language was minimal.

According to Favela, as "a migrant laborer's child, Montoya was excluded from the traditional pattern of bourgeois childhoods in North American society. More importantly, he was kept out of mainstream American elementary education as well.

⁹ Montoya, interview with the author.

¹⁰ Amelia Malagamba Ansótegui, "Malaquías Montoya: El Artista," unpublished document, 1994: 1, Archives of Amelia Malagamba Ansótegui, Austin, Texas.

¹¹ Jose and Malaquías Montoya, interview with Eduardo Hernández Chavez, Elmira, California, February 28, March 16 and 23, June 20 and 23, 1988, transcript of tape recorded interview, Southern California Research Center, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution: 102.

He was placed in a class for ‘linguistically and culturally under-developed children,’ along with school children classified as ‘slow learners,’ because of their deficiencies in the English language.”¹² Elaborating upon this incident, Montoya explained:

[W]hen I went to the third grade they had a class, and I don’t know how I ended up being in it...[T]hey used to call it for the slow learners, people that had a hard time grasping. But that room was made up of pure Chicanos, pure negros, and one or two whites...So, of course, everyone, you know, referred to it as the mentally...I don’t think they used the MR at that time, but it was the stupid [class]...¹³

Rather than recognize Montoya’s language differences as being one of the hindrances for his academic success within the classroom, Montoya’s teachers instead assumed his lack of progress stemmed from a learning disability.

Yet, the classroom was not the only environment that encouraged Montoya’s diffidence regarding the English language. Montoya’s Anglo schoolmates also mocked Montoya both for having an accent and for mispronouncing English vocabulary. Ridiculing the artist, they constantly would ask Montoya to repeat certain words, namely those that emphasized specific mispronunciations. Not only did these episodes reinforce Montoya’s linguistic insecurities, they also alerted a youthful Montoya to the cultural differences between Mexicans and other nationalities, and the negative perceptions attached to the former. Describing an anecdote from elementary school, Montoya recalled:

I remember this little French [child]- -he was from France I guess- - and he was very shy...But I remember him in one of the classes that

¹² Favela, “Malaquías Montoya: Postermaker to El Pueblo Chicano,” 5.

¹³ Jose and Malaquías Montoya, interview with Hernández Chavez, 109.

the way that he spoke was really, really heavy. He had a worse accent than I did, and I thought, ‘Well, me and this guy, tan siquiera, ya know, we’re going to be partners.’ But it turned out just the opposite. They loved the way that he talked. And at that time I didn’t think much about it. You know, later, I mean it’s just a whole racist, you know, thing that they have towards Mexico, and if you’re from Europe it’s different...Those kind of things left me very alienated from school.¹⁴

Unfortunately, the isolation that Montoya sensed in elementary school continued to persist both inside and outside of academic settings.

Montoya’s feelings of estrangement compounded as the youthful artist began to discern material disparities between him and his Anglo classmates, whose homes, clothing, cars and parents’ appearances seemed markedly grander than his own. He responded to these inequities in several ways. First, Montoya reacted by being embarrassed by his parents for a period of time. Describing this response, Montoya claimed:

My father always had dirty clothes from working in the fields, a battered old car with cotton sacks hanging out of the back and jugs of water hanging from the sides. I started to feel embarrassed when my father came to pick me up from school and to take me to work. How terrible to live in a system that makes one ashamed of what one’s parents are. I should not have been ashamed of my parents making a very honest living the way they did.¹⁵

Second, Montoya confessed to fabricating certain Anglo practices to avoid being stereotyped.¹⁶ For instance, when once queried in front of his class as to what he ate for

¹⁴ Ibid., 104-105. Montoya also described this anecdote in Bertha Villanueva Parra’s “El Muralista Malaquíás Montoya: El Arte Chicano no es Subcategoría,” *Excélsior*, (Martes 31 de Marzo, 1987).

¹⁵ Malaquíás Montoya, interview by Ning-Su and Waldo Nilo, in *Arté*, (Fall 1977): 2.

breakfast that morning, Montoya answered “French toast,” Anglicizing his daily tostada with butter.¹⁷ According to Montoya, these early experiences played a key role in his formation of culturally nationalistic thinking.¹⁸

Although Montoya disliked school immensely, he enjoyed its opportunities for practicing art. His third grade remedial class, while classified as being for “slow learners,” promoted creativity amongst its students, who spent the majority of the week’s lesson drawing, carving wood, and making collages.¹⁹ Due to Montoya’s facility at drawing, his teachers eventually placed him into the regular school system. During his junior year at Fowler Union High School, Montoya took an art class with instructor Farhat Moisey, who in turn became an influential figure in his adolescent life.²⁰ Taking over for the previous art teacher, whose artistic production was commercially oriented, the painter and sculptor Moisey introduced Montoya to the intellectual component of art making. According to Montoya, “Farheigh [*sic*] was really impressive to me because he seemed to be a real artist. He talked about art. He talked about the meaning of art...The artist does not compromise himself; the artist changes society; the artist is able to awaken people.”²¹ Although Montoya and

¹⁶ Malaquías Montoya, interview for Califas, Uncorrected Transcript from Califas Videotape #176-179, transcribed by Philip Brookman and Amy Brookman, Elmira, California, November 6, 1983, Papers of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Box 4, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution: 5.

¹⁷ Jose and Malaquías Montoya, interview with Hernández Chavez, 113.

¹⁸ Montoya, interview for Califas, 5.

¹⁹ Jose and Malaquías Montoya, interview with Hernández Chavez, 110.

²⁰ The precise spelling of Farhat Moisey is unclear, as several sources spelled it differently. This spelling appeared most frequently.

²¹ Malaquías Montoya, interview with Ramón Favela, Elmira, California, August 10, 1984, Archives of Amelia Malagamba Ansótegui, Austin, Texas: 28.

Moisey's relationship was complex, with a father-figurish Moisey often telling an obstinate Montoya how to behave, the art teacher nurtured Montoya's artistic creativity. Despite a major quarrel over an art work during Montoya's senior year, after which the two did not speak to one another, Moisey still presented Montoya with a surplus of art materials, as well as provided him with applications for the entrance into California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland.

While Moisey had high expectations for Montoya in terms of his immediate art education, Montoya had a different outlook, deciding not to pursue additional art schooling directly after graduation in 1957. Feeling ill-equipped for other types of formal training and not wanting to continue working as a manual laborer within the fields, the artist enlisted in what he termed "Chicano Extension School," namely the U.S. military.²² "For me," Montoya claimed, "the military was the only thing that many of us had. We went there to learn a trade, to pick up something that we might get out and come back and be able to, you know, put to use in our civilian life."²³ For Montoya, his first year in the U.S. Marine Corps. was a trial against authority. Having to quietly obey orders from individuals his own age yet of higher rank, Montoya felt depleted of power, causing him to act out and subsequently to receive numerous reprimands. By his second year, the artist decided to submit to his supervisors' commands, even though he thoroughly resented his behavior. Even as he gained seniority, moving from private to a PFC, and then to a corporal, he still detested the

²² Montoya, interview with the author.

²³ Montoya, interview with Hernández Chavez, 173.

division of power amongst the military ranks.²⁴ After three years of avoiding authoritarian-oppressive situations in the Marines, Montoya returned to California, ready to pursue his artwork.²⁵

Beginning in the fall of 1960, Montoya attended Reedley Junior College, where he played football and majored in art. After a year and a half at Reedley, Montoya left the college and found a job in San Jose, California, working for commercial artist Ed Pranger who taught him the techniques of silkscreen printing. At Pranger's "Commercial Art and Advertising," Montoya gained comprehensive knowledge of the printing process, initially learning his new skill as an apprentice and then as a full-time artist. After several years of working there, Pranger suggested that the artist enroll in a number of commercial art courses at the local community college, as a means of improving his commercial drawing technique.

Accordingly, Montoya enrolled in San Jose City College, where he took several courses in commercial art, including graphic design and drawing. At SJCC, he met art professor, Joseph Zirker, who influenced Montoya's direction in art and gave him the confidence to regard his art as an important social tool in its own form.²⁶ While Zirker explained that he could supply Montoya with the necessary artistic utensils and teach him how to use them, he maintained that Montoya himself had to provide the content,

²⁴ Ibid., 234.

²⁵ Malaquías Montoya, Unpublished Resume, 1976, Papers of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Box 16, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution: 2.

²⁶ Montoya, interview with Ning-Su and Nilo, 2.

namely his life stories, his upbringing, and his identity.²⁷ Describing his relationship with Zirker, Montoya recalled:

I fell in love with Joe. He was just this incredible, incredible human being...[H]e talked to me about art, he talked to me about the Mexican Muralists, he talked to me about, you know, the responsibility of the artist...[H]e really introduced me to the whole idea of culture, the whole idea of value, what it is that you do...[and] how injustices come about.²⁸

Although Montoya practiced commercial silkscreening as his livelihood, he always perceived himself foremost as an artist. The notion of art production solely for monetary gain eluded him, a stance that was reinforced in 1965 when Montoya faced what he deemed “a traumatic experience” in his life.²⁹

Inspired by Zirker and proud of his success as a silkscreen printer, Montoya decided to visit his former high school art teacher, Farhat Moisey. Hoping to tell Moisey what an inspiration he had been to Montoya in high school, the artist tracked down his past instructor, finally locating him at a booth at the Marin Art Festival. Teary eyed from the emotion of seeing this influential figure, Montoya approached Moisey with the intent of expressing his deepest gratitude. Unfortunately, after reintroducing himself to an oblivious Moisey and clarifying their previous association, Montoya had to listen to Moisey boast about the financial success of his sculptures, which were selling for two and three thousand dollars a piece. Describing the reunion and his subsequent disappointment with this encounter, Montoya explained:

²⁷ Montoya, interview with Hernández Chavez, 191.

²⁸ Montoya, interview with the author.

²⁹ Montoya, interview with Favela, 31.

I did talk to him [Moisey] for about just a couple of minutes, just to hear him tell me that Marin was where the money was at, and that he just sold this. I just wanted to break out crying....I took off. All the way back to the car my eyes were swelled with tears. Making this great sacrifice to go and tell this man who I had this big clash with back in high school that I realized now everything that he said was true. He's the one that talked about things like that you don't prostitute your art, that your art can change society, and all that. Here he was real hippie-looking, beard and telling me, 'oh, I sold this for this much, and sold this for this much...' So that was quite, a traumatic experience.³⁰

This incident underscored Montoya's perception of the artist as cultural educator, a role that he would endorse while at SJCC and for decades to come.

Heeding the advice of Zirker and witnessing the emergence of *El Movimiento* at SJCC, Montoya began to adopt subject matter with which he himself was extremely familiar. *Campesino*, 1967, and *Ajua*, 1968, both produced during his time in San Jose, revealed Montoya's adeptness at the silkscreen and offset processes and his affinity for the issues of the political movement (Figs. 3.1-3.2). In *Campesino*, Montoya revealed his personal relationship to manual labor, while also siding with the existing plight of the Farmworkers, who were picketing in towns located near the artist. Likewise, "Ajua" also held a special connection to the artist. According to Montoya, "Ajua" was a personality that he fabricated, who occupied many of his posters. Representing the figure in various roles, Montoya morphed "Ajua" into the protagonist of his images, illustrating the personage as a worker, holding or leaning on a machete, or as an activist,

³⁰ Ibid.

addressing a rally.³¹ Montoya explained that he often utilized the character when he needed to produce an illustration for an article or a newspaper.

Starting in the mid-1960s, Montoya created images for Chicano-related newspapers, magazines, and brochures, such as *La Palabra*, a pamphlet about the Chicano life at SJCC.³² He also designed letterhead for various local organizations, as well as buttons and posters for political events, like the Chicano walk-outs. In fact, Montoya recollected that producing his SJCC walk-out poster, in 1968, resulted in his being fired by Pranger. According to Montoya, he would often print his personal silkscreens at the studio during off hours. After producing his walk-out poster one evening, Montoya went to work the subsequent day, printing alongside an inquisitive Pranger, who queried the artist about the shadowed image on the printing screen. Unfortunately, the silkscreen stencil of Montoya's demonstration poster left a slight silhouette on Pranger's equipment. Montoya explained to Pranger that he had generated the image for a protest at school. Although Pranger did not chastise Montoya for silkscreening this specific artwork, he did question the artist about his satisfaction with the job. Montoya recollected that "[Pranger] said, 'You know you just don't seem to be happy here anymore...you don't smile anymore, you've lost that sense of humor...I remember when you walked in here that smile that you had is what actually what [*sic*] made me hire you, you know. You were just such a pleasant fellow. Now you seem to

³¹ Montoya, interview with Hernández Chavez, 184.

³² *Ibid.*, 183.

be angry and mad all the time.”³³ Part of the hostility perceived by Pranger stemmed from Montoya’s frustration with his boss’s racial insensitivity. Montoya recalled several instances where visiting salesmen would come into the studio to chat with Pranger, and in casual conversation, would make deprecating jokes about Mexicans. When Montoya finally confronted Pranger about this behavior, his boss merely claimed the artist had lost his sense of humor. Situations like these, as well as the “walk-out” silkscreen incident, finally resulted in Montoya’s termination, ending a six-year stint at the commercial studio.

Montoya, however, was not disappointed with his departure from Pranger in 1968, as the 29-year old artist immediately relocated to Berkeley, California, where he enrolled in U.C. Berkeley to finish his undergraduate degree. On a recommendation from Joe Zirker, Montoya enrolled in a course with Elmer Bischoff, a strong figurative painter. Montoya, however, would soon abandon the class two to three weeks after the commencement of the semester, when he learned of the political strikes beginning on campus and locally. According to Montoya, “[d]uring my two years in Berkeley, at the University from 1968-1970, I hardly went to school, because of the grape strike, the Third-World strike, and the reconstitution of classes. All the time I was there I used my talent-my art work to help in the different causes.”³⁴ Although he missed classes, he produced an opus of posters that he used to promote certain political activities or sold to raise money in various fundraising efforts. For instance, during this period, Montoya

³³ Ibid., 189.

³⁴ Montoya, interview with Ning-Su and Nilo, 2.

produced numerous silkscreens to aid the protesting farmworkers. In *Support the Farmworkers*, 1968, Montoya urged individuals to donate supplies, including clothes and food, to striking migrant laborers, identifying a locale in Berkeley as a drop-off center (Fig. 3.3). In *Benefit for Migrant Legal Services*, c. 1970, Montoya continued his connection with the U.F.W., creating an announcement poster that publicized an “evening with Cesar Chavez in Solidarity with the Farmworkers” (Fig. 3.4).

As a cultural educator, Montoya produced these images to address his activist concerns, yet, as an artist, he still wanted to pay his respects to Bischoff, who allowed him to leave his course to pursue his political needs. Wanting to show his professor that he had not been indolent, Montoya collected his work from the semester and revealed it to Bischoff, who in turn claimed that the artist had completed more work than most of the students who attended the class.³⁵

For Montoya, his time at Berkeley altered the content of his posters, most of which had been primarily commercial when he worked for Pranger. Many of the organizations at U.C. Berkeley needed posters to announce specific events, and Montoya claimed that “doing [these] posters was the first time that I had actually produced designed posters of my own, or for an organization that I believed in, unlike the ones that I was doing in San Jose where we were doing commercial posters.”³⁶ Not only did Montoya create images for these associations, he also joined many of them,

³⁵ Montoya, interview with the author.

³⁶ Montoya, interview for Califas, 11.

including the Third World Liberation Front and the Media Project.³⁷ In addition to his direct involvement with these groups, Montoya also co-created a collective of his own in 1969, called MALAF (the Mexican American Liberation Art Front).

In addition to Montoya, MALAF consisted of a number of Bay Area Chicano artists, including Montoya's brother José Montoya, Manuel Hernández Trujillo, René Yáñez, and Estéban Villa. Members of the group remained together for only a year, though during that time, they "held widespread discussions among Chicano artists seeking definitions and a philosophy of Chicano art."³⁸ According to Montoya, the then-current political situation dictated a need for artists to reassess their positions within the movements. Montoya explained:

We [MALAF] wanted to discuss what our role was in the struggle as artists. What did we do? It was an education for ourselves. Up to this point we had been following the traditional art scene. Our aspirations were to become known in museums and galleries, and have our works published in art history books. In our discussions, we started to realize that we were an important part of The Movement, we were the visual side of The Movement. We had become the producers of the visual education. We could no longer remain in our studios and hang out in cafes and philosophize about art. We were good at painting, we were good at making images, so our job was to be in the community and to try to decentralize the arts that were happening in the universities. Our studios moved into the community and we worked there. We wanted to help people develop their art, and it was working effectively.³⁹

³⁷ Sam Martin, "Art Fights the Power: The Liberating Artwork of Malaquías Montoya," *The Austin Chronicle*, Arts and Leisure section, Vol. 17, issue 51, (August 31, 1998), <http://www.austinchronicle.com/issues/vol17/issue51/arts.montoya.html>, (accessed May 17, 2004).

³⁸ Shifra Goldman, "A Public Voice: Fifteen Years of Chicano Posters," *Art Journal* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 52.

³⁹ Montoya, interview with Ning-Su and Nilo, 2.

As illustrated by this statement, MALAF's goals specifically centered upon the function of the artist. Meeting every Friday night, the group would carry on a discussion, as well as hold a collective critique of each member's individual artwork. According to Montoya, the gatherings were extremely positive events, as they provided a realm for these visual educators to discuss their work, their political allegiances, and their own personal experiences as Chicanos.⁴⁰ Some of the artists shared common backgrounds, including their farmworking childhoods and their stints in the military, while others reported on unique aspects of their lives, such as their upbringing in or excursions to Mexico. For instance, Yáñez, familiar with Mexican art history, conversed about the 1920s collective, the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors, a group which upheld the notion of revolution in art and in politics. He also discussed the 19th century visual satirist, José Guadalupe Posada, whose mass-produced illustrations commented upon the social ills of the century. Through these teachings, Yáñez brought unique elements into the graphics of MALAF.⁴¹ As artists who all received academic training in Western European art, the members of MALAF felt inherent discontent with its canonical art imagery. Montoya contended that "all of us had expressed at these meetings the alienation that we felt in the classroom, you know, while we were students, which later, it was just a simple thing, why we felt this alienation was that imagery or symbols or forms that make an [A]nglo art instructor happy or sad were not the same symbols or forms that made us happy and sad...[W]hat MALAF did for a lot

⁴⁰ Montoya, interview for Califas, 14.

⁴¹ Montoya, interview with Favela, 60.

of us, for me especially, was that it started to validate my imagery, the things that I was doing, because they were very, very real.”⁴²

With their own personal lexicon of visual imagery, the members of MALAF adopted the poster as their type of public art. While the artists acknowledged the history behind Mexican muralism and its connection to the current Movement, they also recognized that muralism was not the easiest form of communication, due to the location restrictions on the actual work. The silkscreen, on the other hand, could be mass-produced and distributed to numerous communities, sending a visual announcement or philosophy throughout the state. By moving their artwork into the local neighborhoods, the visual educators of MALAF attempted to decentralize the arts occurring at the University. This approach allowed for dialogues to ensue among residents of the communities, rather than merely among artists, critics, and art professors.

Unfortunately, the positive aspects of being community visual educators, such as the proximity that they shared with their audience, also turned into negative features, as these aspects often negated any glamorous characteristics usually afforded to the artist. Montoya explained, “[Y]ou weren’t in the limelight, you weren’t exhibited in the galleries,...you weren’t being, you know, published in magazines, and no one gave a damn about you if you were out in the community....[S]o it wasn’t very romantic.”⁴³

This lack of luster was one of the factors that contributed to the disbanding of the group

⁴² Montoya, interview for Califas, 16.

⁴³ Ibid., 22.

by the early 1970s. According to Montoya, two agendas formed among the MALAF members. Some in the group felt that the community was where it should display its artwork, while others desired to enter into the established art realm. Recalling this roadblock, Montoya described one member stating, “I’m protesting to get into the museums,” while others claimed that, “we’re protesting to stay out of them.”⁴⁴ As a result, MALAF disbanded, and its group members proceeded in their own directions.

Montoya continued his career as a student at U.C. Berkeley, and during the last quarter of his senior year, accepted a position with the newly formed Ethnic Studies Department to teach a course in printmaking. U.C. Berkeley’s Ethnic Studies had just formed as a concession of the Third World Strike. Recognizing that this teaching position would provide him a platform on which he could talk to students while also producing artwork, he consented to the offer. Although the course was co-sponsored by the Art Department, Montoya rebuffed a proposition to house the class within its facilities. With the help of the chairman of the Ethnic Studies Department, Montoya moved the workshop off-campus, holding it at what later became the Chicano Art Center, off of Telegraph Avenue and across from the People’s Park. For Montoya, the workshops provided an ideal situation, as they catered to all types of people without much University involvement.⁴⁵ By placing the course within the neighboring area, Montoya felt the University was reaching out, helping to provide the community with a necessary service.

⁴⁴ Montoya, interview with the author.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Montoya's method of instruction was in direct opposition to his fellow instructors on campus. Describing his philosophies on teaching, Montoya explained:

It [my class] was open to anyone who wanted to come....I did everything in that class that I objected to in my art classes when I was a student. I objected to assignments in art classes...I gave no assignments. I objected to grades also. So I gave everyone A's...in other words, every student had a[n] A when he came there. And, he could work himself down by not coming to class, but not by not working. See, I felt that a student, if he came to class, he was going to learn something. If nothing more, by sitting down and having a discussion...about something that happened somewhere unrelated to the art class. But that the interchange between two human beings, there was learning taking place.⁴⁶

While some students accused Montoya of abandoning his teaching duties, since he did not instruct them in a traditional manner, Montoya claimed that he indeed taught by trying to foster creativity amongst his pupils. By giving students the freedom to produce posters of their own, he sought to restructure the whole education system, which he viewed as an organization "geared against developing creative, sensitive people."⁴⁷ Due to the success of the workshops, Montoya stayed in this position for the next four years, teaching at U.C. Berkeley until 1974. His departure from U.C.B. stemmed from his growing perception that the Chicano Studies Department, under pressure from the University itself, had conformed to the standards of the rest of the institution, thereby contradicting the initial purpose of the Department as an alternative educational space for Third-World students.

⁴⁶ Malaquías Montoya, interview with Rita Torres, for UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies 182, Oral History Research Methods, Silkscreening Workshop, Comexaz, 3210 East 14th Street, Oakland, California, (March 15, 1977): 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 13.

After his teaching arrangement at U.C.B. ended, Montoya went to work as part of the core-faculty at Berkeley's University Without Walls, an alternative school that developed in conscious opposition to the growing hegemony of the comprehensive research university.⁴⁸ According to Montoya, the U.W.W. "was a fantastic concept, and...a place where people really, really, truly, truly learn[ed]. Because, the people that went to U.W.W. were there on their own. There were people who dropped out of universities...[T]hey studied, with no one telling them to study or what to study. They studied, they investigated life, they investigated things that were going on, on their own."⁴⁹ This progressive educational arena, with no classrooms and no formal teachers, brought in people who were "so self-motivated, that the [traditional] University couldn't contain them."⁵⁰ Its participants included numerous activists, members of the Black Panther Party, and incarcerated convicts, among others, who took correspondence courses. Unfortunately, U.W.W. Berkeley closed in 1976 as a result of an F.B.I. investigation into fiscal mismanagement and a subsequent Grand Jury hearing. "It was very natural that the F.B.I. would figure out a way of getting in there," Montoya explained, "and they got in by saying well, there were funds that had been misappropriated."⁵¹ Since the school's funding came from federal sources, the F.B.I. was entitled to examine its appropriations. Although the University closed, Montoya

⁴⁸ Rick Hendra and Ed Harris, "Unpublished Results: The University Without Walls Experiment," unpublished essay from the University of Massachusetts, 2002, <http://www.unix.oit.umass.edu/~henra/Unpublished%20Results.html>, (accessed November 22, 2005).

⁴⁹ Montoya, interview with Torres, 3.

⁵⁰ Montoya, interview with the author.

⁵¹ Ibid.

continued to teach workshops, including the Alameda County Neighborhood Arts Program and the Chicano Art Workshop (Taller de Artes Grafica) in Oakland.⁵²

While he instructed classes at the various localities during the 1970s, Montoya also created a wealth of artwork, primarily produced to serve the community, to endorse his political and cultural agenda, and to assist like-minded organizations. These works took the form of magazine and pamphlet covers, letterhead designs, buttons, murals, and of course, silkscreen posters. For instance, some of Montoya's most renowned early images were posters that spoke directly against the Vietnam War.

In the early 1970s, after the United States invaded Cambodia, the anti-war movement flourished, particularly in Northern California. According to Montoya, “[M]ost of the universities, especially around the Bay Area, were converted into poster factories, with the production of an incredible amount of anti-war posters.”⁵³ In his offset, *Viet Nam/Aztlán*, from 1973, Montoya disclosed his negative sentiments regarding the War in Indochina, calling Chicanos to join with Vietnamese in international solidarity (Fig. 3.5). To illustrate the connection between the two oppressed groups, Montoya rendered profile portraits of a Vietnamese soldier and a Chicano activist, fusing them together at the back of their heads. Above and below this portrayal, Montoya placed the forearms of individuals from four different races, each with their hands balled into fists. The rendering of these fists pressed against each other

⁵² Malaquías Montoya, Unpublished Resume, 1978, Papers of Malaquías Montoya, Archives of Gilberto Cárdenas, University of Notre Dame: 3-4

⁵³ Martin, “Art Fights the Power.”

reinforced the camaraderie among these distinct yet allied peoples. Moreover, the text, “Viet Nam Aztlán Fuera,” boldly underscored Montoya’s desire for the U.S. to leave Southeast Asia. According to Carol Wells, while few U.S. posters supported an absolute Vietnamese victory, as that would have meant greater G.I. casualties, they often demanded a U.S. evacuation from the then-current political situation. Montoya positioned his work in this manner, while also calling for an alliance between marginalized groups. Wells deemed Montoya’s *Viet Nam/Aztlán* a “striking example of solidarity imagery...which links and identifies the Chicano struggle with the Vietnamese struggle.”⁵⁴ As Third World Liberation struggles generated political consciousness that crossed race, class, and ethnic boundaries, international solidarity began to appear more regularly within Chicano graphic art.⁵⁵

Besides *Viet Nam/Aztlán* and his other anti-war posters, like *La Batalla Esta Aquí*, 1969, and *Chicano Moratorium*, 1970, Montoya received commissions to produce silkscreens and offsets for various associations, colleges, and events (Figs. 3.6-3.7). For instance, *Benefit Olga-Unidad 7*, from May 1975, and *Danny Trevino*, from March 1976, both promoted events honoring two unjustly treated individuals (Figs. 3.8-3.9). Olga Talamante, a Chicana from Gilroy, California, was one of the 1200 political prisoners being held under the state of siege laws in Argentina during the mid-1970s. While at a party in the Latin American country, Talamante was arrested with twelve of

⁵⁴ Carol A. Wells, “Viet Nam3,” *Decade of Protest: Political Posters from the United States, Viet Nam, Cuba, 1965-1975*, (Santa Monica: Smart Art Press, 1996): 19.

⁵⁵ Holly Barnet-Sanchez, *Just Another Poster? Chicano Graphic Arts in California*, exhibition brochure, (Austin: Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, 2000): 11.

her Argentine friends, tortured for several days by the federal police, and held for months without formal charges. The Olga Talamante Defense Committee maintained that Talamante and her counterparts were “the victims of a far-reaching CAMPAIGN OF REPRESSION by the Isabel Peron regime to destroy all opposition to her unpopular government.”⁵⁶ Montoya’s poster served as a promotion for a dance concert featuring “Unidad 7” to benefit Olga Talamante and her defense.

Likewise, *Danny Trevino* also functioned as an announcement, this one publicizing a rally protesting the San Jose Police Department. In 1976, officers of the department shot Latino youth Danny Trevino, while investigating a complaint about domestic violence. The police believed Trevino was reaching for a gun that he in fact did not have. The Latino community, angered and frustrated by the situation, held several weeks of protests.⁵⁷ Montoya’s poster announced one of these many rallies, specifically the “March for Justice” at Woodmead Park.

In addition to commissioned posters, Montoya’s assignments also included designing logos and magazine covers for groups with which Montoya sympathized. Creating logos primarily for letterheads, business cards, certificates, t-shirts, and posters, Montoya fabricated designs for organizations like the Chicano Studies Department of the Berkeley Unified School District, the University Without Walls

⁵⁶ Olga Talamante Defense Committee, *Olga Talamante Defense Night*, flyer, July 1975, Papers of Malaquías Montoya, Archives of Gilberto Cárdenas, University of Notre Dame.

⁵⁷ Terry Christensen, “San Jose Becomes the Capital of Silicon Valley,” *San Jose: A City for All Seasons*, Judith Henderson, ed., (Encinitas, Calif.: Heritage Press, 1997), http://www2.sjsu.edu/depts/PoliSci/faculty/Christensen.sj_history.htm, (accessed March 12, 2006).

Berkeley, the Academia Emiliano Zapata in Oakland, the Comité de México y Aztlán (COMEXAZ) in Oakland, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council in Oakland, the Oakland Centro Legal de La Raza, La Raza Educators Association in Oakland, the Chicano-Vietnam Project in Oakland and New York, the Comité del Barrio in Oakland, the Fruitvale Committee for Human and Constitutional Rights in Oakland, the South Columbia Rural Health Clinic in Pasco, Washington, and the Barrio Assistance Program at Stanford University (Figs. 3.10-3.20). As revealed in figure 3.10, Montoya's logos not only textually introduced the organization that they represented, but also visually announced the specific group's mission through pictorial representation. By placing the silhouette of a family against the capital building, Montoya reinforced that the Fruitvale Committee would advocate for the rights of its clientele.

In the same manner as his logo designs, Montoya rendered services for the art illustration of book, magazine, and pamphlet covers. Choosing publications with which he aligned himself philosophically, Montoya produced cover and internal images for books like *El Dia de la Raza*, *El Plan de Santa Barbara: A Chicano Plan for Higher Education*, *And the Earth Did Not Part, A Mexican American Chronicle*, *El Espejo-The Mirror*, *Parameters of Institutional Change: Chicano Experiences in Education*, and *The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove*. Journals, newspapers, and pamphlets, which also featured Montoya's designs, included *El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought*, *Journal of Educational Change*, *Third World Community Health*

Care in the Bay Area, Edcentric (Journal by the National Student Association of the Center for Educational Reform), *NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America) Report on the Americas*, *NACLA's Las Maquiladoras en Mexico*, *NACLA's Latin American and Empire Report*, *The Organizer: On Trade Unions and the Rank and File Movement*, *Socialist Review*, *La Raza*, *La Voz del Pueblo*, and *Gambit* (Public Broadcasting Service's Program Guide), to name but a few (Figs. 3.21-3.25). As evidenced by their titles, these publications upheld Montoya's conviction that his imagery "should be a reflection of [his] political beliefs-an art of protest."⁵⁸ While Montoya's early work from the Pranger years may have been commercial, consumer-oriented productions, these images revealed the exact opposite, reflecting Montoya's explicitly non-profit, socially oriented philosophies. In fact, Montoya maintained that his works actively countered those of the mainstream media, claiming:

My images of empowerment are intended to confront the multitude of images of disempowerment given to us by our daily media. Images that disguise reality, manipulate consciousness, and lull the creative imagination to sleep. In my images, I pay tribute to those who struggle on a daily basis. I pay homage to the workers and I aggrandize their efforts. I celebrate small and large victories of the human spirit. I depict people in control of their lives working together to change and transform their reality.⁵⁹

As a cultural educator, he reserved his services primarily for those within the community, those who assisted the community or those who shared his beliefs on

⁵⁸ Malaquías Montoya, "Philosophy," unpublished document, n.d., Papers of Malaquías Montoya, Archives of Amelia Malagamba Ansótegui, Austin, Texas. Reprinted as "Statement," official website of Malaquías Montoya, www.malaquiasmontoya.com/statement.php, (accessed November 23, 2005).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

humanity. This attitude severely restricted Montoya's activity within the mainstream art establishment. As Ramón Favela explained, Montoya "refused to participate in commercially-inspired art exhibitions from which he could benefit personally and economically. He is adamantly opposed to the use of Chicano art, especially his own, for illustrating personal change, aggrandizement, or ideological success in the art market, for example, 'change in style to be announced by a well-publicized radical chic exhibition in a prominent gallery.'"⁶⁰ For Montoya, any placement of protest art within the gallery system negated it, as soon it became a commercial venture that transformed into a fad.⁶¹

Montoya's critical feelings towards the mainstream solidified during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when he witnessed a growing number of Chicano artists who were participating within the mainstream art establishment and commercial art realm. For Montoya, aiding the community while simultaneously desiring recognition by the establishment created an inherent contradiction. He explained, "[Y]ou can't serve your community and at the same time be recognized by those people who are part of the apparatuses that oppress, that oppresses your people."⁶² When opposition charged that entrance into the establishment gave a mainstream voice to the voiceless, Montoya countered, stating "when you produce art for them, for their galleries and for their exhibition places, it has to be art...that is accepted by them. It has to be an art that is

⁶⁰ Favela, "Malaquías Montoya: Postermaker to El Pueblo Chicano," 8.

⁶¹ Montoya, interview with Torres, 5-6.

⁶² Montoya, interview for Califas, 33.

easily digested by them and if it can't be digested by them, then what they have to do is to trim it, change it, hone it down a little bit before it's digestible to their palette, and then when it comes out it's something else."⁶³ For Montoya, Rupert García provided an excellent example of an artist whose work changed throughout the decades, particularly as it matured and entered into the gallery scene. According to Montoya, although García's later images retained "revolutionary titles," their specific content was difficult to decipher.⁶⁴

As a result of his frustration with the status of Chicano art by the late 1970s, Montoya and his wife co-authored an article titled "A Critical Perspective on the State of Chicano Art," published in *Metamorfosis* in 1980. The essay, analyzed at length in chapter two, articulated the abovementioned argument, by stating that the then-current Chicano art had become commodified by the mainstream and its artists had become co-opted. The only option that diligent Chicano artists had to preserve the integrity and validity of their ideological message was to detach themselves from participation within the establishment.

Although Montoya chastised other Chicano artists for not separating wholly from the mainstream, the artist himself was not entirely removed from participation within the establishment. In 1981, the year following the publication of his contemptuous article, Montoya received a grant from the Department of Mental Health, a division of the State of California's Health and Welfare Agency. When asked directly

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Montoya, interview with the author.

how he reconciled his plea for separatism with his acceptance of a governmental commission, Montoya claimed that he initially refused to accept the grant, yet, changed his position when Guillermo Hernández convinced him that this project was akin to those he had already developed in the past. Hernández maintained that Montoya could use the money specifically for supplies and for project related expenses, while providing a much-needed service. After serious deliberation, Montoya accepted the grant for the “Latino Family Mental Health Promotion Project.”

Montoya’s proposal, titled “Family Solidarity: Dignity of Work and Education,” centered upon providing the Latino community with affirmative images of Latinos in various activities of their daily lives. The project, according to Montoya’s overview, proposed “to communicate the concept of the integral relationships among family, work, education, and a sense of community in order to enhance the positive self concept of the Latino youth of Oakland. It will accomplish this by using the art of posters to depict the value of work at every level of endeavor, the importance of strong family and community, and the liberating power of knowledge and education.”⁶⁵ To ascertain how Latino youngsters viewed specific aspects of their lives, Montoya developed focus groups, paying Latino students ten dollars of grant money an hour for an interview. During these research sessions, Montoya sensed the disenchantment felt by many Latino youths with regards to their parents, their home lives, and their communities.

⁶⁵ Malaquías Montoya, “Family Solidarity: The Dignity of Word and Education,” Grant Project Overview for the Latino Family Mental Health Promotion Project, Department of Mental Health, 1981, Papers of Malaquías Montoya, Archives of Gilberto Cárdenas, University of Notre Dame.

Montoya recalled, “I heard that kids were embarrassed of their parents, because they did menial work...[and] they didn’t like living at home, because their parents were too strict.”⁶⁶ When Montoya asked if they would return to their communities in the future, they claimed that they “never want to come back.”⁶⁷ As a result of these discussions, Montoya produced a series of posters that attempted to invert these negative perceptions into positive images of self-determination (Figures 3.26-3.32). Within these silkscreens, the artist presented families and members of the community together, participating in their daily routines. For instance, in figures 3.26-3.28, Montoya focused upon family life, depicting parents and their children cooking, reading, working, and learning together harmoniously. The text featured above the image read “En Mi Familia Empieza El Mundo: Corazón Firme, Cara Noble, Menta Sana.” Montoya’s posters regarding the community, figures 3.29-3.32, shared a similar message, illustrating neighborhood peoples working collectively in various occupations, including both manual and intellectual vocations. Above the visual renderings, Montoya included one of the following passages, “Trabajo y Así Transformo El Mundo,” “Lo Que Juntos Sembramos, Juntos Cosechamos,” “Mi Lucha Es La De Mi Pueblo,” and “Con Nuestro Trabajo Se Hizo Esta Nación.” As with his family portrayals, Montoya included the phrase, “Corazón Firme, Cara Noble, Menta Sana,” within all of these community images, emphasizing the positive physical and mental aspects of working. For Montoya, these works were not radical or revolutionary

⁶⁶ Montoya, interview with the author.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

images, but simply representations that illustrated the dignity involved with working and learning.⁶⁸

According to Montoya, the posters made a sizable improvement on the way Latino youths viewed their families and communities. During interviews that Montoya conducted with the students after they viewed his posters on a daily basis, the students acknowledged that the silkscreens gave them insight into the merit of their parents' vocations.⁶⁹ Montoya maintained that these youths finally acknowledged that their parents, regardless of their profession, contributed to the wealth of the country and should demand not only increased wages but respect, as well. Unfortunately, the works did not elicit positive reactions from everyone. During the development phase of the program, Montoya presented his sketches to the Board of Directors of the agency, who in turn rejected all of them, claiming that the figures in the works appeared angry. The Board also threatened to withdraw the grant if Montoya did not include certain individuals, like police officers, priests, and members of the Ballet Folklórico, in the works. Montoya retorted initially by stating that the Board members had mistaken his figures' determination for anger, and second, by arguing that the Board simply wanted a "saccharinized version of a Chicano."⁷⁰ Although Montoya offered to refund the grant money, attesting that he had not wanted to participate in the project in the first place, the community led a campaign to continue the program, championing Montoya's posters as

⁶⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 25.

inspirations. As a result, the Board funded Montoya's silkscreens, and allowed for limited distribution in venues like high schools and community centers. The billboards that Montoya initially proposed to exhibit for several months on Highway 99, from the Coachella Valley to the Sacramento Valley, never materialized. Regardless, Montoya claimed that the project produced his desired effect, namely self-determination amongst Oakland's Latino youth.

Episodes, like those he experienced with the California State Health and Welfare Agency, validated Montoya's sentiments regarding mainstream accommodation. For Montoya, when the state offered Chicanos money to create artworks, like posters and murals, it created the false illusion that it cared about Chicanos' welfare. Chicano artists, according to Montoya, must be weary of governmental assistance, as it lacked total altruism. Cautioning other Chicano artists, Montoya asserted:

If the state is feeding you money, and letting you do something, you should really stop and think, 'Hey, why is this person giving me this money for me to go paint a wall?'...People might forget that it's a barrio, and that a barrio is created by economic conditions...created by a real fucked up system....Not for one moment should the community ever be allowed to think that this system wants to make it look nice. It's interested in making it look nice on the outside...but inside you're dying.⁷¹

For Montoya, by sponsoring community projects, the establishment found a method by which it could pacify marginalized groups while simultaneously controlling them.

Montoya's philosophies regarding the dangers of mainstream fiscal endorsement deeply influenced his own artistic career. Rather than embrace governmental,

⁷¹ Montoya, interview with Torres, 6.

institutional, or corporate financial backing, Montoya denounced it, choosing instead to produce affordable or not for profit artwork that benefited marginalized groups. To allow him to afford this option, Montoya chose to teach as a means of sustaining his livelihood. He took faculty positions at the California College of Arts and Crafts, where he taught from 1978-1989, and at U.C. Davis, where he began in 1990 and continues to work today.⁷² While artists, like Rupert García, question whether or not Montoya views working at U.C. Davis, a University dedicated to agricultural studies including the development of certain pesticides, a negation of his ethics, Montoya claimed that he does not.⁷³ He reconciled teaching at a mainstream institution with his ideologies on separatism, by asserting that he taught specifically so he could artistically separate from the establishment and produce artworks for the community.⁷⁴ Moreover, Montoya claimed that by instructing, he was able to enlighten and influence ethnically diverse students, educating them on his philosophies. As a professor, the artist believed that education should be a subversive and confrontational discourse.⁷⁵ According to Sam Martin, Montoya considered “his teaching now to be just as important as his poster art was in the early Seventies, asserting that ‘the young children need the images from their community and the struggles that are taking place’ as much as the students did in

⁷² Malaquías Montoya, “Curriculum Vitae,” PDF file, www.malaquiasmontoya.com/pdf/vitae.pdf, (accessed December 5, 2005): 2-3.

⁷³ Rupert García, interview with Paul J. Karlstrom, Oakland, California, September and November 1995, and June 1996, Oral History Interview, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Museum, <http://www.archivesofamericanart.si.edu/oralhist/garcia96.htm>, (accessed May 14, 2002): 60.

⁷⁴ Malaquías Montoya, interview with the author, 21.

⁷⁵ Martin, “Art Fights the Power.”

Berkeley in 1968.”⁷⁶ Even at U.C. Davis, where Montoya currently holds a position as Full Professor in the Chicano Studies Department and Cooperating Faculty in the Art Department, he remains a devoted cultural educator.

RUPERT GARCÍA: The Appropriator

While the artistic productions of Montoya remained consistently separated from any mainstream affiliation, even during the periods of growing assimilation among Mexican Americans, the artwork of the San Francisco Bay Area artist, Rupert García, more readily followed the trends reflective of the various phases of *El Movimiento*, phases that witnessed both periods of separatism and periods of accommodation. This flexibility may have been a result, in part, of García’s personal philosophies about cultural politics and art. García saw no contradiction between being socially and politically committed to a specific cause and a being a fine artist. Decrying the binary approach that held these two positions as mutually exclusive, García lauded the paradigm which endorsed a blending of the two, as represented by his two heroes, Marcel Duchamp and Martin Luther King, Jr. Their deaths in 1968 affected García deeply, as their ideological viewpoints reverberated profoundly within the artist. “The event of these two men dying in the same year,” García claimed, “... resonates deeply for me because it kind of combines an aspect of who I think I am- the aesthetic, cultural artistic dimension, with the twist of having a critical bent built into it, not taking things

⁷⁶ Ibid.

for granted in terms of art and culture, represented by Duchamp, and then Martin Luther King representing that part of me who has always been conscious of the dimensions of racism and class in our society.”⁷⁷ Entwined within his political stance on racism and classicism was García’s “internationalist” viewpoint, which embraced not only Chicanos but Third World peoples as well. García’s inclusionary position stemmed from his understanding of the human condition in the context of historical domination. He gained insight into this situation as a youngster growing up among children of diverse races.

In September of 1941, Rupert García was born to Frank García and Dolores Atilano García in French Camp, a small agricultural town located directly outside of Stockton, California, in the San Joaquin Valley. García’s maternal grandparents came from Jalostotitlán, situated outside of Guadalajara in Jalisco, Mexico. His paternal grandparents came from the Juarez/El Paso, Texas, region. According to García, many individuals, including his maternal grandparents, immigrated to the United States because of the Mexican Civil War. He claimed that the reason for their immigration was a classic one, stating “just as the Surrealists [left] Europe in the late thirties and early forties...my grandparents immigrated for the War of 1910-1920, the Revolution in Mexico.”⁷⁸ Both of his parents were born in the United States, and met in California.

From French Camp, the family moved initially to Manteca, California, and then to Stockton. In Stockton, García’s mother, a meat-packer at the time, and his

⁷⁷ García, interview with Karlstrom, 2.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 9.

grandmother, Maria Guadalupe Atilano, raised him. Throughout the years, members of his family worked in various places, including canneries, department stores, packing sheds, and a meat plant.⁷⁹ Unlike Montoya, García reminisced pleasantly about his childhood in Stockton, recalling that he had “a great life as a kid. It was wonderful. I couldn’t have it any better.”⁸⁰ As a child, he grew up surrounded by family members, who actively participated in the arts. His aunts and uncles performed in the Ballet Folklórico, while his paternal grandmother, Pascuala García, designed and produced all of the dance costumes.⁸¹ García vividly recalled the visual excitement of viewing the colorful costumes created by his grandmother. Similarly, his maternal grandmother, Maria Guadalupe, created fine small dolls and animals out of tissue paper.⁸² She was “responsible for instilling in him from a very early age a keen interest in working with objects and color and transforming disparate things into art, such as making wooden figures from clothespins...[S]he amazed him by making entire figurine ensembles—animals and people—out of twisted tissue paper.”⁸³ In addition to this artistic exploration on behalf of his extended family, García’s mother produced artworks, thereby further influencing García. Surrounded by singers, musicians, and artists,

⁷⁹ Lucy R. Lippard, “Rupert García: Face to Face,” *Rupert García: Prints and Posters, 1967-1990*, (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1990): 14.

⁸⁰ García, interview with Karlstrom, 9.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸² Peter Selz, “Rupert García,” pre-published manuscript, (not dated: 1-8), Papers of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Box 10, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁸³ Ramón Favela, *The Art of Rupert García: A Survey Exhibition*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books and The Mexican Museum, 1986): 17.

García's future vocation seemed far from aberrant. He decided at an early age to pursue a profession in the arts.⁸⁴

Although the artist claimed that he enjoyed his childhood thoroughly, it was not without prejudicial incidents. According to García, “as a kid and a young man in Stockton I grew up with rampant racism and rampant class divisions.”⁸⁵ Even as a youngster, he understood why his family took certain jobs, such as working in the fields and the canneries, while more affluent Caucasian families procured less strenuous and more lucrative occupations. Moreover, the artist not only experienced discrimination on behalf of his own race, he also witnessed intolerance against his friends of African American and Asian American descent. The Boy Scouts excluded African Americans from becoming members, while it allowed Asian Americans to join strictly within their own group. Since he was Mexican American, García was placed into the Asian American, rather than the Caucasian troop. In addition, attending schools with children of Japanese descent, García had friends who were born in Japanese American internment camps. He witnessed the pain of their families, who refrained from speaking of their experiences because of the grief they continued to bear. These various forms of inequity did not evade García's consciousness, but rather caused him at times to act out. García maintained, “You're not blind!...[H]aving experienced that, knowing that, and simultaneously feeling the hurt and having the anger...I at a few moments got

⁸⁴ Peter Selz, “Rupert García,” *Rupert García: New Pastel Paintings*, (Paris: Galerie Claude Samuel, 1987): 1.

⁸⁵ García, interview with Karlstrom, 16.

involved in some self-destructive stuff, but fortunately I was able to curtail that by seeing that people die from doing these certain kinds of things. I mean, drugs, gangs, robbing- serious stuff. And I saw that this for me didn't make any sense.”⁸⁶ Bearing witness to the discrimination felt not only amongst peoples of his own race but among individuals of other races may have been the root of García's beliefs on nationalism. As explained further within this chapter, García shunned essentialist, exclusionary forms of cultural nationalism. While the artist's cultural heritage as a Chicano played a major role in his life and work, it did not “prevent him from defining himself and his art as ‘internationalist,’ with the aim of forging strong bonds between movements unfolding around the globe.”⁸⁷

Being born in California to a family whose members strongly identified with their Mexican heritage, García grew-up calling himself “México.” For García, recognizing himself as a Mexican did not negate being American. He did not see the two nationalities as being in opposition with one another. Not until much later in life, when García actually visited Mexico, did the artist feel disconnected from Mexican nationals. To reconcile this sense of detachment, García began to research the history of Mexico, realizing that the country has undergone vast historical changes over thousands of years. By exploring himself as a Mexican within this context, García was

⁸⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁷ Angela Davis, “On the Art of Rupert García,” *Rupert García*, exhibition brochure, (Phoenix: MARS Artspace, 1987).

able to regain a balance in terms of his own identity. Describing this new awareness,

García explained:

As I began to realize that, ‘Well, I *am* of Mexico, and in many kinds of ways, but that’s only part of who I am potentially, and who I am at the moment....’ And so that began to open up the spectrum of experience and to include whatever I want to include. So since I didn’t buy any kind of really vulgar Mexican nationalism-which some people in the family did- I was able not only as a kid but also even after going to Mexico to truly embrace a lot of aspects of being of Mexico.⁸⁸

While the artist wholly embraced his Mexican heritage, he eschewed narrow visions of racial identity, particularly those that isolated the artist from other cultures. In high school, García dated non-Chicanas, displeasing his grandmother who maintained that García should socialize romantically with women of his own race. “[T]hat hit within me a very sour chord,” García claimed, “as if I only have one people, as if the human race is not of the people with whom I associate, who are not Mexicano and Catholic...My feelings for the openness of human experience, thankfully, beat out the narrowness of certain visions of the human family.”⁸⁹

After García graduated high school, he attended Stockton Junior College, where he received an A.A. in Art in 1962. In the fall of the same year, a 21 year-old García, along with two other artists, moved to San Francisco, in an attempt to break into the city’s art sphere. Within two months of arriving, the artist was washing dishes for a

⁸⁸ García, interview with Karlstrom, 12.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 55.

restaurant located in the Mission district, while producing paintings and drawings.⁹⁰ He exhibited these works in a three-man show at “Papa’s Pizza” parlor situated across the street from Kezar stadium.⁹¹ Broke and frustrated, García returned to Stockton and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force.

For his first three years in the military, García served as a member of the air police at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, Montana. His job was to protect the northern U.S. from invasion by Russian Communists, by securing people, information, nuclear weapons, and fighter-bombs.⁹² As a result of his extreme aversion to this situation in Montana, García volunteered to serve in Vietnam, where he was placed at a secret air base in Ubal Rachatani, situated in up-country Thailand near the Laotian border. While stationed covertly at this base, García and his troop pretended to be Australians. Their mission was to guard the planes, napalm bombs, and other “ordnances used to ravage Vietnam.”⁹³ While on base, García only produced two drawings, one of a Sikh man and the other of a traditional Thai house on stilts. Although approached by individuals on the base to produce military related artwork, García refused, claiming he did not want his work associated with the armed forces. He felt the connection would debase it, asserting that “[my work] had to be pure. Unconnected. As well as with like, with selling art at that time, I felt like...I never

⁹⁰ University Press Books (UPB), Press Release for “Exhibition of the Pastel Drawings of Rupert García” at the UPB Gallery, (March 9-April 23, 1985), Papers of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Box 10, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁹¹ Victoria Alba, “Artists with a Mission,” *San Francisco Examiner Image*, (May 20, 1990): 29.

⁹² García, interview with Karlstrom, 25.

⁹³ Lippard, “Rupert García: Face to Face,” 15.

considered selling art. It seemed to be debasing to equate art with money.”⁹⁴ García maintained that during this period of his life, he had a fairly exalted view of art making and of being an artist.

Although García’s philosophies regarding the U.S. involvement in Vietnam would soon change, at the time he supported his participation in Indochina. Hearing about the anti-war movement occurring in the U.S., García recalled:

I led a discussion about why we should be flown back to the United States with our M-16’s, with which we would shoot these students protesting, to show them what’s really going on....You know, I was stupid. But that’s what I felt....I don’t know if it was a reason or if it was just a defensive gesture. For my own well-being, how dare somebody question me being here. Having my life on the line twenty-four hours a day and some son-of-a-bitch back in the United States drinking coffee, just protesting....I said, ‘You go shoot ‘em. That’ll teach ‘em.’⁹⁵

Yet in 1966, once García concluded his tour of duty in the Air Force and returned to Sacramento, the artist began to reconsider his endorsement of the War, feeling increasingly ambivalent about U.S. participation. Beginning San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University) in the fall of the same year, García witnessed the anti-war movement first hand. He began taking courses, in which he read books that altered his previous understanding of certain “truths” taught to him by the military. García declared, “I had been duped into believing all of this stuff about the Communist. All that stuff comes out and I’m very disappointed, very upset, and very angry about how I, in particular, was led to believe that what I’m doing is the right thing

⁹⁴ García, interview with Karlstrom, 30.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 28.

to do-[It] is in fact propaganda.”⁹⁶ Through this intellectual and critical re-examination, García became increasingly political.

On his return to college, García majored in Art on the G.I. Bill, and joined the anti-war movement with those in Mexican American and other “minority” groups, who noticed that people of color comprised a disproportionately large amount of casualties in Vietnam.⁹⁷ As García’s political activism increased, he joined with student protesters of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds for the 1968-1969 student strike at San Francisco State College. According to Carlos Muñoz, the SFSC strike, organized by the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), “marked the first time that Mexican American and other third world student activists united to create a politically explosive ‘rainbow’ coalition,” one that sought reforms for African American, Mexican American, and third world students.⁹⁸ Lucy Lippard maintained that the artist’s connection with student activists who were not solely Mexican American “fit right into García’s emergent internationalism.”⁹⁹ Expounding upon his philosophies, García maintained that he identified strongly with the cultural component of the various civil rights movements, since he grew up with Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, and the white working class. While he asserted that he was not a Marxist, he consented to adopting certain Marxist beliefs. Identifying the foundation of his principles, García claimed “it was leftish, it was Third Worldish, it

⁹⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁷ Lippard, “Rupert García: Face to Face,” 15.

⁹⁸ Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*, (London: Verso, 1989): 68-69.

⁹⁹ Lippard, “Rupert García: Face to Face,” 17.

was all kinds of things. It wasn't one thing. It was Chicanismo—but not the vulgarized position, which I totally fought against.”¹⁰⁰

In fact, García repeatedly rebelled against any exclusionary philosophy that divided people with a common cause. As an indication of his aversion to intransigent cultural nationalism, García recalled an anecdote, which occurred when he initially founded the Galería de la Raza in San Francisco:

I remember going to a meeting in 1971 in Los Angeles with a friend of mine from San Francisco, and there was a moment when people talked, and I said, ‘Francisco and I are from San Francisco, from the Galería de la Raza.’ And the question was, ‘Why do you call it Galería de la Raza?’ So I said, ‘Well, we call it that because there are many peoples who live in the Mission District who are from various places in Latin America, not only Mexicans, Chicanos.’ And, man, they just booed us out....All they’re talking about it [*sic*] is a ‘pure Chicanismo’.... So this kind of vulgar, reactionary cultural-nationalism was one that bothered me to no end.¹⁰¹

For García, “vulgar” Chicanismo would never have worked due to its divisive nature. When offered a position to teach a preliminary class called La Raza Art Workshop at San Francisco State in 1969, García informed the interviewers that he would not produce little Mexican Muralists. “If it’s [the workshop] going to be vulgar, essentialist, and exclusive,” García claimed, “its vision is therefore myopic. I’m not interested in that.”¹⁰² García was, however, concerned with creating and teaching about artworks that would highlight his mounting social consciousness.

¹⁰⁰ García, interview with Karlstrom, 34.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Effectively, the 1968 student movement profoundly altered García's view of the function of art. Although trained as an easel painter, he began to investigate the potentiality of turning the techniques and materials of commercial art to a social purpose.¹⁰³ Realizing that he could no longer simply create art for its own sake, García began forming definitive ideas about the social responsibility of the artist. As part of a student/faculty coalition during the strike, García produced political posters and silkscreen prints for wide distribution to a mass audience.¹⁰⁴ For instance, printed when García was a member of the Student and Faculty Poster Workshop, García's silkscreens, *Right On!*, 1968, and *Down With the Whiteness*, 1969, both supported the student strike, while also highlighting García's evolving internationalist perspective (Figs. 3.33-3.34). In *Right On!*, García celebrated the renowned Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara, underscoring his allegiance to the activist by placing the words "RIGHT ON!" directly below the stark, black and white portrait. García's *Down With The Whiteness* also featured a visual rendering, in this case of an anonymous black radical gesturing passionately below a comic balloon that read "Down with the Whiteness." García maintained that he designed this image as a response to "white racism as [an] attitude."¹⁰⁵ While many of the student/faculty poster group silkscreens supported the SFSC student strike, their sales also functioned as a means of raising money to get

¹⁰³ Jean Franco, "Rupert García," *Juan Fuentes and Rupert García: Posters, Drawings, Prints*, exhibition brochure, (San Francisco: Galeria de la Raza, 1975).

¹⁰⁴ Selz, "Rupert García," 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ Personal correspondence from Rupert García to Jean Franco, San Francisco, March 8, 1979, Papers of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Box 10, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

student and faculty members, incarcerated during the protest, out of jail. According to activist Angela Davis, by creating portraits of Che Guevara and Black Panther Party Members, García created bonds that linked the civil rights movements to the rising of Third World people around the globe.¹⁰⁶

Several key factors influenced García's repositioning as a critical silkscreen producer at this time. Under the guidance of social photographer John Guttman, García studied about progressive artists in Europe, like Renato Guttuso and Juan Genovés. He also learned from Pop Art, especially from James Rosenquist's giant lyrical canvases, Robert Indiana's colors-as-forms, and from R.B. Kitaj's hybrid figuration (Figs. 3.35-3.37).¹⁰⁷ Finally, as the sixties became a period of increased media analysis by the Left, including individuals like Marshall McLuhan, García also investigated the effect of television and advertisements on the U.S. public. The war images revealed by the media distressed García, as he witnessed a disconnect between the reality of the War he experienced and the portrayal of the same war in the media. Likewise, García objected to the manner in which the media represented "minorities" within both commercial and print advertisements. As a result, the artist adopted popular advertisements for his silkscreens, yet inverted their meaning through the metamorphosis of their imagery and/or accompanying texts. By intervening into the traditional mainstream media and adopting vernacular icons, García produced works, which upon first glance appeared

¹⁰⁶ Angela Davis, "On the Art of Rupert García."

¹⁰⁷ Lippard, "Rupert García: Face to Face," 17.

familiar, and thereby comfortable to a mainstream audience. Yet, upon second glance, the viewer was blindsided, confronted by an image with a very distinct social message.

For instance, in his silkscreen from 1969, titled *No More o' This Shit*, García appropriated the famous advertisement for Cream of Wheat, which incorporated an African American male dressed in chef's apparel (Fig. 3.38). Rather than altering the time-honored trademark figure, García retained the icon, yet inserted text below the image to create a new critical context for the traditional portrait. By integrating "No More O' This Shit" underneath the smiling figure, García created a visual contradiction between the original trademark and his new linguistic motto. According to Roland Barthes, in his investigation of print advertisement, the linguistic message can either identify the image or interpret it. However, "when it comes to the 'symbolic message,'" Barthes contended, "the linguistic message no longer guides the identification but interpretation, constituting a kind of vice which holds the connoted meanings from proliferating, whether towards excessively individual regions (it limits, that is to say, the projective power of the image) or towards dysphoric values."¹⁰⁸ By incorporating "No More O' This Shit" as a textual phrase, García altered the symbolic message of the traditional representation, by using the linguistic message as the direct means for interpretation. This textual phrase became the "vice" utilized to keep the representation from slipping into its conventional role as commercial, or even as Pop Art, image.

¹⁰⁸ Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Image, Music, Text*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977): 39.

Like *No More O' This Shit*, García's *Decay Dance* series, 1969, similarly utilized the direct appropriation of specific celebrated characters (Fig. 3.39-3.41). Produced for the SFSC student strike, García superimposed a warped portrait of Leonardo De Vinci's *Mona Lisa* atop the Quaker Oats Man's face, leaving only the upper-most portion of the trademark figure exposed. Analyzing this silkscreen, Henry C. Estrada claimed that García "took the quintessential icon of Western aesthetic standards of quality, the *Mona Lisa*, distorted the image, then juxtaposed it with a reproduction of the Quaker Oats logo-another symbol of 'quality.' The work is a commentary on mass consumerism that reflects back on Pop art's origins in U.S. capitalism, as well as a witty commentary on Western art history's obsession with the distinctions of high and low art."¹⁰⁹ By creating a pun on the word "decadence," García claimed that he was making a declaration about art history, a statement to Clement Greenberg's insistence on the hierarchy of high over low art and to the decadence that would ensue if kitsch triumphed.¹¹⁰ The artist conceded to being influenced by Pop Art at this time, but to taking a more critical approach than its mainstream practitioners.¹¹¹ Rather than remaining ambivalent in his representation of consumerism like many of his mainstream Pop counterparts, García was extremely judgmental of the commercial representations that he appropriated.

¹⁰⁹ Henry García, "From Populist to Pop: The Graphic Arts of the Chicano and Puerto Rican Movements," *Pressing the Point: Parallel Expressions in the Graphic Arts of the Chicano and Puerto Rican Movements*, curated by Yasmin Ramirez and Henry C. Estrada, (New York: El Museo del Barrio, 1999): 22.

¹¹⁰ Lippard, "Rupert García: Face to Face," 31.

¹¹¹ Personal correspondence from Rupert García to Jean Franco.

While the philosophies proposed by Malaquías Montoya seemingly would condemn García for co-opting by utilizing techniques and styles developed by mainstream artists, García actively viewed his own work as a direct affront to mass media culture. In fact, in 1970 at SFSC, García submitted *Media Supplement*, a Master of Arts' thesis that astutely theorized the role of the artist and the mass media in the United States. While Montoya shunned the use of overtly mainstream styles, García consciously “appropriated the pictorial devices and premises of Pop art and subverted them from a Chicano and Third World perspective to serve his aesthetic and ideological ends, which were very different from the cool detachment and politically disengaged ‘neutrality’ of Anglo-American pop artists and their legacy.”¹¹² Rather than boycott the utilization of mainstream artistic conventions, García drew upon them with specific intent, as a means of inverting an image's original meaning. Adopting the idea of “usage” from philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who stated that the meaning of a word was in its use, García maintained that “the use I employ of the image is, I claim, contradictory to its given use.”¹¹³ Clarifying this viewpoint, García explained:

My art is committed to the paradox that in using mass-media I am using a source which I despise and with which I am at war. In using the images of mass-media I am taking an art-form whose motives are debased, exploitive, and indifferent to human welfare, and setting it into a totally new moral context. I am, so to speak, reversing the process by which mass-media betray the masses, and betraying the images of mass-media to moral purposes for which they were not designed, the

¹¹² Favela, *The Art of Rupert García*, 11.

¹¹³ Rupert García, *Media Supplement*, unpublished M.A. Thesis, (San Francisco: San Francisco State College, 1970): 22.

art of social protest.¹¹⁴

For García, his appropriation and subversion of mainstream's own commercial images served the grand function of illuminating his individual philosophies. Had he espoused Montoya's views regarding the usage, or lack thereof, of mass media or Pop Art vernacular, his work would not have produced the desired effect.

The adaptation of mainstream imagery and techniques was not the only subject on which García and Montoya diverged. García openly disagreed with many of Montoya's viewpoints on Chicano nationalism and the tenets of separatism. In the early 1970s, when García first founded the Galería de la Raza in San Francisco, a confrontation ensued between members of the Galería and the Mexican American Liberation Art Front (MALAF), of which Montoya was a key member. At the time, the Oakland Museum had hung an exhibition with which MALAF found fault, thereby spurring the group to convince artists to denounce the show and retract their works. In a special gallery space within the same museum, García was simultaneously presenting his M.A. exhibition in a one-person show. According to the artist, MALAF confronted him about not removing his work. Although García recognized the collective as a significant and necessary group for the Chicano Movement, he insisted that its philosophies were too stringent. In his interview with Karlstrom, García described his relationship with MALAF at length. He maintained:

[MALAF] did good work. But there was this tendency for them

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 13.

to see the Galería as less than politically correct....And I finally realized what was going on, that, well, the Galería had a certain kind of sense of nationalism. It was not driven by a narrow ideology. There was no particular platform from which we were working. While on the other hand, in Oakland the MALAF seemed to be following a particular political line...[and] seemed to have a well-defined position on the role of art and the artist in the context of the Chicano civil rights movement.¹¹⁵

According to García, MALAF “established itself in Chicano America as one of the more important forces in the development of Chicano art based upon the socio-aesthetics of nationalism and collective effort.”¹¹⁶ Its members endorsed separatism to the mainstream, in both their manner of artistic expression and their actual venue selection.

While García concurred with MALAF’s idea that marginalized artists needed to develop a counter-cultural hegemony, primarily in the form of venues like the Galería de la Raza, the Mexican Museum, and Artes Seis, where they could hang and discuss their own work, García deviated from the group by maintaining that entry into mainstream art institutions was also acceptable. For García, acceptance into the art establishment did not equal an abandonment of principles, although he agreed that some Chicanos viewed it as such. “That could have been perceived,” Garcia claimed, “[a]nd I know it was perceived by some of the members of MALAF....And as a matter of fact eventually there was a major text written by Malaquías Montoya and his wife [Leslie

¹¹⁵ García, interview with Karlstrom, 52-53.

¹¹⁶ Rupert García, *Chicano-Latino Murals of California, 1963-1970: A Period of Accommodation and Protest*, unpublished paper for Peter Selz’s Art of the 1960’s course, University of California at Berkeley, Fall 1979-Winter 1980, Papers of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Box 10, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution: 16.

Solkowitz-Montoya [*sic*]-Ed.] that blatantly attacked artists who were getting exhibitions in so-called regular galleries and were getting some exposure as holding hands with the enemy.”¹¹⁷ García, in contrast, saw no dilemma with participation at both mainstream and alternative venues. He, however, did find the Montoyas’ essay highly problematic. Referring to the Montoyas’ article, “A Critical Perspective on the State of Chicano Art,” analyzed heavily in chapter two, García declared:

The argument they put forth was one which many of us saw as just being too narrow—too narrow and came from a position of being too pure and absolute in a context in which that was impossible—the context being our country and our culture. A society in which it is impossible to be pure. But that notion was put forth. The moment you show someplace that is easily identifiable as being part of the mainstream, you have sold out. So for those who subscribe to that I guess one can be perceived as selling out. And someone like me who did not subscribe to that, to me it wasn’t a problem. I mean, I never felt compromised showing at the Modern in ’69 and showing at Artes Seis and showing at someplace like the Oakland Museum. I mean, I never felt that venues were not open to me....[I] didn’t have an extreme position where *all* [venues] were seen as the problem. I didn’t have that clean, purist thing....Purity, they’re trying to have things separate. So separate.¹¹⁸

Warnings about co-optation and “selling out” had little effect on García.

After graduating with his M.A. in art from SFSC, the artist continued to produce silkscreens, and by 1975, began working with pastel on paper. In terms of content, García expanded his repertoire of source images, including portraits of well-known artistic and political celebrities. According to Ramón Favela, García selected his subjects carefully, “composing their portrait images for very specific symbolic or

¹¹⁷ García, interview with Karlstrom, 60.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

ideological reasons.”¹¹⁹ Initially García’s portraits, all based upon mechanically reproduced photographs or self-portraits of the subjects, may have appeared to be simple takeoffs of media-hyped cultural icons of the 20th century, such as Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Luis Buñuel, and Bertolt Brecht (Figs. 3.42-3.43). “However,” Favela maintained, “being subversives of exhausted artistic traditions or corrupt institutions in their own right, their emblematic images were selected in the seventies and early eighties by García precisely for the implications of the political sympathies held by these personalities. García was ahead of his time in developing this individualistic genre of ideologically emblematic portraits culled from printed media sources.”¹²⁰ While these portraits initially came from “mass art,” García transformed them into popular art, which he defined as “a form of expression that profoundly speaks to the creativeability, resistivity, communicability, and socialability of a people. This art, when including a people’s historical symbols, designs, events, and notable figures in its form and /or content negates, in effect, the one-sided view of history as written by elite, racist, and sexist historians.”¹²¹ The artist’s identification with his own ethnic heritage, as well as with oppressed peoples of the Third World, markedly shaped the content of this portraiture.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Favela, *The Art of Rupert García*, 8.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹²¹ Rupert García, “The Politics of Popular Art,” *Chismearte*, (Vol. 2, No. 1, 1978): 2-4.

¹²² Constance Lewallen, “Powerful Pastels,” *University Art Museum Calendar*, (Berkeley: University of California, December 1984): 1, 8.

During this same period, García also continued to exhibit at diverse locales, participating in several group exhibitions, such as *Other Sources: An American Essay*, *The Fifth Sun: Contemporary/Traditional Chicano and Latino Art*, and *Raices Antiguas/Visiones Nuevas*, as well as in a handful of individual shows.¹²³ According to an article in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, García showed in a plethora of museums and alternative galleries in the mid-1970s. The essay alleged, however, that there was only one place that García refused to show his works. When asked if he would exhibit in a downtown San Francisco gallery, García laughed:

‘Those galleries...I’ll never join those stables. They only cater to the few. Most of them think that human expression is a commodity, and they persuade the artist to sell his creative essence.’¹²⁴

For the most part, however, García did not privilege certain venues over others. “I showed everywhere,” García explained. “MOMA here [San Francisco], the Galería, and everywhere. Venues of exhibition, I didn’t have any frame of reference that told me that that’s wrong and that’s right. I mean...I understand the differences between SF MOMA and the Galería. They’re not the same. But it didn’t matter to me. I wasn’t discouraged from showing wherever I wanted to show.”¹²⁵ Excluding the

¹²³ Rupert García, et. al, *Other Sources: An American Essay*, (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Institute, 1976); Rupert García, et. al., *The Fifth Sun: Contemporary/Traditional Chicano and Latino Art*, (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1977); Diego A. Navarette, Jr., et. al, *Raices Antiguas/Visiones Nuevas*, (Tucson, Arizona: Tucson Museum of Art, 1977).

¹²⁴ “Rupert García,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, (October 3, 1975): 22-23.

¹²⁵ Rupert García, interview with the author, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, California, May 26, 2005, 12:00 p.m.

abovementioned galleries of “commodification,” García exhibited his works in most locations during this period.

Within these exhibits, García maintained his internationalist viewpoint. For instance, in an essay written for *Other Sources*, García argued against colonization and the classification of Third World peoples as “Others.”¹²⁶ Investigating murals from the San Francisco Bay Area, García discussed works by a diverse group of Third World artists, including Dewey Crumpler’s *The Black Panel*, 1974, rather than exclusively focusing upon Chicano artists from the Chicano mural movement (Fig. 3.44).

In fact, at this time, García shunned the classification of himself strictly as a Chicano radical poster artist. According to the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* in 1975, one could “[c]all Rupert García anything, but don’t call him Chicano. Not that he isn’t Mexican American. It’s just that García can’t stand stereotypes, and by now [1975] ‘Chicano’ and even ‘revolution’ have come to lose their meaning for him.”¹²⁷ García upheld this statement in 1993, as he recalled:

I’ve been pigeonholed since the late 1960s because of my involvement with the Chicano and Civil Rights movements. It has taken me almost twenty years of ‘contestation’ to alter somewhat the stereotype of Rupert García as the ‘radical poster-maker.’ Of course, I’m bothered by this pigeonholing, especially when it objectifies me, reduces me to a simple-minded thinker. But I don’t mind that people consider me a critical Chicano artist, as long as they understand the complexity of the term. To be ‘Chicano’ is above all to be a concerned human, and to be this means to be complex and multifaceted. It is true that my work is sometimes explicitly and suggestively political, but I am also concerned with many other things. A democracy demands that its citizens be

¹²⁶ García, “Sources,” *The Fifth Sun*, 23.

¹²⁷ “Rupert García,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, 22-23.

critical, political, vociferous, or in my case, visiferous.¹²⁸

As revealed by the artist's fondness for both Duchamp and MLK, Jr., García viewed himself as an activist and as an artist. Content and aesthetics were of equal significance in his works, thereby prompting García to shun the classification of "radical poster-maker," which he felt dismissed his artistic talents as inconsequential. In fact, the aesthetic quality and technical skill displayed in his works, in addition to their content, facilitated their acceptance into traditional art realms, like S.F. MOMA.

In 1978, García presented a one-man show of his pastel drawings at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. According to the curator, Rolando Castellon, the exhibition reflected García's continued commitment to his internationalist philosophy.¹²⁹ His works moved thematically through different countries, from the United States, to Vietnam, to China, to Africa, and back again. Elizabeth Catlett, writing for the S.F. MOMA exhibition catalogue, maintained that García was one of those artists "no longer confused nor stimulated by the world of galleries, dealers, critics, fame and fortune. He...dedicated himself and his artistic production to oppressed people in general and his people in particular."¹³⁰ Interestingly, García received mixed reviews from mainstream critics. *San Francisco Chronicle's* Alfred Frankenstein gave the artist high praise, deeming García's *Political Prisoner* "the

¹²⁸ Rupert García and Guillermo Gomez-Peña, "Turning it Around: A Conversation between Rupert García and Guillermo Gomez-Peña," *Aspects of Resistance: Rupert García*, (New York: Alternative Museum, 1994): 14.

¹²⁹ Rolando Castellon, "Rupert García/Pastel Drawings, March 3-April 23, 1978," *Rupert García/Pastel Drawings*, (San Francisco: Museum of Modern Art, 1978): 1.

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Catlett, "Rupert García/Pastel Drawings," *Rupert García/Pastel Drawings*, 2.

masterpiece of the show,” (Fig. 3.45) while Berkeley Barb’s Robert Atkins offered

García a more varied critique, contending that:

The political artist’s tortuous tasks has always been to somehow marry art and politics, to simultaneously communicate with a mass audience and make a sophisticated visual statement. García ambitiously assays this task, with mixed results. The least powerful of García’s works are the single, poster-like drawing combining image with words, and a conventional view of Mao in front of the Chinese flag so hackneyed that it’s almost impossible to look at [(Fig. 3.46)]. The most successful drawings are those for which García—like Degas, the pastel artist par excellence—chose an unusual point of view.¹³¹

Apparently upon entry into mainstream establishments, García’s works became subject to mainstream critiques.

Yet, art world critics were not the only individuals who evaluated García’s foray into San Francisco’s bastion of Modern Art. In an essay titled “The Source is the Force,” Jose Montoya, brother of Malaquías Montoya and member of the Chicano art collective, “Royal Chicano Air Force” (RCAF), analyzed García’s acceptance into the mainstream. Opening his article with a description of García’s more powerful pieces, Montoya exclaimed “How did Rupert manage to get into the San Francisco Museum? How, one might add, did he swing a one man show?”¹³² Montoya continued by commenting upon the reluctance of “big museums” to exhibit Raza artists, since curators felt that their works presented ethnic politics at the expense of aesthetics.

¹³¹ Alfred Frankenstein, “When Politics and Art Do Mix,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, (March 15, 1978): 53; Robert Atkins, “Revolt on Canvas,” *Berkeley Barb*, (March 24-30, 1978)

¹³² Jose Montoya, “The Source Is the Force,” unpublished manuscript, copyright 1978, Papers of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Box 10, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution: 1.

When the dominant culture finally opened its doors, Montoya maintained, it co-opted marginalized artists, under the guise that it knew what was best. Discussing how some Chicanos succumbed to “selling out,” Montoya described:

As one looks back over the years, it is easy to trace the way so many of our early leaders went from poverty warriors to poverty pimps to finally, poverty barons. But in looking back one can also see the ones who did not capitulate, the lonely battlers who somehow withstood the onslaught. I am referring to the poets and the artistas—the carnalas and carnales who have not waived in their commitment to use art as an organizing tool—art as a weapon and not merely for self-expression. Most of those veteranos are still around and they are still kicking ass: the Malaquiases and the Salvador Roberto Torrezes are still as involved and as committed to the struggle as ever; ...and of course, the subject of this article, Rupert García.¹³³

While Montoya recognized that artists who have exhibited in a mainstream forum might become “imbued with a sense of power that will transform us into theys”, he declared that García was one of the early warriors who understood “that power is a false illusion of immortality, and he ain’t buying no mortality shit.”¹³⁴ For Montoya writing in 1978, the contemporary García would maintain his personal identity without compromising his values and ideals. “And when he comes through it all,” Montoya asserted, “and I have no fear of his succumbing—he will show the rest of us how to go in and come out whole.”¹³⁵ García’s initial S.F. MOMA show would be the start of García’s mainstream participation for years to come.

¹³³ Ibid., 3-4.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

In the years directly following this exhibition, García continued to produce a variety of prints, posters, and pastels, ranging from serene community announcements, like the Matisseque 7th *Marin City Community Festival* poster, 1981, to politically charged, vibrantly colored pastels, such as *Assassination of a Striking Mexican Worker*, 1979 (Figs. 3.47-3.48). His voyage into ideological portraiture, as mentioned previously, with representations of influential artists, poets, playwrights, and scholars, like his 1982 pastel *Bertolt Brecht*, recalled García's art historical studies, which included a second master's degree in art history from the University of California at Berkeley in 1981 (Fig. 3.49).¹³⁶

By 1985, García openly acknowledged a transformation in his work, claiming that he was "more interested in exploring what's behind the image as opposed to being superficially concerned with the statements' obvious message."¹³⁷ In an interview with Laurie Marks, the artist recognized that his works, beginning in the early 1980s, represented a departure from his accepted declarations of more overtly political art to more personal reflections.¹³⁸ As the source of his work became more internal, the messages became more universal. Although García's depictions continued to portray the effects of tyranny, racism, organized violence and moral complacency, they represented these subjects through increased abstraction. By using a simplification and intensification of form and radically cropped imagery, García created works that

¹³⁶ Lippard, "Rupert García: Face to Face," 39.

¹³⁷ Laurie Marks, "Rupert García," *Metier*, (Spring 1985): 9.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

appeared ideologically more subtle, beckoning viewers to make their own conclusions as to the significance of the content.¹³⁹ According to Thomas Albright, as García further simplified his forms and colors, he reduced his images to flat interlocking shapes that sometimes came up “just short of abstraction.”¹⁴⁰

As García’s pastels and oils grew larger, more layered and increasingly more complex, they became dialogic. Searching to express universal human concerns, García began to compose his paintings as diptychs and triptychs, such as *Fenixes*, 1984, and *For Caravaggio and ABL*, 1985 (Figs. 3.50-3.51). For García, the aesthetic strategy of the multi-panel (or divided space of a single panel) offered a platform to dialectically address experiences, ideas, and cultural artifices, which the public often perceived as contrary.¹⁴¹ This dialogue developed between high art and popular imagery, between resources from the past and the present, and between Western art and the non-Western World.¹⁴² Moreover, Ybarra-Frausto explained, “[t]hese complex compositional devices allow for a sort of visual call and response among the formal elements in his work. His lush coloration is often deliberately juxtaposed with deeply ironic subject

¹³⁹ Kenneth Baker, “García Pastels Treat Art As Ammo,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, (September 12, 1995): 58.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Albright, “Rupert García: Radical Political Portraitist,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, (April 28, 1983): 60.

¹⁴¹ García and Gomez-Peña, “Turning it Around,” 34.

¹⁴² Linda Nochlin, “Rupert García: The Power of the Image,” *Rupert García*, (San Francisco: Rena Bransten Gallery, 1997): 6-7.

matter in ways that force the viewer to ponder and reconsider the deeper messages and meanings of what is represented.”¹⁴³

In *Fenixes*, a large pastel on paper, García created a triptych of three representational but abstracted images. On the far left, a vibrant red figure of a burning man emerged from orange flames that comprised the background, while the central image revealed a gathering of nocturnal helicopters, hovering in the threatening blue sky atop the shadowy plot of land below. The indistinguishable black figure holding a gun in the far right panel, silhouetted against a green background, came directly from a photograph of a rebel during the Nicaraguan revolution.¹⁴⁴ Through the juxtaposition of these isolated forms, García explored the reality of violence occurring in this contemporary age.

While *Fenixes* revealed three detached but thematically related images, the diptych *For Caravaggio and ABL* depicted two individuals, whose relationship seemed less apparent. Drawing in black and white pastels on the far right of the representation, García portrayed the 17th century Italian painter, Caravaggio. The face of the Baroque artist, abstracted vertically to reveal only a small portion of his features, confronted the viewer through a forward gazing eye. To the left of this visual rendering, García drew a much larger, color pastel version of Robert Capa’s famed photograph of the Spanish Republican soldier at the exact time of his death. With outstretched arms and rifle in

¹⁴³ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, letter to Professor Joseph Mannino, Chair of the 1992 Committee for the Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement by the College Art Association, (September 20, 1991), Papers of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Box 10, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

¹⁴⁴ Peter Selz, “Rupert García,” *Rupert García*, (San Francisco: Harcourts Gallery, 1985): not paged.

tow, the soldier pressed his chest forward, emphasizing the location where he was shot.

Analyzing the work, Peter Selz claimed:

This soldier confronts Caravaggio whose concerns for the common people and whose break with Renaissance and Mannerist tradition in painting has a particular personal appeal to García who is also involved with fusing significant and often revolutionary content with innovative form. *ALB* stands for Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the American regiments who volunteered to fight on the side of the Spanish Loyalists in that country's tragic civil war. And Caravaggio, whose radical form and content struck a blow against his high ecclesiastical patrons is our contemporary.¹⁴⁵

Thematically, *For Caravaggio and ABL* reinforced García's philosophies about the interconnectedness between the social and the aesthetic in his art. Robert Ballard, director of the Iannetti Lanzzone Gallery in San Francisco where García would show his work in 1987, further expounded upon his point, claiming that "García's sensibility functions on two levels at once—esthetically and intellectually...The marriage of elements creates a universal art not dependent upon one's awareness of an image or event but on total esthetic."¹⁴⁶ While this work, as well as other contemporary multi-paneled depictions by García, retained the forcefulness of his early posters, their abstracted nature demanded active viewing on behalf of the onlooker, who now needed to contemplate the association of the juxtaposed and often disparate representations.

As García's work began to transform aesthetically and thematically, he commenced showing not only in museums and alternative sites but in commercial

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., not paged.

¹⁴⁶ Robert H. Ballard, "Foreword," *Rupert García: New Work*, exhibition brochure, (San Francisco: Iannetti Lanzzone Gallery Inc., 1988)

galleries as well, even those in downtown San Francisco. For his first solo commercial exhibition, *Rupert García Pastels*, García exhibited at San Francisco's Simon Lowinsky Gallery in 1982. The following year, he joined the University Press Books (UPB) Gallery in Berkeley, California, and showed his pastels in several solo exhibits until 1985, at which time, he left UPB Gallery to join Harcourts Gallery in San Francisco. At Harcourts, García held a one-man exhibition, *Rupert García*, featuring his first solo catalogue, with an introduction by the then director of the S.F. MOMA, Henry Hopkins, and an essay by art critic, Peter Selz. Departing from Harcourts Gallery in 1987, García joined the Iannetti-Lanzone Gallery in San Francisco, the Galerie Claude Samuel of Paris, and in 1988, the Saxon-Lee Gallery in Los Angeles. In 1990, the artist moved from the Iannetti-Lanzone Gallery to San Francisco's Rena Bransten Gallery, which presently continues to represent him.

García's entrance into the commercial art sphere was not necessarily a unique phenomenon for a Chicano artist during this period of time. According to Margarita Nieto, the late 1970s brought significant changes to the artists of the Chicano art movement. Describing the period, she explained:

Committed to the objectives of making art, they [Chicano artists] were faced with a pivotal decision: to reject public art forms which had lost both momentum and purpose and return to studio art and into established mainstream art institutions, that is, galleries and museums. Furthermore the experiences of the last decade had enriched their own personal visions; there was an individual desire among many of them, to begin exploring

their internal worlds.¹⁴⁷

Nieto cited Frank Romero, Carlos Almaraz, Gronk, and John Valadez, among others, as those artists who continued to explore a Meso-American narrative tradition, while simultaneously experimenting within the international art world.

In addition to his direct participation in the commercial realm, García also accepted honors and awards as a printmaker, an instructor, and a fine artist from numerous mainstream institutions. For instance, in the mid-to-late 1980s, the artist received the San Francisco Art Commission's Award of Honor for Outstanding Achievement in Printmaking, the Meritorious Achievement Award in Graphics and Illustration from Media Alliance in San Francisco, and an NEA Individual Visual Artists Fellowship Grant. By the 1990s, his awards mounted, including the College Art Association's Distinguished Award for Lifetime Achievement, the Award for Artistic Achievement from San Jose State University, and an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute.¹⁴⁸ Even though the majority of these tributes came directly from the establishment, García accepted them graciously.

For García, participation in the mainstream did not negate his socio-political ideologies. In fact, García viewed involvement within the traditional art world as a constructive mechanism by which to disband segregationist tactics on behalf of the

¹⁴⁷ Margarita Nieto, "Le Démon des Anges:" A Brief History of the Chicano-Latino Artists of Los Angeles," *Le Demon des Anges: 16 Artistes Chicanos Autour de Los Angeles*, ed. Pascal Letellier, (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Cultura; Nantes: Centre de Recherche Pour Le Developpment Cultural, 1989): 222.

¹⁴⁸ Anonymous, "Chronology," *Aspects of Resistance: Rupert García*, 39-40.

establishment. When asked specifically by Guillermo Gomez-Peña about the notion of multicontextuality, the exhibition in multiple contexts and sites as a strategy to dismantle exclusionary discourses, García replied:

I exhibit my work in major museums in the United States and other countries as well as in civic, university, and local community spaces. To me, all are possible venues. I show in all kinds of places because it counters the notion of exclusion and exclusivity. The objective is to always be open, to go wherever you want to go. The exclusionary notion is also a product of binary thinking: if you can do this, you *can't* do that. If you want to dismantle that dangerous notion, then you show wherever you want to show. From MOMA (New York) or the Tamayo Museum (Mexico City) to the Galería de la Raza (San Francisco). I mean, the value of human experience and the quality of art aren't exclusively determined by the exhibiting context. In other words, the context of MOMA alone shouldn't make my paintings more valuable than the context of the Galería.¹⁴⁹

Unlike Montoya, García never found separatism to be a significant issue. When asked about his philosophies regarding accommodationism, García declared, “there was never a problem to me about separatism and assimilation...I didn't think in those terms.”¹⁵⁰

García also refused to commit to a fixed style of artistic production, particularly one that endorsed the “notion that there is a single and unchanging ‘authentic Chicaneness’ hovering among history.”¹⁵¹ By opposing a rigid approach to the artistic expression of Chicanismo, García allowed himself the freedom to produce political imagery while simultaneously exploring his creative role as an artist. By the 1990s, this self-defined independence led García to engage in art historical dialogues within his

¹⁴⁹ García and Gomez-Peña, “Turning it Around,” 35.

¹⁵⁰ Rupert García, interview with the author.

¹⁵¹ García and Gomez-Peña, “Turning it Around,” 35

works and to fabricate images with no political implications at all, as illustrated in *El Magritte/Magritte*, 1997, and *El Sapo/The Frog*, 1997 (Figs. 3.52-3.53). Although some of his works on paper appeared less overtly political in their implications than his posters from the 60s and 70s, “his social commitment,” Linda Nochlin claimed, was “still present in the expressive intensity of this more intimate and reflective vision.”¹⁵² For García, an absence of overt social commentary within these works did not counteract his political beliefs. Rather, it further illustrated his duality as an artist of both aestheticism and activism, reinforcing his commitment to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Duchamp.

MEL RAMOS: The Pop Artist

As stated at the onset of this chapter, Oakland artist Mel Ramos makes a compelling candidate in this triad. My initial outline for this section in fact included him as the Chicano artist who wholeheartedly adopted assimilation to both the mainstream art establishment and its Western art practices, while he simultaneously ignored his Mexican cultural roots. As a student of Chicano art history for over twelve years, I had studied Ramos within my Chicano art history classes. The artist and his images of seductive, voluptuous pin-ups lounging amid ripened fruits summoned

¹⁵² Nochlin, “Rupert García: The Power of the Image,” 6.

analysis in terms of what Shifra Goldman called “the cult of *machismo*.”¹⁵³ My professor presented slides of Ramos’ beauties as a means of revealing the patriarchal aspects of Chicano culture.

My instructor, however, was not alone in his scrutiny of Ramos’ work in terms of his alleged Chicano heritage. Art critics like Collier Schorr and Tom Moody both examined Ramos’ images in relation to his “Hispanic” background, turning the traditional paradigm of the European white male artist and his native model on its head. Interestingly, however, Ramos is not Chicano at all, but rather a well-assimilated artist of Portuguese descent. Perhaps his surname and his childhood community, among other things, conferred upon him a mestizo ancestry. Ramos grew-up in Sacramento, an area from where several prominent Chicano artists and art collectives emerged.

While at quick glance Ramos’ childhood shared similarities with those of Montoya and García, namely in terms of age, gender, and geography, Ramos appeared to have leapt into the mainstream art establishment at the onset of his career. Ramos was born on July 24, 1935 in Sacramento California to Agnes and Clifton Ramos. Literature varies regarding his father’s profession, citing jobs ranging from a racing driver¹⁵⁴ to a mechanic and a commercial fisherman.¹⁵⁵ Any detailed references to his parents’ heritage or his cultural upbringing remain quite limited in scope. After

¹⁵³ Shifra M. Goldman, “Six Women Artists of Mexico,” *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994): 183. Originally published in *Woman’s Art Journal* 3, no. 2, (Fall 1982/Winter 1983): 1-9.

¹⁵⁴ Gardner, “Wonder Women,” 7.

¹⁵⁵ Barbara Vetter, “Chronology,” *Mel Ramos: A Twenty-Year Survey*, ed. Carl Belz, (Waltham, Mass.: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1980): 43.

completing California Junior High School, where he was enrolled from 1947-1950, Ramos attended C.K. McClatchy High School from 1950-1953. While at McClatchy High, Ramos met Jack Ogden and began producing art, including posters for the local football games.¹⁵⁶ During his senior year, Wayne Thiebaud, who was an art teacher at Sacramento Junior College (now Sacramento City College), visited the high school for Career Day, and lectured about his experience working for Disney. According to Ramos, Thiebaud fit his perception of the quintessential artist, claiming “Wayne appeared to me as the personification of what an artist should look like- he was wearing green corduroy trousers and a maroon jacket with a bow tie.”¹⁵⁷ Thiebaud would soon become a major figure in Ramos’ life.

After graduating, Ramos enrolled in Sacramento Junior College, taking art history and painting courses with Thiebaud. He also assisted his instructor at the California State Fair in Sacramento, where Thiebaud served as exhibition designer for shows of crafts, modern art, and fine art.¹⁵⁸ As Ramos helped to organize and install the exhibits, he met various artists, including Richard Diebenkorn, Robert Mallory, Jack Zajak, and Jean Varda, who served as judges for the art competition.¹⁵⁹ Art critics, such as Robert Rosenblum, would later identify aspects of Ramos’ works as having been

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Mel Ramos, “Forward,” *Mel Ramos Pop Art Fantasies: The Complete Paintings*, ed. Donald Kuspit, (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2004): 10.

¹⁵⁸ Steven A. Nash, “Chronology,” *Wayne Thiebaud: A Painting Retrospective*, eds. Steven A. Nash and Adam Gopnik, (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2000): 196.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

shaped by Diebenkorn and other Bay Area Figurative School artists, whose works exhibited dense, brushmarked surfaces and sun-soaked colors (Fig. 3.54).¹⁶⁰

In 1954, Ramos began attending San Jose State College, where by the next year, he further developed his strong interest in Surrealism, particularly in the work of Salvador Dali. According to Ramos, Dali was the most influential person in his life. In an interview with Paul Karlstrom, he claimed:

When I was 15 years old, 16 years old, the first time I ever saw a reproduction of a Salvador Dali painting, I decided that I wanted to be an artist. It was a painting called *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans* [(Fig. 3.55)]....My work is rooted in Surrealism, definitely. You mentioned the word 'conjunction' a while back. That's exactly what it is. Every series of paintings that I've done seems to have as a central pervading kind of theme this notion of conjunctions, that is, one symbol with another symbol...the girl with the animal, or in the case of a girl and the food, the grapefruit thing, the banana thing.¹⁶¹

By 1955, Ramos entered Sacramento State College, where Thiebaud and Odgen also enrolled in courses. Joining an art tour organized by Thiebaud and Paul Beckman, Ramos visited New York City for the first time, meeting art critic Harold Rosenberg and numerous artists, including Franz Kline, Larry Rivers, Philip Pearlstein, and Conrad Marca-Relli.¹⁶² While on this excursion East, Ramos also encountered Willem de Kooning's *Woman I*, which was a major factor in steering Ramos towards Abstract Expressionism (Fig. 3.56). In a conversation with Carl Belz, Ramos elucidated:

[I]n 1956, I saw de Kooning for the first time. It did a number on me,

¹⁶⁰ Robert Rosenblum, *Mel Ramos: Pop Art Images*, (Köln, Germany: Taschen, 1997): 8.

¹⁶¹ Mel Ramos, interview with Paul Karlstrom, artist's home, Oakland, California, May 15, 1981, California Oral History Project, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Museum: 16-17.

¹⁶² Vetter, "Chronology," 43.

my eyes rolled around for about three months. After that, my work went from Surrealist renderings- there's an old picture of a woman melting on an egg- to mannerist de Koonings. It was very important to make each brushstroke with superhuman speed. It became ingrained in me, the notion of the gesture, of making moves with the paint. The association of my work with Pop Art had nothing to do with the mechanics of painting; it had to do with imagery. My roots are in Abstract Expressionism.¹⁶³

Ramos' painting, *Invalid*, from 1959, appears as a testament to this statement (Fig. 3.57). Influenced by both de Kooning and the Bay Area Figurative Style, Ramos rendered his figure with loose gestural brushstrokes. In addition, as Harvey L. Jones maintained, *Invalid* clearly referred to Bay Area artist Nathan Oliveira's "painterly equalization of figure and ground."¹⁶⁴

In 1957 and 1958, Ramos received a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Masters of Arts degree, respectively, from Sacramento State College, and began teaching art at Elk Grove High School. By 1960, he became the Chairman of the Art Department at Mira Loma High School, where he continued his artistic production. In his work from this period, the influence of former teacher Thiebaud began to emerge, as seen in a series of solitary figures on a neutral background (Figs. 3.58-3.60). Jones maintained that it "is in this series that Ramos begins working with the figure while retaining his concern for gesture and paint. Paintings such as *Tourist* and *Pete* are deftly modeled in light and

¹⁶³ Carl Belz and Mel Ramos, "Talking with Mel Ramos," *Mel Ramos: A Twenty-Year Survey*, Belz, ed., 14.

¹⁶⁴ Harvey L. Jones, *Mel Ramos: Paintings 1959-1977*, (Oakland: The Oakland Museum, 1977): 7.

shadow with the same broad fluid strokes as the background to create the requisite pictorial unity."¹⁶⁵

In spite of the success of these images, Ramos chose an alternative path to painting for its own sake, deciding in late 1961 to adopt as his subject the comic-strip heroes that he admired as a child, starting with *Superman*.¹⁶⁶ According to Ramos, "I decided that instead of painting people I knew, I would paint people I grew up admiring. I was very into comic books when I was a kid and I wanted to paint my childhood heroes."¹⁶⁷ In *Superman and Batman #2*, both from 1961, Ramos espoused a similar approach to his previous figure paintings, placing the inert and rigid costume-clad superheroes against a neutral background (Figs. 3.61-3.62). Soon, however, Ramos charged these static forms with the exuberance of his childhood comic book protagonists. The subtle color of the earlier images yielded to the vibrant hues of the comic, as revealed in paintings such as *Batmobile*, 1962 (Fig. 3.63). The vitality of these works also stemmed from the figure's "aggressive frontality," which Jones claimed invigorated Ramos' characters, including those in his much later works:

It is in that advancing, frontal, stop-action pose that Ramos achieves the three-dimensional illusion that he develops and refines in later paintings. The thick impasto brush strokes and a slight shadow serve as requisite unifying elements in the figure-ground relationship.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Marco Livingstone, *Pop Art: A Continuing History*, (New York: Thames & Hudson, Inc., 2000): 72.

¹⁶⁷ Elizabeth Claridge, *The Girls of Mel Ramos*, (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1975): 26.

¹⁶⁸ Jones, *Mel Ramos: Paintings 1959-1977*, 8.

According to Marco Livingstone, by choosing familiar personages but painting them with such lavish paintwork against brightly colored backgrounds, Ramos evoked the sensation that “he was remembering them from previous encounters rather than copying them as found objects from a single frame.”¹⁶⁹ In addition, by being characters from mainstream American culture, Ramos’ subjects fit nicely into the existing Pop Art vernacular. Ramos quickly found himself included in exhibitions such as *Pop! Goes the Easel* at the Museum of Contemporary Arts, Houston, Texas, *The Popular Image* at the London Institute of Contemporary Art, *Six More* at the Los Angeles Country Museum of Art (an expansion of the New York traveling exhibition *Six Painters and the Object*), and *Pop Art USA* at the Oakland Museum of Art.¹⁷⁰ At these shows, his paintings hung amid those of artists like Jim Dine, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Andy Warhol.

Male superheroes were not the sole subjects of Ramos’ representations. By 1962, the artist began depicting heroines, featured in works like *Wonder Woman #1* and *Miss Liberty-Frontier Heroine* (Figs. 3.64-3.65). As Donald Kuspit explained:

After painting *Miss Liberty*, Ramos realized that there was a world of female superheroes and villains, and turned his attention to the female figure epitomized by these sexy comic book characters, beginning with the elegant Phantom Lady and the deadly Señorita Rio. The series continued with depictions of the Jungle Queens Sheena and Camilla,

¹⁶⁹ Livingstone, *Pop Art: A Continuing History*, 72.

¹⁷⁰ Exhibition catalogues included *Pop! Goes the Easel*, text by Douglas MacAgy, (Houston: Contemporary Arts Association of Houston, 1963); *The Popular Image*, text by Alan Solomon, phonograph record of statements by the artists, (Washington D.C.: Gallery of Modern Art, 1963); *Six More*, text by Lawrence Alloway, (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, 1963); *Pop Art USA*, text by John Coplans, (Oakland: Oakland Museum of Art, 1963).

and ended with the first painting of 1964, *Cave Girl*.

Elizabeth Claridge further expounded upon this succession of female characters, by contrasting Ramos' earliest paintings, like *Wonder Woman #1*, with his later works, such as *Wonder Woman #2*, from 1963 (Fig. 3.66). While in the former portrayal Ramos merely transposed the schematic representation of the original comic strip figure onto the canvas without dramatic alteration, the later depiction revealed a Wonder Woman with "a body considerably more rounded than the one she owned in her comic book adventures....She is sloe-eyed, softly smiling and the American Eagle on her costume spreads its wings over curved breasts. The Wonder Woman who could fell the giant Mammotha with one blow has metamorphosed into a pin-up whose methods of persuasion are of a less aggressive, and perhaps more invidious, kind."¹⁷¹ According to Ramos, his female characters became more erotic as he began painting them in a realistic fashion, using photographs of real people and models rather than comic strips. He maintained that he made his "second Wonder Woman more like Linda Carter than the original Wonder Woman."¹⁷²

Not long thereafter, after Ramos felt he had exhausted the available supply of figurative subject matter from comics, the artist adopted female models from advertisements and girlie magazines as his archetype. In an interview with Claridge, Ramos explained that it was a short step from depicting the female in a costume to

¹⁷¹ Claridge, *The Girls of Mel Ramos*, 46.

¹⁷² Belz and Ramos, "Talking with Mel Ramos," 18.

portraying her nude. He claimed, “I finally just removed the costume.”¹⁷³ Two primary series that Ramos created in 1964 were his *Peek-a-boo* paintings and his “Wolf Call” canvases, all of which focused upon the female figure.

According to Claridge, Ramos based his *Peek-a-boo* paintings on a salacious device of pin-up pictures, which varied in their erotic effect depending upon the magazine, calendar, postcard, slot-machine image, cigarette card, or other outlets of soft core titillation since at least the end of the nineteenth century. Ramos adopted the design for this group of paintings in particular from a 1940s Peek-a-View card in a Mutoscope series.¹⁷⁴ While in the voyeuristic images of the past, the keyholes revealed unaware females in various stages of undress, Ramos’ keyholes displayed nudes who were quite cognizant of the peeping eyes watching them. In fact, Ramos’ figures enticed the viewer, pouting or laughing while making direct eye contact with the onlooker. Moreover, in a similar manner as models in advertisements, the women of the *Peek-a-boo* canvases posed as though they were being photographed, positioning themselves in the most flattering yet revealing positions. In *Peek-a-boo, Platinum Blonde*, the model gazed directly at the viewer through her blonde, tousled hair (Fig. 3.67). She positioned her arms vertically against her chest, creating cleavage while at the same time trying partially to cover herself. Instead of seeming “tantalisingly out of reach beyond the keyhole,” Ramos’ models seemed easily available through it.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Claridge, *The Girls of Mel Ramos*, 60.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Kuspit maintained that Ramos' *Peek-a-boo* paintings reflected the philosophy of the past pin-up artists in their "idealization of the American Dream Girl," as did Ramos' "Wolf Call" series.¹⁷⁶

"Wolf calls," the term given to slang compliments for women that supplement wolf whistles, became the title of a series that Ramos created, in which he placed a life-size portrait head of a glamour girl in front of bold, block lettering. The blockbuster text behind the image varied amongst paintings, containing leering remarks such as "Hubba Hubba," "Yum Yum," "Doll" and "Wow."¹⁷⁷ According to Kuspit, Ramos was "taken with single words that were used to denote sexy, cute, American pin-up girls, and started adding them in the background of his paintings, like slogans advertising their special appeal."¹⁷⁸ In *Hubba Hubba*, from 1964, Ramos placed a redheaded, wind-blown model in front of a vibrant pink and red text-filled background (Fig. 3.68). The catchphrase, "Hubba Hubba," worked significantly in this painting as a formal device, forming the backdrop against which the redheaded model rested. Soon thereafter, the "Wolf Call" girls morphed into beauty queen paintings, in which the tag names indicated "not so much individual male chauvinist lechery as corporate vested interest: they suggest[ed], and caricature[d], the specious titles bestowed on beauty queens, the brand-names given to successful products."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Donald Kuspit, *Mel Ramos Pop Art Fantasies*, 64.

¹⁷⁷ Claridge, *The Girls of Mel Ramos*, 61.

¹⁷⁸ Kuspit, *Mel Ramos Pop Art Fantasies*, 66.

¹⁷⁹ Claridge, *The Girls of Mel Ramos*, 61.

Ramos gained inspiration for his brand-name beauty queen paintings during his college years when he was assisting Thiebaud at the California State Fair in Sacramento. While leaning against the art building on his lunch break, he witnessed a scene that would become etched into his consciousness for more than five years, when he finally created his *Miss Grapefruit Festival*, 1964. Ramos recalled:

...[A]ll the PR people from the various counties used to come to the art building as a backdrop to promote the fair. It was the only decent-looking building. And in doing this, they came here once with the maid who had just recently won the beauty queen contest, the Maid of Orange County or Ventura County, or somewhere down south where they grow a lot of oranges, and they came, and this girl—I'm sitting there, eating my bologna sandwich—and all of a sudden these guys come up in this truck, a dumptruck, and they dump this load of oranges there on the grass. And then out comes this girl in this white bathing suit with a little satin banner that said "Ventura County" on it, and they kind of bury her halfway into the stuff and they take all these photographs to send back home for the papers to promote the fair....So [my painting] came from a real life experience. But as I was sitting there, I said to myself, that's really surreal.¹⁸⁰

Miss Grapefruit Festival illustrated Ramos' memory on canvas, revealing a half nude model posed amid a blanket of vibrant Sunkist grapefruits (Fig. 3.69). "Sunkist," the bold-edge, commercial text, jumped off the purple background behind the model, whose scarlet hair blazed against the red lettering. Thinking of the work in relation to the past, Claridge vividly explained that "the girlie nude, who has acquired the face of the film star Arlene Dahl, emerge[d] like Venus from a sea of grapefruit."¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Ramos, interview with Karlstrom, 19.

¹⁸¹ Clardige, *The Girls of Mel Ramos*, 71.

According to Claridge, Ramos introduced “an overt twist of parody” into the beauty queen paintings, “by echoing in contemporary terms iconographic conventions attached to the nude in art history.”¹⁸² She paralleled Ramos’ beauty queen representations to the countless portrayals of the Judgment of Paris, in which the Trojan prince Paris must judge Aphrodite, Athena, and Hera against one another (Fig. 3.70). Claridge’s art historical analysis, however, was not simply conjecture on behalf of a scholar. Ramos himself clearly identified his works in relation to the history of art, whether the link be indirect, as seen with the beauty queen series, or direct, as visible in his “Salute to Art History” series from the 1970s. In fact, by 1972, Ramos began to create paintings that were straightforward appropriations of art history’s canonical works. As maintained by Kuspit, Ramos became interested in saluting some of the most celebrated nude paintings in art history, such as Édouard Manet’s *Olympia*, 1863, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’ *Grande Odalisque*, 1814 (Figs. 3.71-3.72). Ramos’ *Manet’s Olympia*, 1973, and *Plenti-Grand Odalisque*, 1973, among many others created as part of Ramos’ “Salute” series, were direct acknowledgments of the classic nudes of the great masters (Figs. 3.73-3.74). For Ramos, “the eroticism of nudes depicted throughout the history of art [was] essentially the same in the contemporary idiom as exemplified in pin-up pictures.”¹⁸³ According to Jones, Ramos did not conceive of the works as mere parodies or satires of the original paintings, but rather as respectful, sometimes humorous, alterations. Unlike Montoya or García, Ramos viewed

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Jones, *Mel Ramos: Paintings 1959-1977*, 15.

himself as a “very academic, old-fashioned, unreconstructed Western European-type painter....”¹⁸⁴

By 1975, Ramos expanded his repertoire of art historical salutations to include modern artworks, such as those from Willem de Kooning’s *Woman* series from the 1950s (Fig. 3.56). In a parallel series titled *I Still Get a Thrill When I See Bill*, “Ramos extracted the modern American truths that lay behind the surface of the older painter’s frothing brushstrokes, abruptly capping these harpies’ wildly fractured bodies with the slickly stylized heads of perfect pin-up girls.”¹⁸⁵ In *I Still Get a Thrill When I See Bill #1* and *#3*, Ramos rendered the works in a photo realistic manner, copying De Kooning’s original gestural brushwork, while simultaneously, incorporating faces true to Ramos (Figs. 3.75-3.76).¹⁸⁶ Moreover, Ramos constructed a direct dialogue with the modernist artist, paying tribute to De Kooning’s brash appropriation of female advertising billboards of the 1950 by recharging his works with celebrity images from the 1970s. According to Rosenblum, “such recycling of earlier art not only gave Ramos’ work a new twist, but also located him squarely in the 70s, when so many artists began to quote other works of art, usually in ways that recreated the dead past into a topical present.”¹⁸⁷ The only contrast between many of these other artists of the 1970s and Ramos was that the latter remained resolutely apolitical in his adaptations, while many of the former used their appropriations for social commentary. For

¹⁸⁴ Ramos, interview with Karlstrom, 44.

¹⁸⁵ Rosenblum, *Mel Ramos: Pop Art Images*, 14.

¹⁸⁶ Kuspit, *Mel Ramos Pop Art Fantasies*, 158.

¹⁸⁷ Rosenblum, *Mel Ramos: Pop Art Images*, 14.

instance, West Coast artist Robert Colescott, who also began to modernize old masters, took Ramos' De Kooning revision one step further, by replacing Ramos' celebrity faces with Aunt Jemima's head (Fig. 3.77). Titling the work *I Gets a Thrill Too When I Sees DeKoo*, 1978, Colescott incorporated an additional variable into the painting by "adding a new and modern racial twist to the story of art about art."¹⁸⁸ According to Lucy Lippard, Colescott "transformed many of art history's 'sacred cows' with a broad humor that veil[ed] rage."¹⁸⁹

Like Colescott, Ester Hernández similarly revamped renowned images for the sake of social commentary. In her serigraph, *Sun Mad*, 1982, Hernández subverted the trademark "Sun-Maid" raisin logo as a means of exposing the harmful health hazards of the raisin industry (Figs. 3.78-3.79). The artist maintained that one of her main reasons for the utilization of this icon was that she enjoyed "taking apart well-known images and transforming them" into what she perceived was their true nature.¹⁹⁰ While Ramos converted his beauty queens into corporate talismans, Hernández translated the Sun-Maid beauty queen into a corporate admonition. The Sun-Maid girl, Lorraine Collett, gained her title in 1915, when the company selected her to be the personality behind the "pretty 'maid' gathering the harvest and making the raisins."¹⁹¹ Initially, the company

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 16.

¹⁸⁹ Lucy R. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990): 238.

¹⁹⁰ Shifra Goldman, "'Portraying Ourselves': Contemporary Chicana Artists," *Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology*, eds. Arlene Raven, Cassandra L. Langer, and Joanna Frueh, (New York: Icon Editions, 1991): 198.

¹⁹¹ Sun-Maid Growers of California, *Sun-Maid Informational Brochure*, (Kingburg, California: Sun-Maid Growers of California, 1992).

chose her with two other women to promote Sun-Maid raisins at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco (Figs. 3.80-3.81). After her discovery, she posed for artist Fanny Scafford, who painted the popular Sun-Maid image with Collett as the central figure. In this work, Collett appeared as a vision of health, robust and attractive, holding a basket of gleaming green grapes.

By way of contrast, Hernández transformed this trademark to make a social statement about the negative aspects of raisin production. The artist morphed the smiling, jovial maid into a calavera, commenting on the fatal results of pesticide poisoning and making a reference to the famous 19th century Mexican satirist José Guadalupe Posada. She also altered the grapes below the skeletal figure, bestowing them with an artificial quality that alluded to their hidden toxins. Finally, her incorporation of text clarified any misconceptions about her parody. By substituting “Sun Mad” for “Sun-Maid,” Hernández inferred that the girl had either become mad (crazy) due to her exposure to poison, or mad (angry) due to her rage about this exposure. Moreover, she satirically commented that the raisins were “unnaturally grown [with] insecticides, miticides, herbicides, [and] fungicides.” For Amalia Mesa-Bains, “there lies below the surface of the Sun Mad Raisin image a sense of defiance, a questioning of the social context,” to which she referred as “la política.”¹⁹² Like Colescott, Hernández “wittily and magically disrupts icons, and simultaneously gives

¹⁹² Amalia Mesa-Bains, “Ester Hernández,” *Artist Monograph Series*, n. 1, (San Francisco: Galeria de la Raza, June 1988): 1.

them new life...[that is] an ongoing complicated, intelligent, offbeat blend of wit and political commentary.”¹⁹³

Quite conversely, Ramos has always been emphatic about the apolitical nature of his works. Ramos dismissed criticism that his works were about eroticism and maintained that his paintings simply focused on that specific social condition, but did not confirm or negate it. He did not “have any political feelings one way or the other about it.”¹⁹⁴ Moreover, when Karlstrom asked whether or not his paintings honored high-profile individuals, Ramos claimed:

I’m not honoring anything. I’m very apolitical about art. I get a lot of flack from very few, but nevertheless very vociferous, feminists about my work...They think of it as exploitive. My standard comment in a reply to that is that I’m apolitical about it. I’m not embracing it, supporting it, championing that, rejecting that, I’m just observing that it’s there and that’s the way it is...It’s part of the visual landscape and I’m interested in pointing out that aspect of it.¹⁹⁵

For the artist, his paintings highlighted popular imagery, yet not for its social ramifications. According to Kuspit, Ramos wanted his works “to be popular for art reasons, as his allusions to high art suggest.”¹⁹⁶

In the same manner that they appeared politically neutral, Ramos’ art works also remained emotionally and culturally void, at least with regards to the artist’s own cultural background. None of his works hinted to his ethnicity, but instead retained a

¹⁹³ Yolanda M. López and Moira Roth, “Social Protest: Racism and Sexism,” *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994): 147.

¹⁹⁴ Belz and Ramos, “Talking with Mel Ramos,” 20.

¹⁹⁵ Ramos, interview with Karlstrom, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Kuspit, *Mel Ramos Pop Art Fantasies*, 19.

glossy, detached air, an approach Ramos referred to as “clinical.”¹⁹⁷ Carl Belz declared that “Ramos’ best paintings employ not only an artificial figure in an artificial context, but they generate an abstract artificial space as well.”¹⁹⁸ By refraining from any political and cultural commentary in his works, Ramos achieved such a level of assimilation that his own personal history became obsolete.

Since the artist’s mainstream accommodation led to such complete cultural erasure, why is Ramos included within this investigation? Given that the artist is a second-generation United States citizen, the son of U.S.-born parents of Portuguese descent, his inclusion within a dissertation about Chicano artists remains unclear. Why should his assimilation practices have any bearing on Chicano identity, nationalism, and art establishment participation? The answer to this question lies in the fact that because Ramos remained reticent about his personal heritage, some critics and academics assigned one to him, namely “Hispanic.” Since the artist never discussed his legacy openly, argued any cultural politics in relation to his art, nor painted social commentary, some authors sought out their own angle by which to examine his art. They conferred onto him a Hispanic heritage, ideal for a cultural analysis of his art works.

Within her essay published in *Artforum*, Collier Schorr reviewed Robert Rosenblum’s book, *Mel Ramos: Pop Art Images*. Within the original text, Rosenblum

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 8.

¹⁹⁸ Carl Belz, *Mel Ramos*, exhibition catalogue, (Oakland: Mills College Art Gallery, 1968): 1.

likened Ramos and California to Paul Gauguin and Tahiti.¹⁹⁹ Schorr quickly grasped onto this connection and inverted the link, stating:

In fact, these dyads are opposite—Gauguin was a white European alien painting ‘native’ girls, Ramos an artist of Hispanic parentage, California born and bred, painting white peroxide-blondes. The five paintings of Latinas in *Mel Ramos* are subtly different from the other pictures in ways Rosenblum neglects to mention: *Spicey* and *Kiss Me* are perfect capsules of the American vision of Latin women—spicy, red-hot-and-fiery, Rita, not Natalie, in *West Side Story*. *Miss Navel Orange* and *Miss Lemon Drop*, both models posed before giant versions of their respective fruits, surely hint at agribusiness’ exploitation of migrant workers. *Senorita Rio*—The Queen of Spies, on the other hand, with her smoking gun at breast level, is a dangerous superhero—and it’s easy to imagine what she threatens. Whether or not Ramos consciously set out to explode the white-female trophy, his mimicry of contemporary advertising rituals clearly illustrates his awareness of the all-American desire to be all-American.²⁰⁰

In this examination, Schorr placed Ramos squarely in the role of the “Hispanic” artist, evaluating his images in relation to a perceived cultural identity. As a result, her analysis altered the overt significance of the works, casting upon them an alternative meaning, one with critical cultural overtones unbeknownst to even the artist himself.

Likewise, artist and critic Tom Moody also critiqued Ramos in a similar manner. Defending Ramos’ work against magazines like *Arts*, which described Ramos’ images as “masturbation plates,” Moody argued, “What’s awkward is, he’s Hispanic, and by the early ‘90s the (white, elitist) art world was bending over backward to be ‘multicultural.’ What do you do when the culture you’re fetishizing fetishizes

¹⁹⁹ Rosenblum, *Mel Ramos: Pop Art Images*, 6.

²⁰⁰ Collier Schorr, “Mel Ramos: Pop Art Images,” *ArtForum International*, book review, (November 1994): 14.

women?”²⁰¹ Clearly, Moody’s argument depended upon the perceived reality that Ramos himself was part of a marginalized group in the United States.

In addition to these critics’ placement of Ramos into the role of the “Hispanic” artist, Ramos’ inclusion in certain exhibitions also insinuated a link to a Chicano heritage. In *Oakland Icons: Paintings, Posters and Prints by Rupert García and Mel Ramos*, coordinated by the Craft and Cultural Arts Gallery in Oakland, the work of García and Ramos hung adjacently, without noteworthy interpretation, in a two-person exhibition. Describing the show in a written critique for *Artweek*, Terri Cohn bemoaned the pairing of the two artists, asking herself how she was going “to begin to comment on the depressing suitability of Ramos’s commercial aesthetic to this setting, and conversely, the chilling contradictions to it made by García’s powerful images, which critique the effects of power structures, both corporate and otherwise.”²⁰² She continued her essay not by forging a link between the two, but rather by criticizing Ramos’s images for their superficiality and praising García’s works for their visual fortitude. Even at the conclusion of her essay, Cohn further questioned the correlation, clouding rather than clarifying any connection for the reader. Given the polarity of these artists’ subject matter, the superficial linkage between the two was their geographical roots. Yet, devoid of significant explanation as to their relation, viewers were left to infer their own opinions, with a cultural association being one of them.

²⁰¹ Tom Moody, “A Short History of Mel Ramos,” from Tom Moody’s Weblong, <http://www.digitalmediatree.com/tommoody/?6641>, (accessed August 18, 2005).

²⁰² Terri Cohn, “‘Oakland Icons’ at the Craft & Cultural Arts Gallery,” *Artweek*, Vol. 33, No. 9, (November 2002): 16.

Finally, the employment of Ramos' paintings for certain endeavors may have further contributed to the bestowal of this inaccurate ethnic identity. In 1996, the rock band "Rage Against the Machine" utilized Ramos' painting, *Crime Buster*, 1962, as the cover picture for their album, "Evil Empire" (Fig. 3.82-3.83). The title of this record referred to the classification bestowed upon the former Soviet Union by past U.S. President Ronald Reagan.²⁰³ However, "Rage Against the Machine" appropriated this title as a means of hinting to the establishment that we should evaluate our own country's actions before labeling others.

For the album, Ramos' original image received slight modifications, including the integration of the band's name across the top of the artwork, an alteration of the original painting's colors, the exchange of the word "Crime Buster" for the motto "Evil Empire" on the scroll below the superhero's torso, and the incorporation of a specific countenance onto the generic Crime Buster's portrait. Ari Meisel, a 15-year old who attended the United Nations International School in New York, became the model to adorn millions of album covers.²⁰⁴

As the name of the band implies, "Rage Against of the Machine" placed its politics in the forefront of its music production, using its lyrics as a sounding board for its members' contention against "the Machine." According to Lee Smith, the band viewed the Machine as "what we have come to know as our governments, our politics,

²⁰³ Steven Michael Vroom, "Covers: Visual Artists and the Music Industry," *The Vroom Journal*, (August 30, 2004), [http://www.littlecityjournal.com/VroomArticle.php?RECORD_KEY\(VJ\)=ROW_ID&ROW_ID\(VJ\)=52](http://www.littlecityjournal.com/VroomArticle.php?RECORD_KEY(VJ)=ROW_ID&ROW_ID(VJ)=52), (accessed October 22, 2005).

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

our economies, the people and corporate conglomerates that have come to dominate our society in this day and age. The Machine is the oppression of people everywhere, from Mexico to China to the United States.”²⁰⁵ Unlike some other heavy metal bands, which celebrate self-indulgence and drug-culture, “Rage Against the Machine” concentrated its energies on the confrontation of social injustices. According to Alexander Naylor and his father, Professor Emeritus of Economics from Duke University Thomas Naylor, “Rage aims its antiauthoritarian message right at the heart and soul of technofacism. Its highly politicized – almost revolutionary – music is a parody of American technofacism which it portrays as ‘The Machine.’ Over-consumption, technomania, megalomania, globalization, racism, and American imperialism are targets of their counterculture band’s rage.”²⁰⁶

At the time of the release of “Evil Empire,” the band was comprised of several outspoken and socially mindful individuals, including Zack de la Rocha. The lead vocalist of the band, Zack de la Rocha, is the son of Chicano artist, Roberto de la Rocha. During the early 1970s, “Beto” de la Rocha was one of the four original members of the renowned Chicano art collective, *Los Four*, which painted murals and exhibited jointly in Los Angeles. *Los Four* was crucial to the early development of the Chicano Art Movement and instrumental in breaking discriminatory barriers, by getting

²⁰⁵ Lee Smith, “General Rage Information,” *The Unofficial Rage Against the Machine Website*, www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Alley/4664/htmlfaq.htm#A, (accessed December 7, 2005).

²⁰⁶ Alexander W. Naylor and Thomas H. Naylor, “Rage Against the Machine,” *The Center for Progressive Christianity Newsletter*, March 2000, http://www.tpc.org/resources/articles/rage_against.html, (accessed October 24, 2005).

Chicano art into the mainstream art establishment. Zack de la Rocha evidently gained insight into the struggles initially endured by his father's generation, and continued to pursue justice for the oppressed. The songs included on "Evil Empire" contained socially and politically relevant lyrics, ranging from the plight of Mexican immigrants in the United States to the complete domination of the media by right wing propagandists.

Not only did Zack de la Rocha and his fellow band members perform using lyrics that shared their specific political inclinations, they also endorsed particular ideologies within the liner notes of "Evil Empire." The band pictured over seventy books within the fold-out of the album, including *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Juan Gómez-Quiñones' *Chicano Politics: Reality & Promise, 1940-1990*, Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Che Guevara's *A New Society: Reflections for Today's World*, and V.I. Lenin's *The State and Revolution*, to name but a few. These recommended reading lists found residence below the protective layer of Ramos' comic book character. Within this context, Ramos' original Crime Buster transformed into the contemporary superhero, who protected the people against the "Machine." "Rage Against the Machine" assumed this role, attempting to reveal and "bust" the corruption of the establishment.

Regardless of whether or not Ramos actively sympathized with the principles presented by "Rage Against the Machine," the connection between his painting and the album alluded to a specific philosophical perspective on behalf of the artist. Moreover,

the ties between Zack de la Rocha and the Chicano Art Movement, via his father, created yet another avenue by which confusion as to the Ramos' identity could flourish. Association with the Chicano artist, his son, and his son's radical proclamations may have indirectly bestowed Ramos with an inaccurate cultural identity.

While ethnicity played no direct role within Ramos' work, the conferring of an identity upon the artist has, in some instances, influenced the reception of his images. For Ramos, this conference of a Chicano identity is problematic, as it is not his heritage, and it has perpetuated the analysis of his paintings from an incorrect perspective. When asked to clarify his ethnic background, Ramos gladly accepted, stating:

Yes, I am interested in getting it correct...I am a second generation Californiano and a Native son of the Golden West. Like me, my parents were born in Sacramento to Portuguese immigrants, my maternal and paternal grandparents who all came from the island of Pico, in the Azores. I am as close to pure Portuguese as you can get, or so I thought until 1991. That year I was invited to be the official artist of Carnaval 91' in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. I mentioned my heritage to an official of the Carnaval and a native to the island, and she suggested to me that I may be Guanche, people who inhabited the islands of the Eastern Atlantic Ocean and were tall in stature, not a common trait in mainland Spain. I am writing this e-mail at my studio in Spain where I spend three months every year since 1972. I have come to know many Catalans in the last thirty years and I feel connected to these people who are my friends, neighbors and acquaintances. So while my genes make me Portuguese, I like the sound of "Guanche" which probably makes me a closet Spaniard.²⁰⁷

When asked whether or not his cultural identity influenced his art production, Ramos claimed:

²⁰⁷ Mel Ramos, e-mail correspondence with the author, August 27, 2005.

[It] has nothing to do with what I do. For me, ethnicity is not a factor in making art and has no relevance to what I do. Growing up in California has a lot of relevance to [what] I do. Sunshine, Free will, and the tyranny of beautiful women left an imprint on me. I never considered myself 'hispanic' and always declined invitations to participate in 'hispanic' art events. I thought they should give a real 'hispanic' artist the opportunity to exhibit work.²⁰⁸

For Ramos, his paintings derived their meaning from their lack of cultural affiliation, as Ramos fully exploited their clinical, apolitical character. The imposition of a specific, and at times incorrect, identity upon the artist considerably altered the significance of his images.

While complete mainstream assimilation granted Ramos the ability to gain cross-cultural success, it also left critics questioning his background, as they eagerly attempted to critique his works through his culture. Ramos, thus, found himself in an alternative situation to Montoya and García, as an assimilated individual involuntarily bestowed a culture. Montoya and García, on the other hand, actively endorsed their cultural affiliations, yet found themselves at odds with one another regarding their mechanism for artistic distribution. While Montoya's nationalistic leanings sought an isolationist approach, geared towards community involvement, García's inclusionary tactic openly endorsed mainstream participation. As three Bay Area artists, Montoya, García, and Ramos may have shared common geographical histories, but they have quite distinct ideologies regarding culture, identity, and the mainstreaming of their artworks.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion

Innovation through Appropriation as an Alternative to Separatism

The question of whether or not Chicano artists can produce socially relevant and politically controversial artwork, which gains strength through subversion and condemnation of mainstream society, while at the same time benefiting from involvement within the traditional art establishment, is highly complicated. It is a topic that has had a long past, punctuated by specific events and ideologies linked to the Chicano political movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, and has presented a contradiction for many politically conscious Chicano artists, whose artwork challenges the very institutions that subsidize it.

Moreover, although this dilemma has had a lengthy history, it has escaped scholarly examination. As explained by Amelia Malagamba-Ansótegui, “[t]he tendency of research, scholarship and curatorial work in the visual arts of the Chicano Movement has been principally focused on the artistic Movement’s intersection with the Chicano Movement of the 1960s. While many of the visual artists from that period continue to work, and many new artists have emerged, the overall analysis of their work still lingers primarily on the philosophical issues of the 1960s.”¹ This limited focus is inadequate for concerns that pertain to the decades following the Movement’s initial inception. It overlooks the inherent inconsistencies that developed over the next two

¹ Amelia Malagamba-Ansótegui, *Tracing Symbolic Spaces in Border Art: De Este y Del Orto Lado*, PhD diss., (University of Texas at Austin, May 2001): 1.

decades, when many of the ideologies of the early Chicano Movement proved unrealistic.

During the early years of *El Movimiento*, Chicano activists, like Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, endorsed an isolationist approach to all aspects of Chicano life, including art production. Leaders urged Chicano writers, artists, and poets, to name a few, to produce self-deterministic representations, which strove to counteract mainstream stereotypes of Mexican Americans. As stated in the introduction of this dissertation, the mission of Chicano cultural educators was “conservation, struggle, and invention” as the means to formulate an insider perspective of a Chicano identity.² The visual and literary products of this mission targeted the Mexican American community rather than the mainstream establishment at large. Isolation from the Anglo mainstream proved a mechanism by which many Chicano creators sought to formulate positive representations of this collective identity for intracultural consumption.

Yet, while the proclamations of these early leaders advised Chicanos to become cultural instructors within their own neighborhoods and outside of the Anglo establishment, how realistic were their urgings for University-trained Chicano artists? As revealed by Luis Camnitzer at the beginning of chapter three, marginalized artists often found themselves in a quandary, desiring to belong to the mainstream while

² Tomás Rivera, “Into the Labyrinth: The Chicano in Literature,” paper presented at *New Voices in Literature: The Mexican American*, symposium, (Department of English, Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas, October 7-8, 1971): 24.

simultaneously longing to destroy it.³ The rhetoric adopted in many of the separatist manifestoes of the early period spoke in rigid binary terms, calling for complete separatism of Chicanos from the mainstream. Yet, for University-trained Chicano artists, these manifestoes occurred at a time when Chicano artists were still attempting to break *into* Anglo mainstream art institutions.

Describing the art world of the 1960s, Andreas Huyssen explained how many of the mainstream art movements of the late 1950s and 1960s challenged not only the formalist legacy of Abstract Expressionism, but attacked the hegemony of elitist social structures as well. According to Huyssen, Pop Art was “a pivotal movement initiating the push toward the postmodern in the context of the cultural politics of the 1960s,”⁴ and it, along with developments like Happenings and Beat culture, to name only a few, nurtured an environment of inquiry and even resistance against the traditional art world. Within this counter-culture current, civil rights movements, like *El Movimiento*, were able to prosper, and marginalized groups gained a voice both to confront their economic and political inequities and to dispute the exclusionary practices of mainstream society.⁵

Yet, to what degree did these mainstream artistic movements influence the Chicano Art Movement and its artists? Since the artistic questioning of established

³ Luis Camnitzer, “Access to the Mainstream,” *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996): 218.

⁴ Andreas, Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986): xi.

⁵ John A. García, “The Chicano Movement: Its Legacy for Politics and Policy,” *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads: Social, Economic, and Political Change*, eds. David R. Maciel and Isidro D. Ortiz, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996): 83.

authority cultivated an atmosphere, which was both critical of the status quo and aligned with various counter-culture movements, I will acknowledge that these movements did, to a limited degree, foster an environment that facilitated the emergence of the first phase of the Chicano Art Movement. However, even given the counter-cultural climate, minority cultures still remained isolated from the dominant high culture. The Chicano Art Movement initially developed largely within its own separatist context. Mainstream art movements may have contributed to the opportunity for the Chicano Art Movement to be born, but ultimately they did little to directly nurture or promote it. The artists within these mainstream movements, although rebellious and at times part of a subculture, still remained largely allied with the dominant art establishment. This made them quite distinct from “minority” artists, who themselves were part of a subordinate culture. Expounding upon this topic, Alicia Gaspar de Alba explained that:

the term ‘subculture’ is applicable only to those cultures like Hippies, punks, fraternities or in the separatist communities of senior citizens... [who] are enclaves of difference within the same ethnicity as well as by-products of the dominant culture’s values. Although subcultures appear to resist the dominant value system, they are not, in fact, resisting the dominant culture as much as dominance itself. A subordinate culture, on the other hand, lives in a direct power relation with the dominant culture; it is not a recalcitrant offspring, but a disenfranchised colony of the dominant ethnicity.⁶

Although subcultures exhibited “a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their ‘parent’ culture,” they still contained significant

⁶ Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art, Inside/Outside the Master’s House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*, (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998): 16.

characteristics which bound them to this “parent” culture.⁷ For this reason, the facility of mainstream 1960s artists to be critical of “high modernism” stemmed directly from their union with the dominant culture. Regardless of their stance towards this connection, most of these artists remained part of the cultural majority of the period. Even the Beat generation, whose categorization as a subculture was in all probability the most apparent, emerged predominantly as anti-authoritarian, not anti-American. The Beats’ inclusion in *Look* magazine, a publication geared towards a mainstream middle-class audience and their middle-class lifestyle, revealed the Beats’ connection to the mainstream, albeit as insiders longing to be outsiders. The article, “The Bored, The Bearded and The Beat,” published in *Look* in August of 1958, played upon this connection, portraying the Beats as “fugitives from the great American middle class—people who have chosen to retire for a while from the rat race of everyday living,” and describing their philosophy as consisting “merely of the average American value scale—turned inside out.”⁸ The article even quoted “Beatnik” Eric Nord as claiming that “[t]here’s a little of the Beat in all of us. A lot of people would like to break out of the conformist rat race, quit working day after day just to get a bigger house or a bigger car. Maybe our way isn’t the good life. But neither is theirs.”⁹ In spite of the Beats’ counter-cultural perspectives (and maybe because of them), middle-class Americans

⁷ John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts, “Subcultures, Cultures and Class,” *Resistance through Ritual: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, eds. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, (1975; reprint, London: Routledge, 1996) 13-14.

⁸ George B. Leonard, Jr., “The Bored, The Bearded, and The Beats,” *Look*, vol. 22, no. 17, (August 19, 1958): 65.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

sympathized with these artists, relating to their need to escape the ennui of the bourgeois lifestyle. Essays about the plights of Chicano artists, however, remained excluded from such publications.

In fact, Chicanos artists remained outside of mainstream art institutions until the mid-1970s, when the Chicano collective, *Los Four*, finally exhibited in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Even subsequently, exhibitions for Chicano artists remained minimal at Anglo museums and galleries. This begged the question of whether or not Chicano artists could appropriately separate from the mainstream art world during the early phase of the Chicano Art Movement if they were never fully recognized by it in the first place. This initial question precipitates further inquiries. For instance, can one ever truly make a connection to an institution if one is not acknowledged by it? Similarly, can one fully separate from the establishment once a connection has been made?

These queries lie at the heart of the separatist/assimilationist situation for Chicano artists, as they complicate the binary construct to which so many of the early Chicano manifestoes subscribed. In her book, *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism after Identity Politics*, Jodi Dean claimed that there were in fact multiple levels of identity politics, not just simply the dueling separatist and assimilationist conditions. She described these different circumstances as being “characterized by a particular notion of the subject, the sort of recognition demanded, the type of appeal raised in making this demand, a vision of society or culture, and the corresponding political theory or

conception of the state and legal system.”¹⁰ Within this description, Dean also maintained that identity categories were, and still are, artificial constructs. They are not fixed, and overlaps occur among them. For many University-trained Chicano artists, an adherence to cultural nationalism did not completely erase their mainstream education or participation.

For instance, even as many Chicano artists produced artworks counter to those taught by their mainstream instructors and albeit Chicano artists remained isolated from exhibiting and participating within the mainstream, I contend that many college-trained Chicano artists continued to engage with the art of the mainstream during the early phase of *El Movimiento*. Simply because Chicano artists remained distanced from the mainstream, adopting the role of cultural educators, did not mean that they completely disengaged from the happenings of the various art movements. Their productions, while created for social or political ends, often times simultaneously fostered a dialogic relationship with the art of mainstream movements. As indicated by Ybarra-Frausto and Shifra Goldman:

It is obvious that Chicanos living within the United States and attending its art schools should be aware of and utilize most of the mainstream tendencies. What is interesting in this context is that many utilize these tendencies in their own ways; that is, they do not simply *enter* the mainstream, but expropriate it to their own ends. Thus we find trends like photorealism, pop art, performance, installation, and video art

¹⁰ Jodi Dean, *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism after Identity Politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 50.

adopted and altered for Chicano needs and subjects.¹¹

Within this statement, Ybarra-Frausto and Goldman highlighted a key point when examining the art of the first phase of the Movement. Even within the early years of separatism, Chicano artists, such as Rupert García, Mel Casas, and select members of Los Four and of ASCO to name but a few, made use of their formal education, borrowing techniques and styles, and even appropriating the works of their mainstream counterparts for their own political ends. They did not divorce themselves from their formal training, but rather, like Warhol and his liaison with high Modernism, engaged with the art of the mainstream in a critical dialogue.

For instance, Rupert García hyper-realized the works of mainstream Pop artists, like Andy Warhol, appropriating from them directly to create his own innovations, commentaries on societal-ills and injustices. García consciously borrowed from their works, never believing that this appropriation compromised his commitment to the cultural aspects of his productions. For the most part, the binary structure of separatism/assimilation advanced by early Chicano leaders was unrealistic and non-applicable to García's inclusionary stance. García shunned a separatist model, while simultaneously eschewing complete assimilation.

Yet, even García, whose philosophies fell in the middle of this dichotomous dialogue, was not entirely consistent in his own practices. As revealed in chapter three, García laughingly reacted to the question of whether or not he would exhibit in

¹¹ Shifra Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, *Arte Chicano: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Art, 1965-1981*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1985): 51-52.

downtown San Francisco galleries, claiming that he would never join them as they would commodify his creative essence. Ten years later, by the mid-1980s, García entered into these arenas, seemingly negating his earlier pronouncements. The realization, however, is that García never overtly stated that entrance into these galleries led to cultural commodification. Rather he seemed more concerned that his participation within these environments would lead to artistic compromise. García appeared to remain constant in his stance toward multi-contextuality, the practice of exhibition in multiple and diverse venues. Whether or not his move toward abstraction and apolitical content in his later work was the result of venue or artistic experimentation remains questionable.

While artists, like García, viewed an artistic intercultural dialogue as a means of cultivating their own creative and political ends, not all Chicano artists agreed with this approach. Artists, like Malaquías Montoya, believed that any involvement, even an artistic conversation with the mainstream, negated the value of an artwork as social commentary. However, how realistic were Montoya's proclamations? While he enthusiastically endorsed his views on isolationism, particularly within his *Metamorfosis* essay from the early 1980s, Montoya truly only practiced partial separatism. By teaching at a state university and accepting grant funding from the government, Montoya complicated his own separatist pronouncements. His caveat that he teaches so he can produce inexpensive or free art for his community has validity, but does not negate the fact that he works within state-run institutions, the *sine qua non* for

the establishment. By espousing rhetoric that adopted a strict binary model on separatism, Montoya created a paradigm to which he himself could not entirely subscribe. Moreover, given the complexity of identity politics, as explained by Jodi Dean and as revealed by Mel Ramos' own cultural hijacking, the reality of a binary approach proved unsustainable. Even as Ramos attempted to adhere to one extreme, complete assimilation, scholars assigned him an incorrect identity.

Whether or not the Montoyas of the world present theories of separatism too idealistic for practice, their propositions reveal a huge apprehension about the commodification of their culture. As George Yudice maintained, with the reduction in governmental funds for the production of the arts, the privatization of culture keeps growing.¹² Chicano artists continue to grapple with the question of whether they can participate in the mainstream without compromising their ideologies. For these artists, this question resonates as strongly today as in the past, particularly as the civil rights achievements of the 1960s continue to diminish.

¹² George Yudice, "The Privatization of Culture," *Art Matters: How the Cultural Wars Changed America*, eds. Brian Wallis, Marianne Weems, and Philip Yenawine, (New York: New York University Press, 1999): 287-299.



Fig. 1.1 Author, Photograph of Sculpture of Sleeping Worker Under Sombrero, 2005, Palos Verdes Estates, California.



Fig. 1.2 Harry Gamboa, Jr., *Spray Paint LACMA*, 1972, photograph.
©1972, Harry Gamboa, Jr.

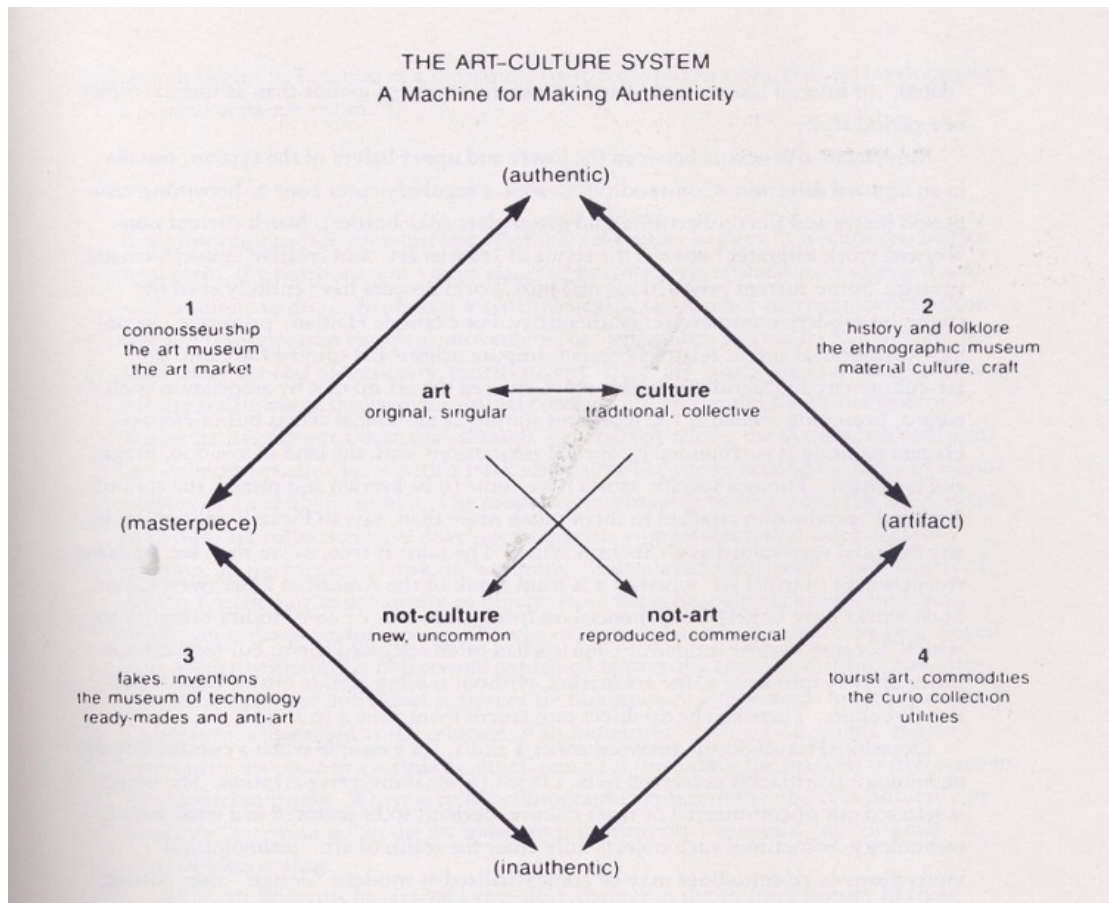


Fig. 1.3 James Clifford, “The Art-Culture System: A Machine for Making Authenticity” Diagram, from *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1988: 224).



Fig. 1.4 Ester Hernández, *Libertad*, 1976, etching, 16 1/8 x 10 1/8 inches. Collection of the artist.

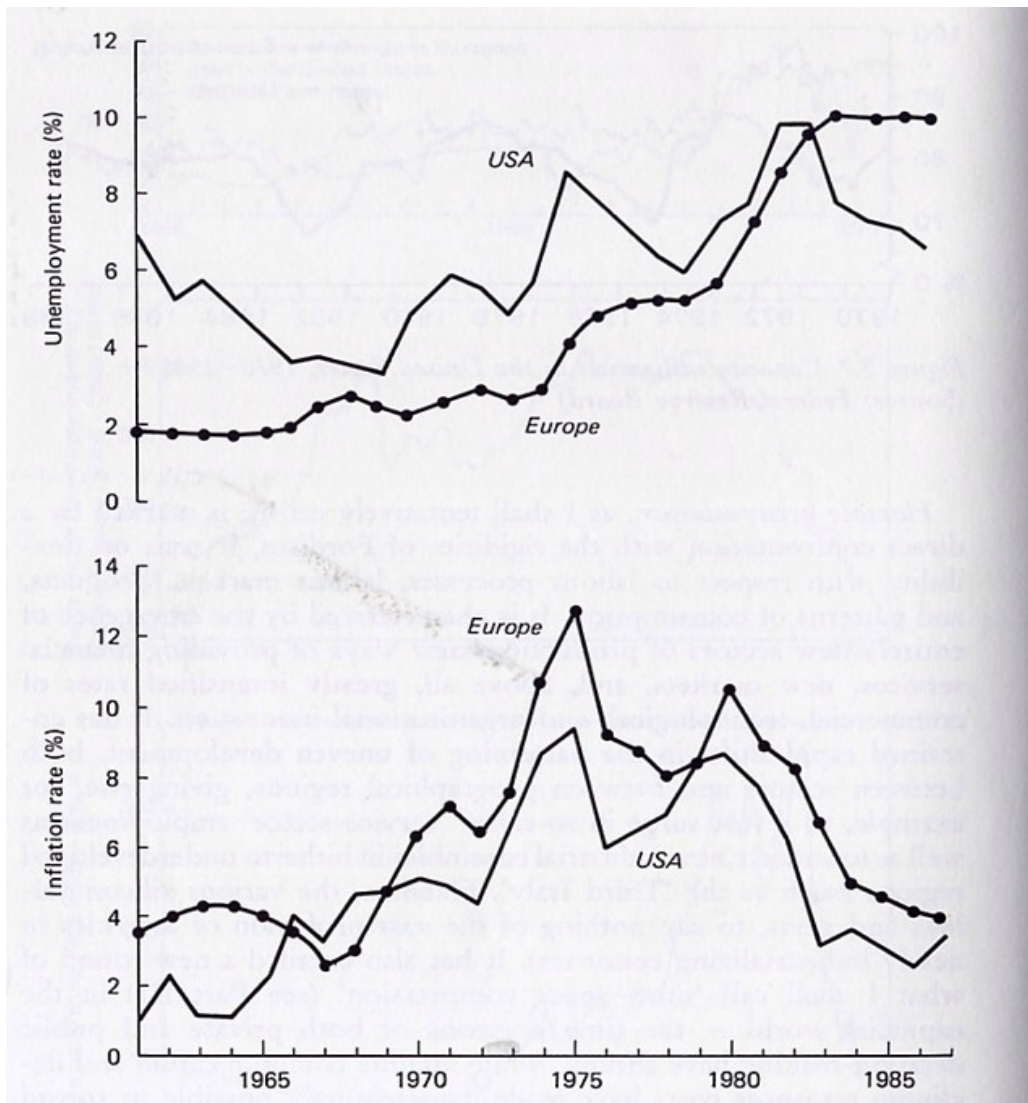


Fig. 2.1 David Harvey, “Unemployment and inflation rates in Europe and the USA, 1961-1987,” (Source: OECD), from *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990: 148).

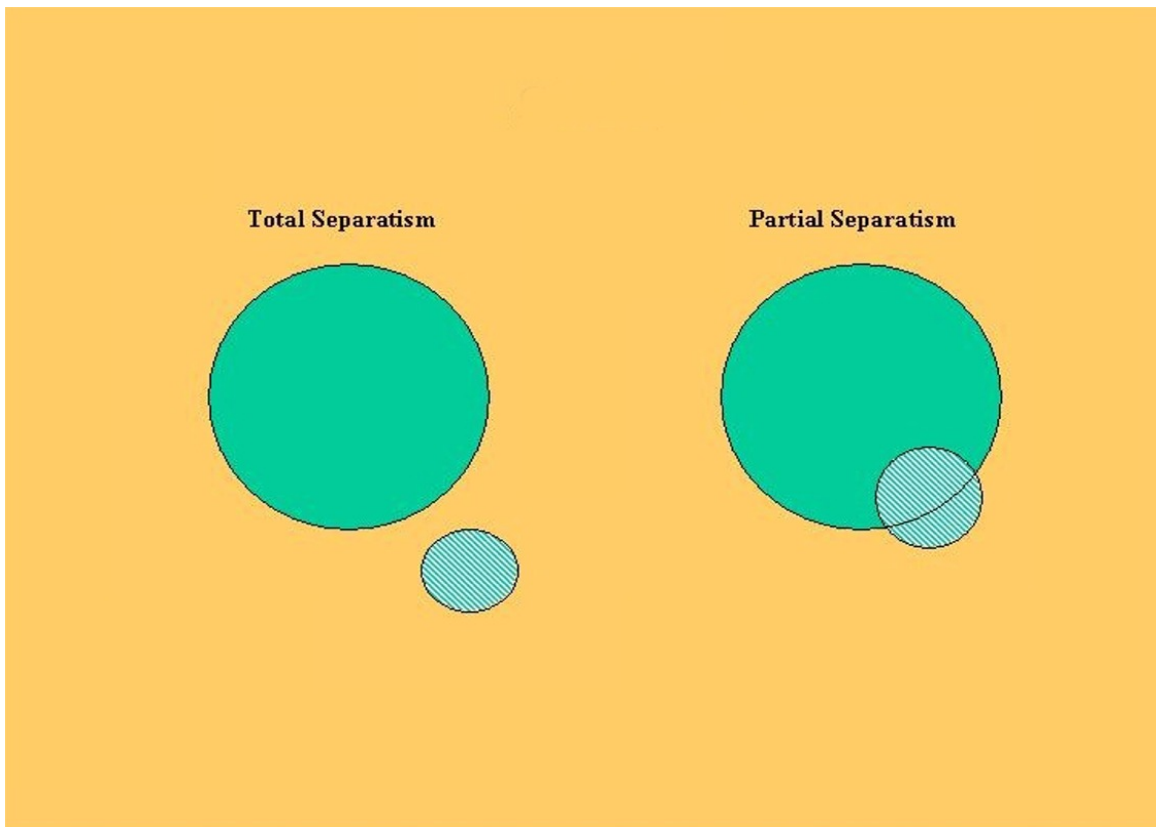


Fig. 2.2 Author, Graph of Separatism As Proposed by Malaquías Montoya and Shifra Goldman, 2003.



Fig. 3.1 Malaquías Montoya, *Campesino*, 1967, silkscreen, 14 x 10 ¼ inches.

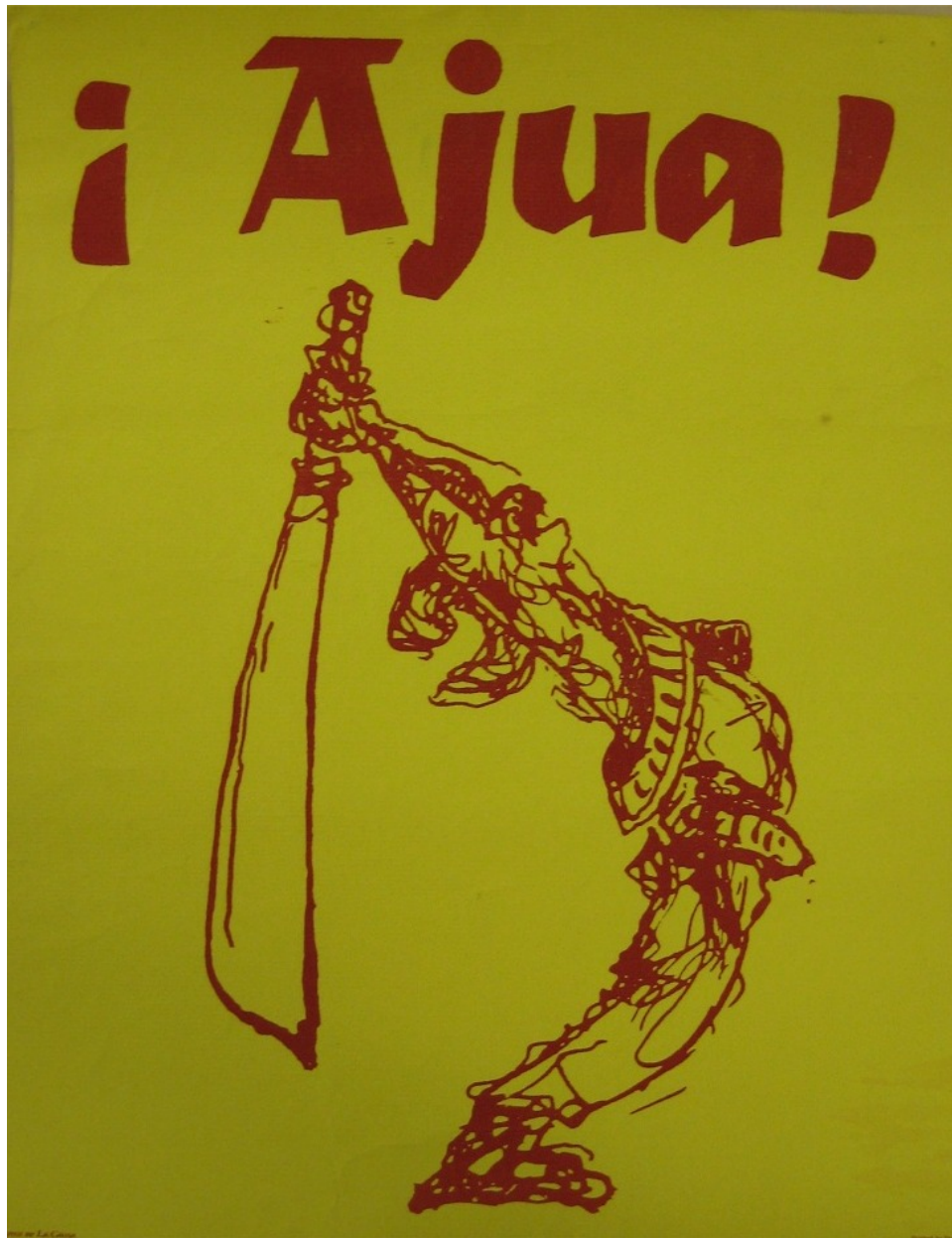


Fig. 3.2 Malaquías Montoya, *Ajuu*, 1968, offset, 17 x 12 inches.

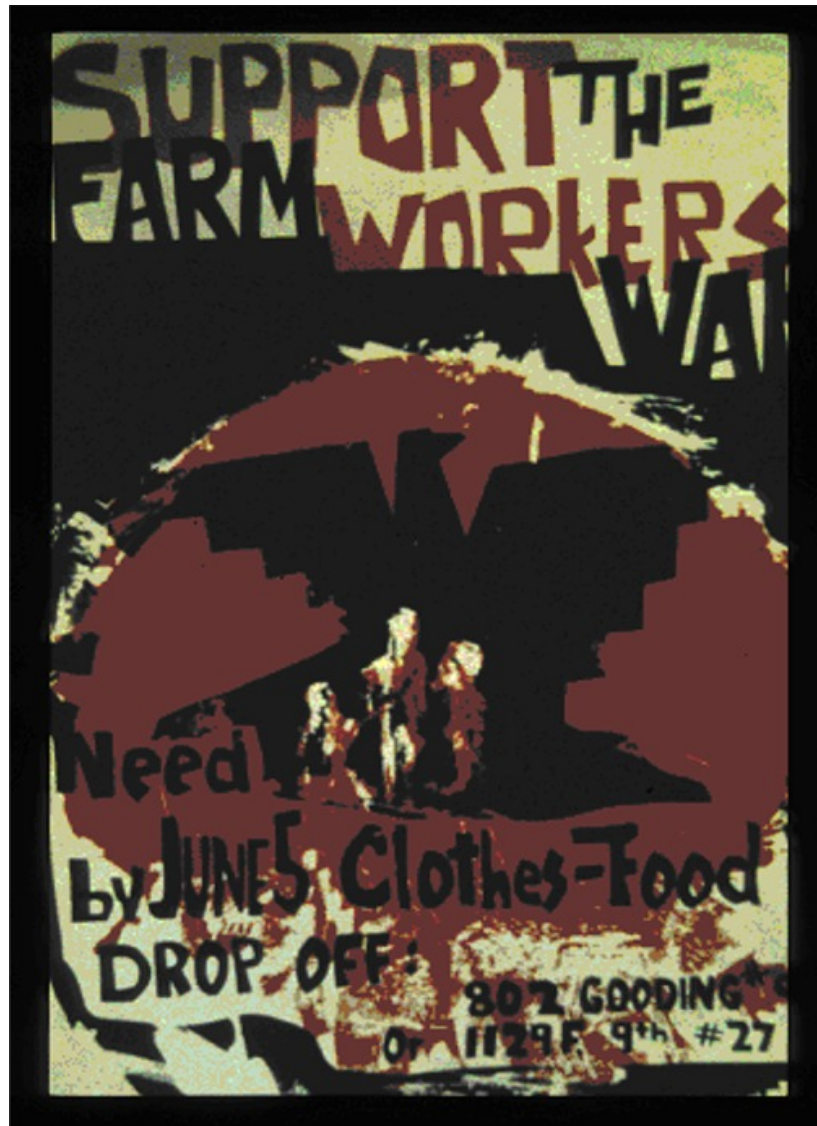


Fig. 3.3 Malaquías Montoya, *Support the Farmworkers*, 1968, silkscreen. Collection of the artist.



Fig. 3.4 Malaquías Montoya, *Migrant Legal Services*, c. 1970, silkscreen, 14 x 22 ½ inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.5 Malaquías Montoya, *Viet Nam Aztlán*, 1973, offset, 19 x 26 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.6 Malaquías Montoya, *La Batalla Esta Aquí*, 1969, silkscreen, 22 x 14 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.

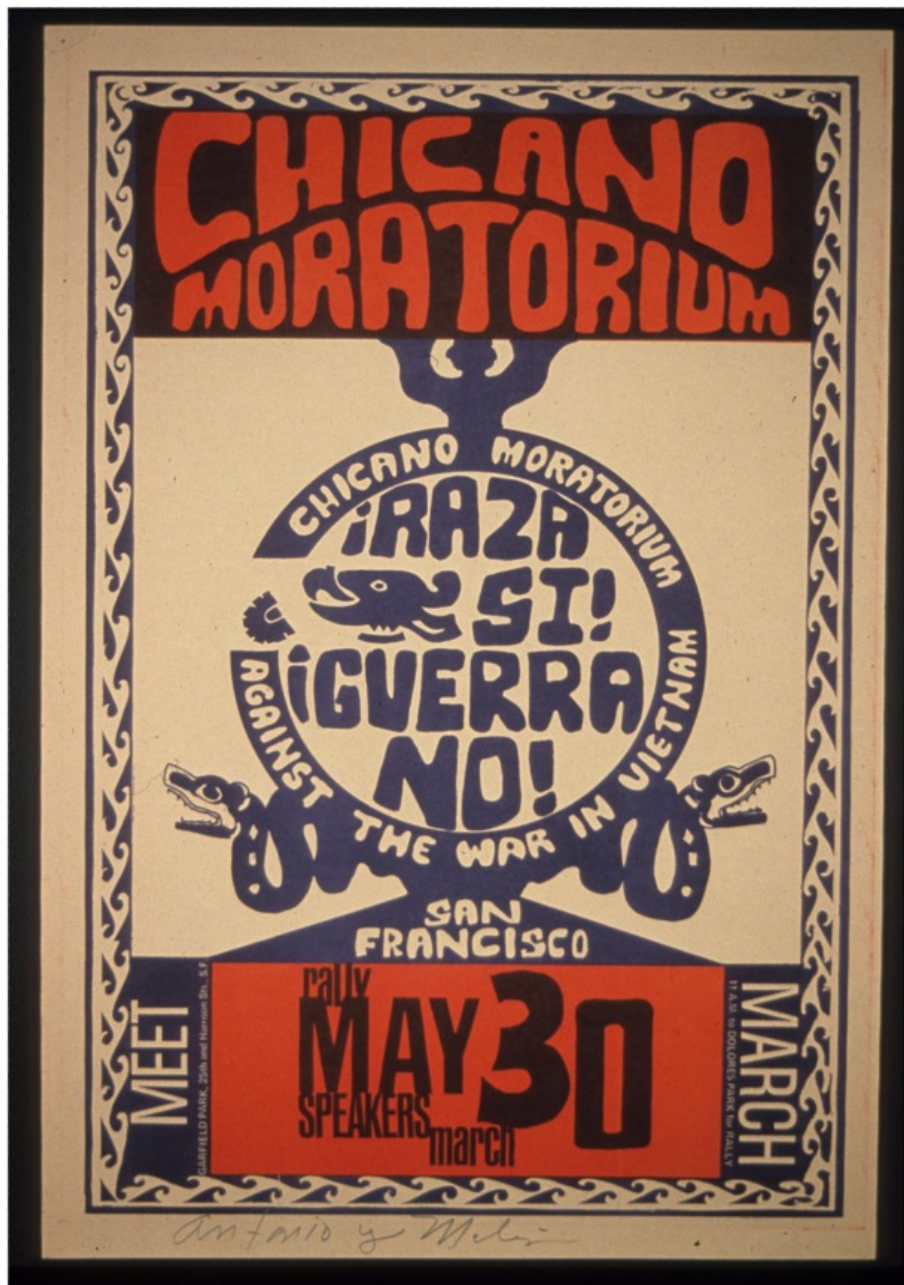


Fig. 3.7 Malaquías Montoya, *Chicano Moratorium*, 1970, offset, 17 x 11 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.8 Malaquías Montoya, *Benefit Olga-Unidad 7*, 1975, offset of an original silkscreen, 22 ½ x 17 ½ inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.

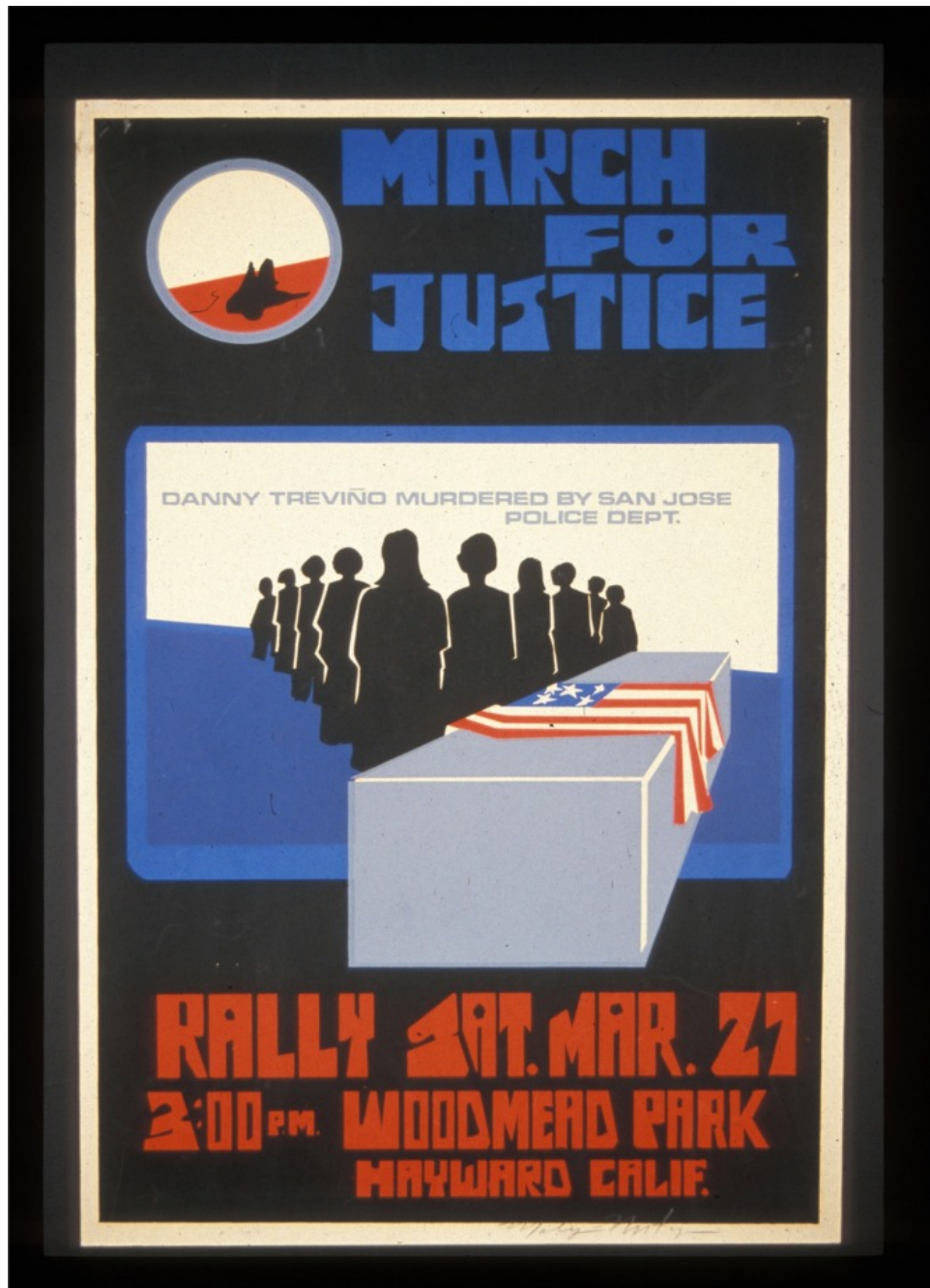


Fig. 3.9 Malaquías Montoya, *Danny Trevino*, 1976, silkscreen, 22 x 14 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.10 Malaquías Montoya, Logo Design, Fruitvale Committee for Human and Constitutional Rights, Oakland, California, 1980.



Fig. 3.11 Malaquías Montoya, Logo Design, Barrio Assistance of Stanford, Stanford, California, December 1982.



Fig. 3.12 Malaquías Montoya, Logo Design for Certificate, South Columbia Rural Health Clinic, Pasco, Washington.

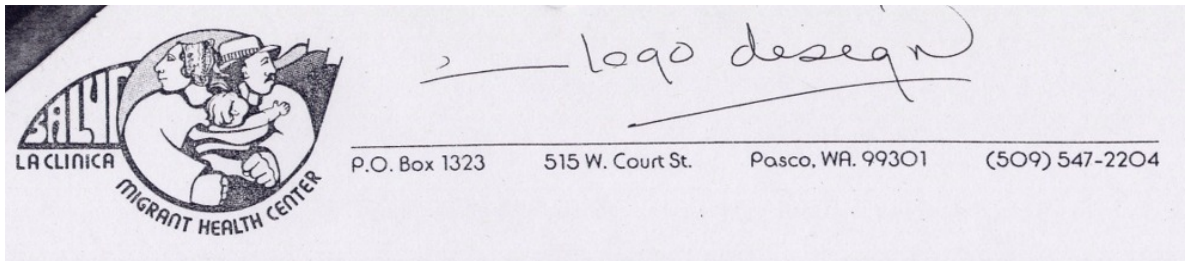


Fig. 3.13 Malaquías Montoya, Logo Design for Letterhead, La Clinica Migrant Health Center, Pasco, Washington.

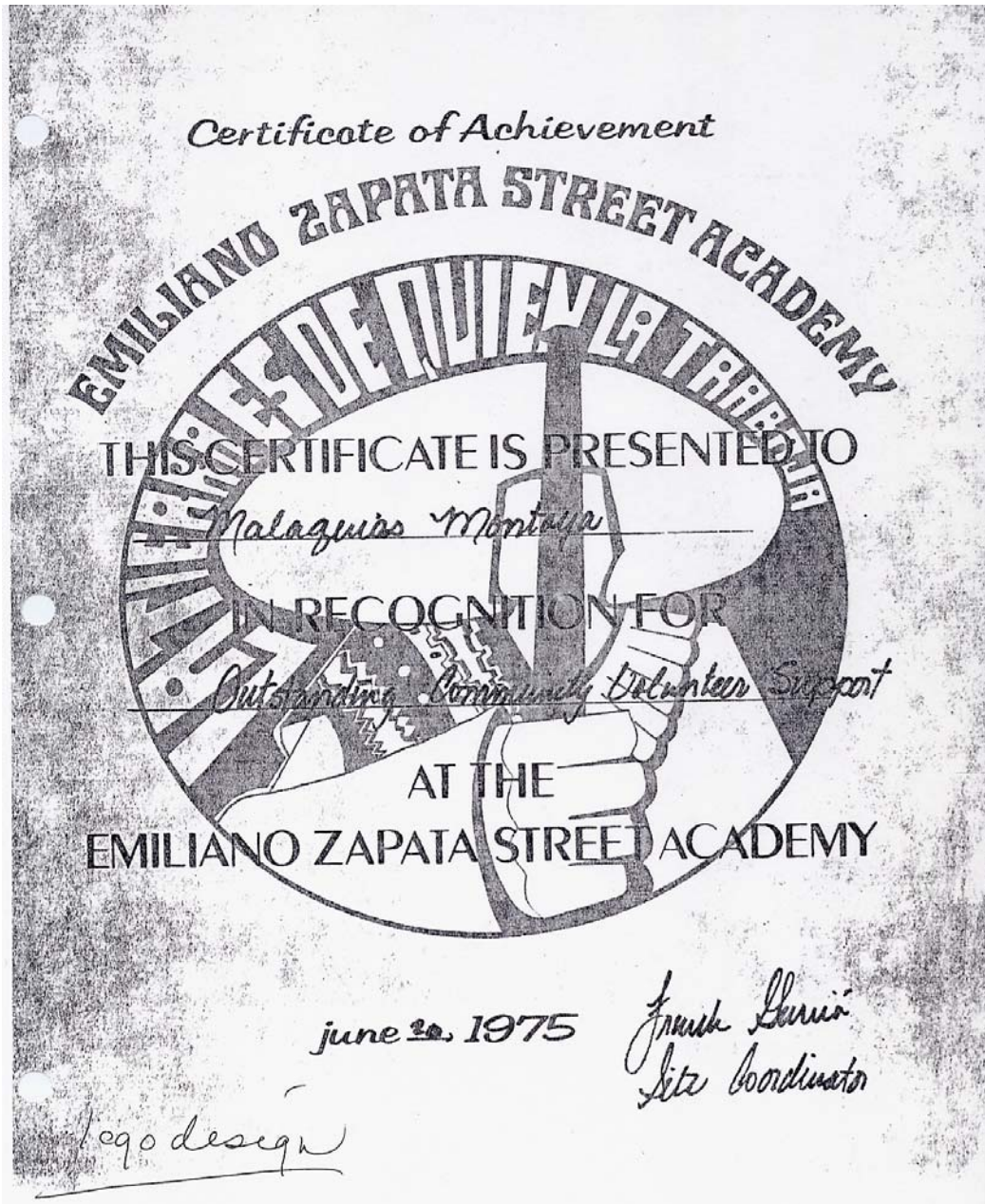


Fig. 3.14 Malaquías Montoya, Logo Design for Certificate, Emiliano Zapata Street Academy, Oakland, 1975.



Fig. 3.15 Malaquías Montoya, Logo Design, Comité de México y Aztlán (COMEXAZ), Oakland, California, January 1976.

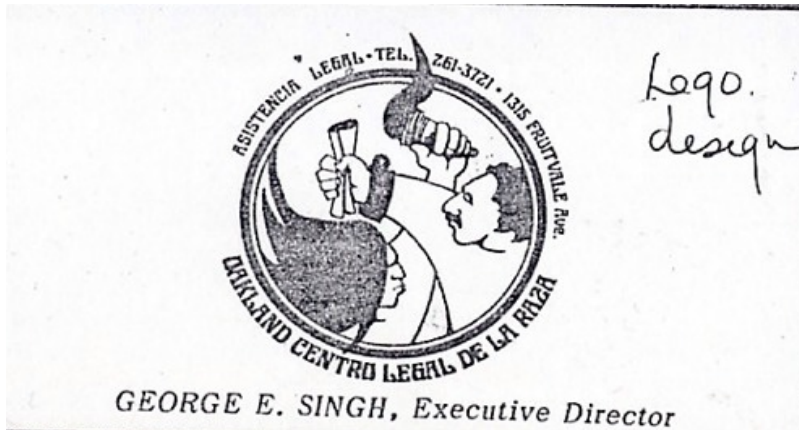


Fig. 3.16 Malaquías Montoya, Logo Design for Business Card, Oakland Centro Legal de La Raza, Oakland, California.

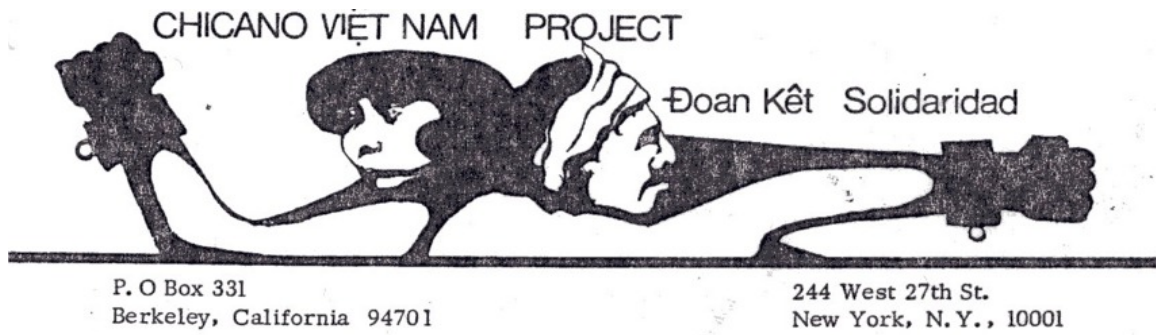


Fig. 3.17 Malaquías Montoya, Logo for Letterhead, Chicano-Viet Nam Project, Berkeley, California and New York, New York, 1971.



Fig. 3.18 Malaquías Montoya, Logo for Letterhead, La Raza Educators Association, Oakland, California, 1972.

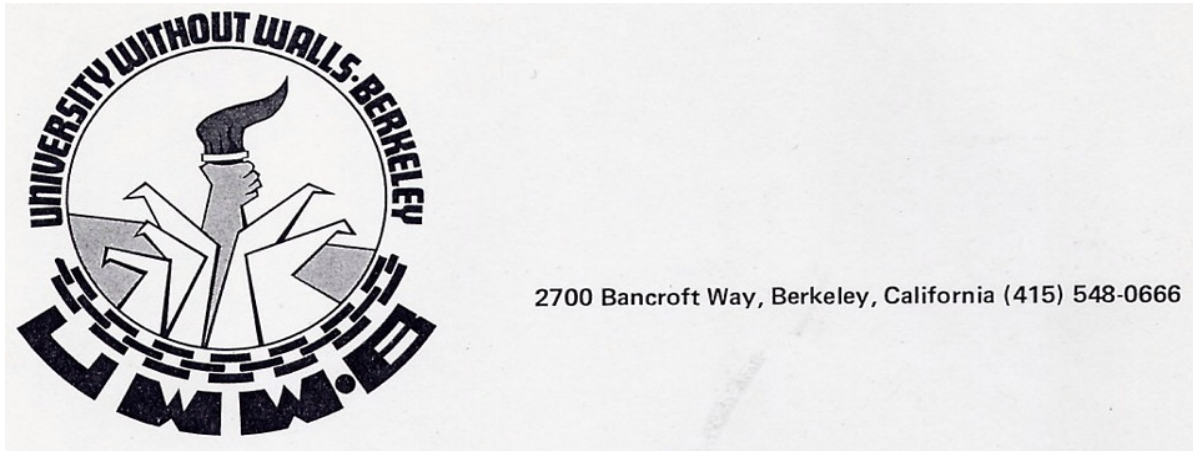


Fig. 3.19 Malaquías Montoya, Logo for Letterhead, University Without Walls, Berkeley, California, 1975.

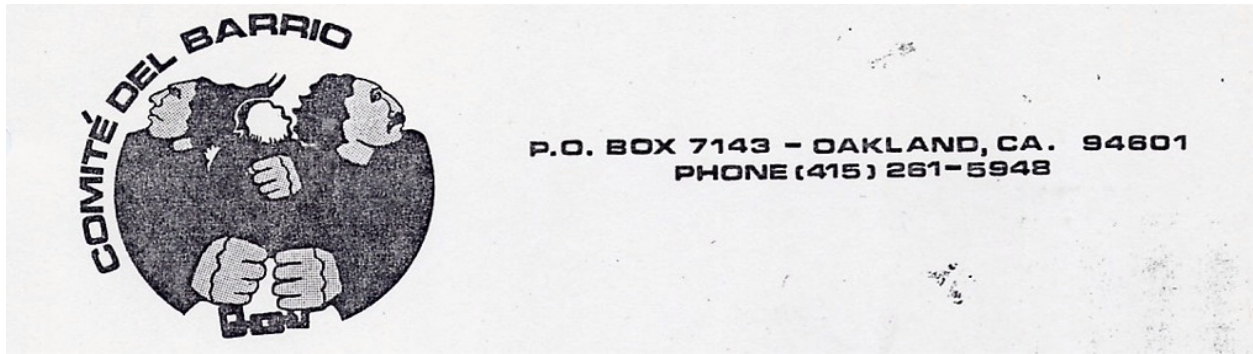


Fig. 3.20 Malaquías Montoya, Logo for Letterhead, Comité del Barrio, Oakland, California.

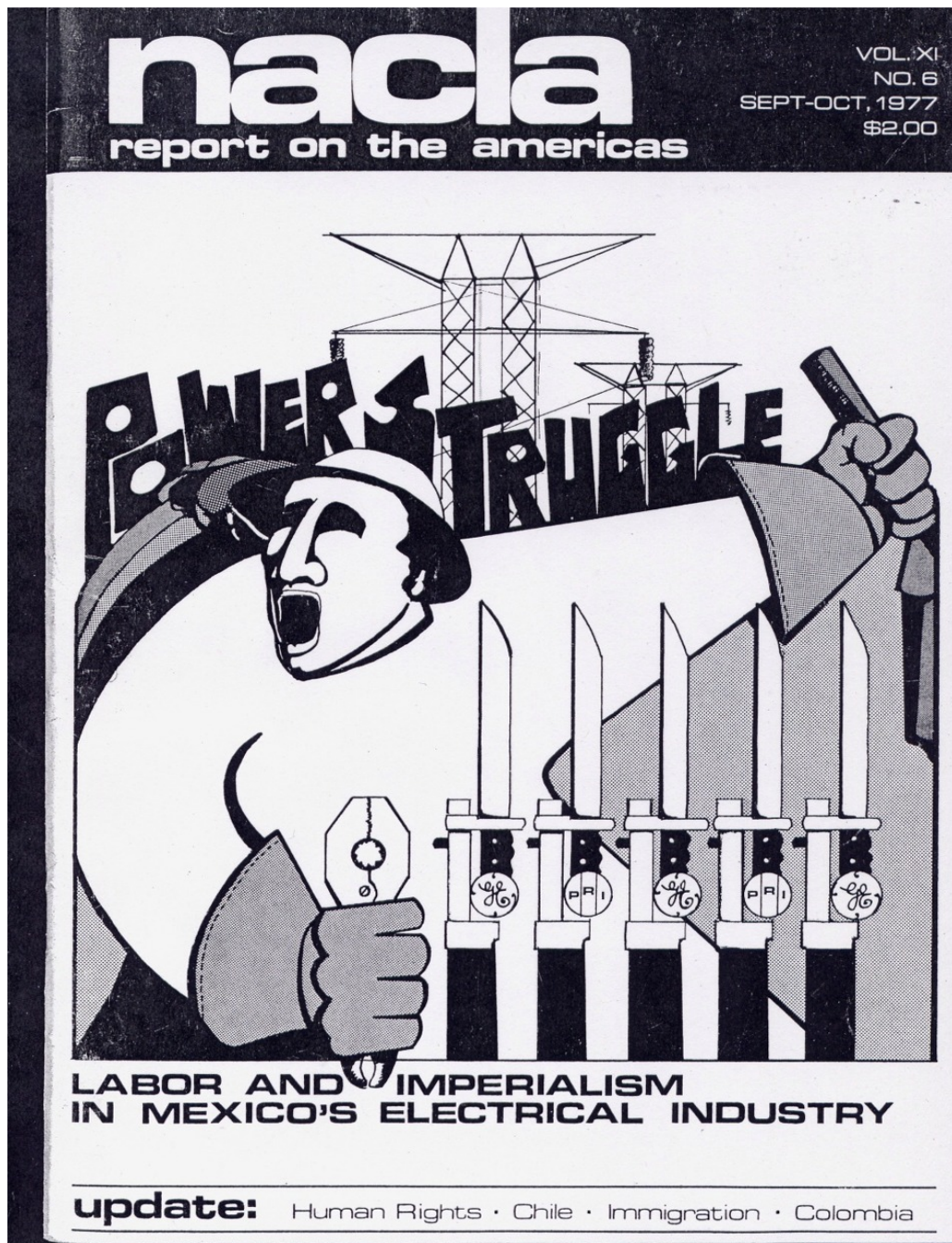


Fig. 3.21 Malaquías Montoya, Cover illustration, *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, North American Congress on Latin America, Vol. XI, No. 6, (September-October 1977).



Fig. 3.22 Malaquías Montoya, Cover illustration, *NACLA: Las Maquiladoras en Mexico, Nueva Lanza del Imperialismo*, North American Congress on Latin America, (June 1975).

Vol. X., No. 6, July-August 1976

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Fig. 3.23 Malaquías Montoya, Cover illustration, *NACLA's Latin America & Empire Report*, North American Congress on Latin America, Vol. X, No. 6, (July-August 1976).

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ON TRADE UNIONS AND THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT



Fig. 3.24 Malaquías Montoya, Cover illustration, *The Organizer: Philadelphia Workers' Organizing Committee*, Vol. 2., No. 3, (June-July 1976).



Fig. 3.25 Malaquías Montoya, Cover illustration, *Gambit: KCET/Channel 28 Program Guide*, California, (August 1972).



Fig. 3.26 Malaquías Montoya, *Family and Solidarity: The Dignity of Work and Education*, 1982, silkscreen, 16 ½ x 35 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.27 Malaquías Montoya, *Family and Solidarity: The Dignity of Work and Education*, 1982, silkscreen, 16 ½ x 35 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.28 Malaquías Montoya, *Family and Solidarity: The Dignity of Work and Education*, 1982, silkscreen, 16 ½ x 35 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.29 Malaquías Montoya, *Family and Solidarity: The Dignity of Work and Education*, 1982, silkscreen, 16 ½ x 35 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.30 Malaquías Montoya, *Family and Solidarity: The Dignity of Work and Education*, 1982, silkscreen, 16 ½ x 35 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.31 Malaquías Montoya, *Family and Solidarity: The Dignity of Work and Education*, 1982, silkscreen, 16 ½ x 35 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.32 Malaquías Montoya, *Family and Solidarity: The Dignity of Work and Education*, 1982, silkscreen, 16 ½ x 35 inches. Collection of Gilberto Cárdenas.



Fig. 3.33 Rupert García, *Right On!*, 1968, silkscreen on white wove paper, 26 x 20 inches.

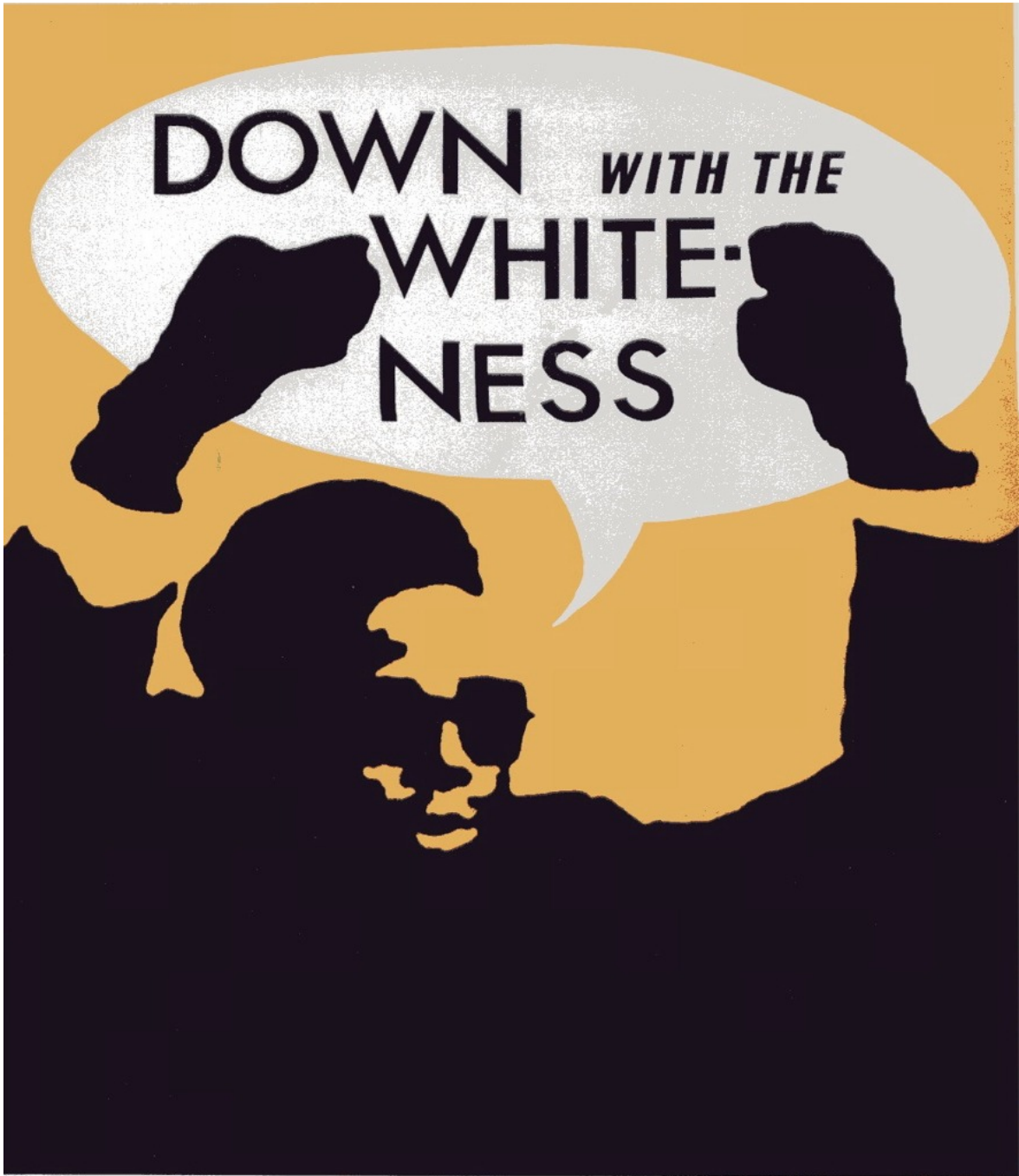


Fig. 3.34 Rupert García, *Down with the Whiteness*, 1969, color silkscreen on white wove paper, 23 ¼ x 19 inches sheet; 22 5/8 x 18 ¾ inches image.



Fig. 3.35 James Rosenquist, *The F-III*, 1965, oil on canvas with aluminum, in four parts, 120 x 1032 inches. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/ Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 3.36 Robert Indiana, *Love*, 1967, serigraph, 36 x 36 inches sheet; 34 x 34 inches image. Collection of the Gallery Brown, Los Angeles. © 1967 Robert Indiana/Artists Rights Society (ARS).



Fig. 3.37 R.B. Kitaj, *The Ohio Gang*, 1964, oil on canvas, 72 x 72 inches. Collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

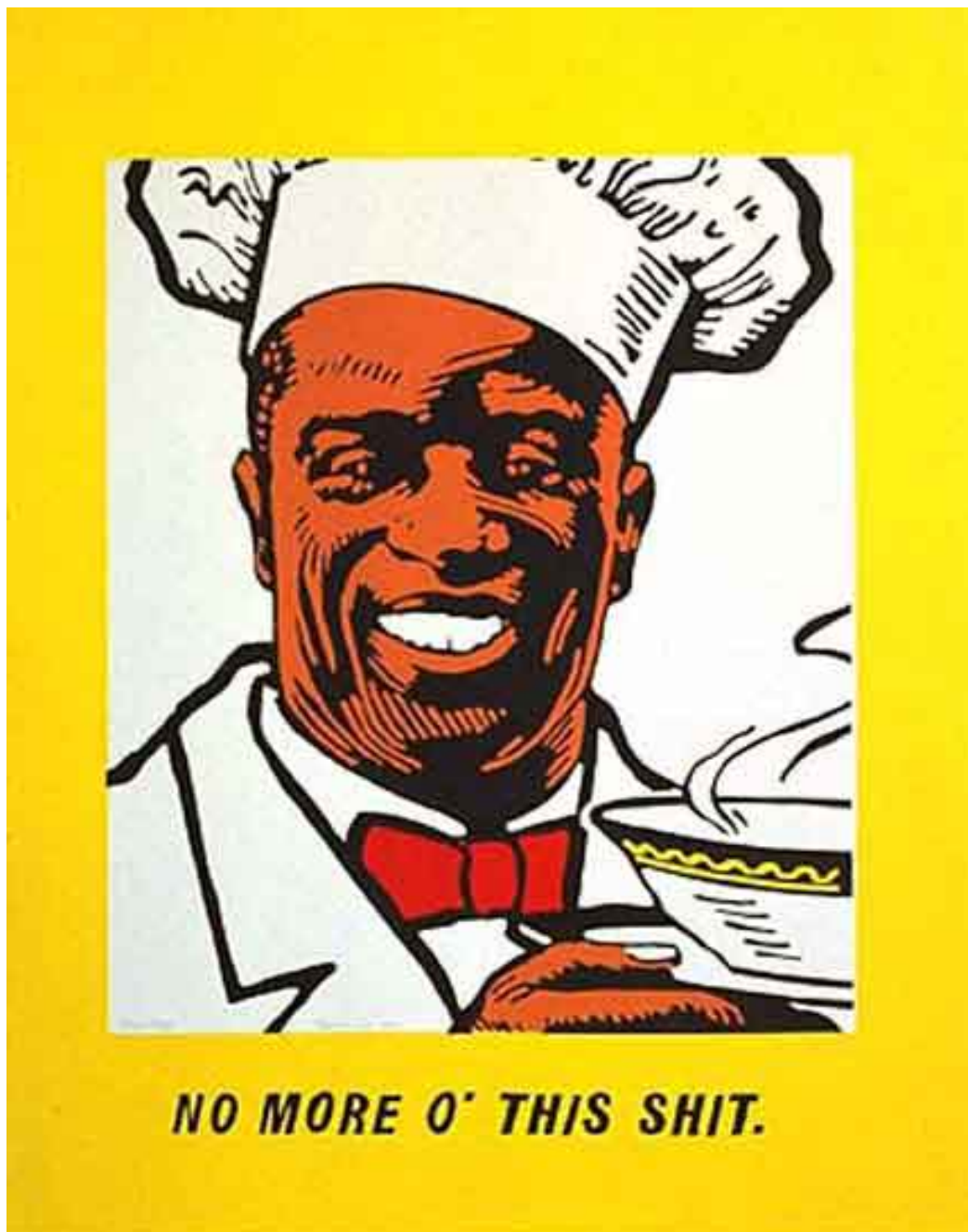


Fig. 3.38 Rupert García, *No More o' This Shit.*, 1969, color silkscreen on white wove paper, 24 x 18 inches sheet; 17 x 13 5/8 inches image.



Fig. 3.39 Rupert García, *Decay Dance*, 1969, color silkscreen on yellow laid paper and silver ink, 27 x 19 ¾ inches.



Fig. 3.40 Rupert García, *Decay Dance*, 1969, color silkscreen on white wove paper, 26 x 20 inches sheet; 24 7/8 x 19 inches image.



Fig. 3.41 Rupert García, *Decay Dance*, 1969, color silkscreen on white wove paper, 26 x 20 inches sheet; 24 7/8 x 19 inches image.

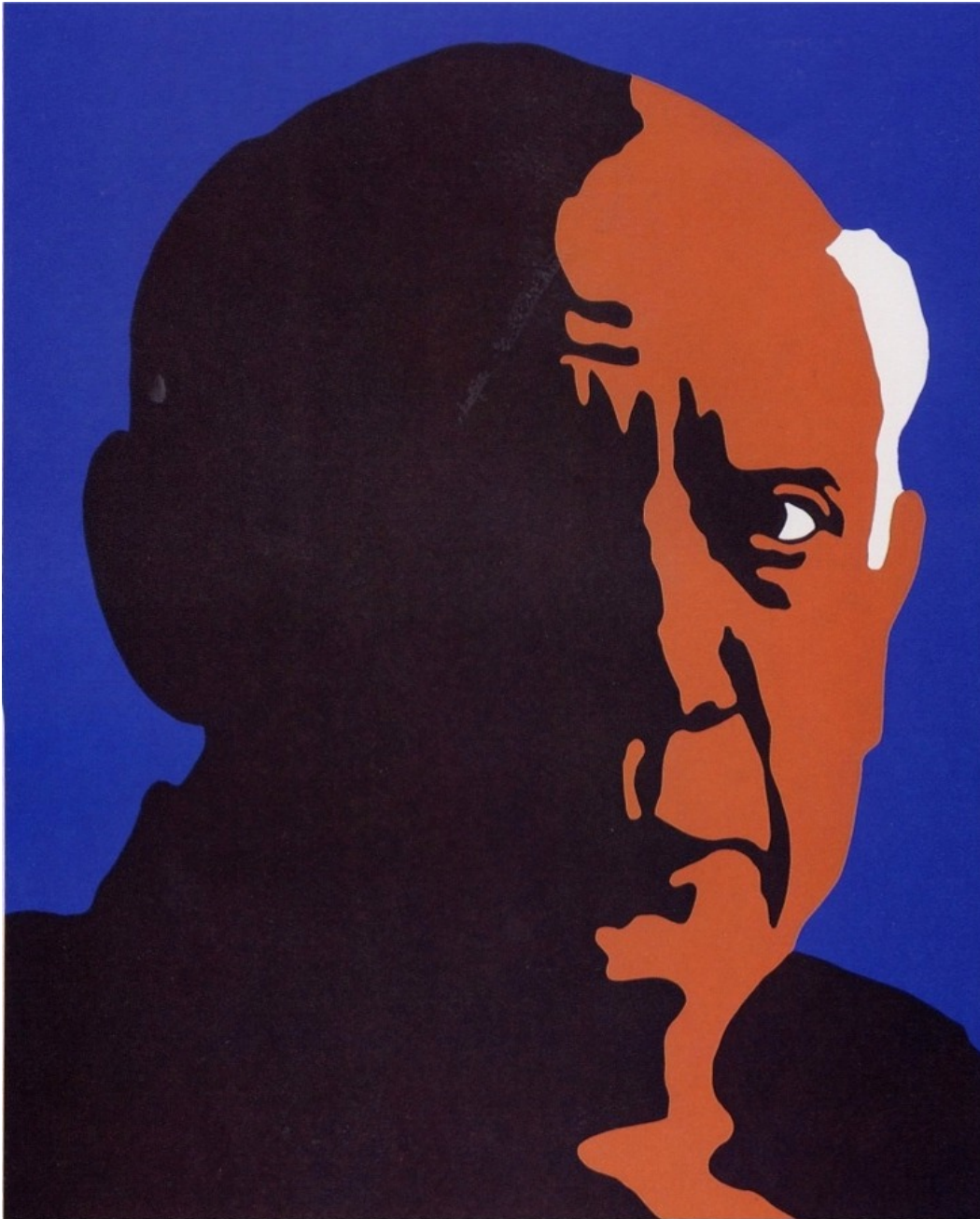


Fig. 3.42 Rupert García, *Pablo Picasso*, 1973, color screenprint, 66.3 x 58.7 centimeters sheet; 62.6 x 40.3 centimeters image. Collection of Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Marcus.



Fig. 3.43 Rupert García, *Frida Kahlo*, 1975, silkscreen, 58.3 x 44.4 centimeters. Collection of the artist.

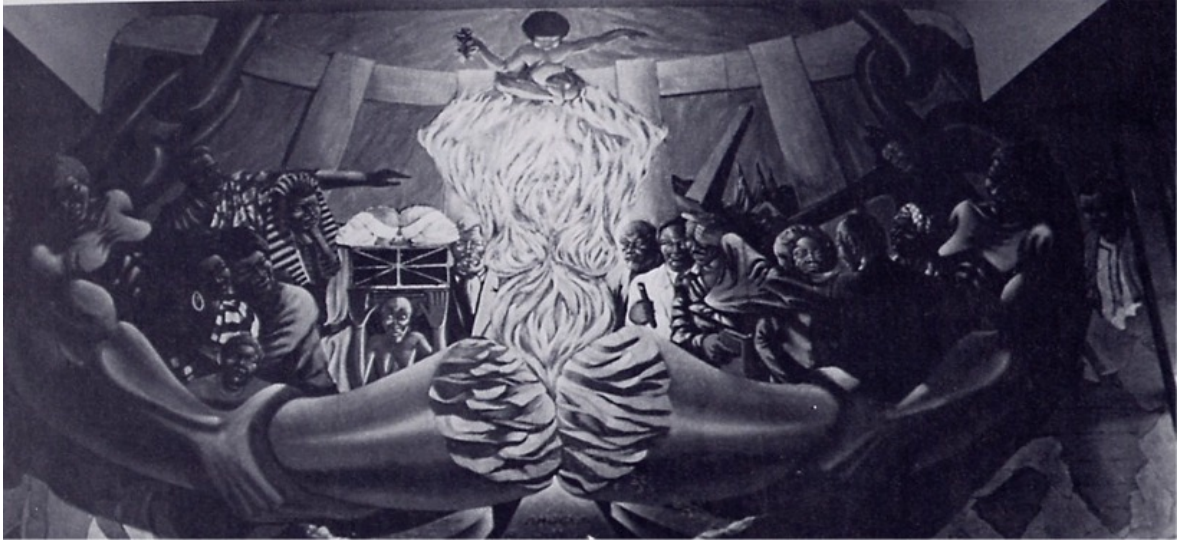


Fig. 3.44 Dewey Crumpler, *The Black Panel*, 1974, mural, George Washington High School, San Francisco.



Fig. 3.45 Rupert García, *Political Prisoner*, 1976, pastel on paper, 122 x 91 .5 centimeters. Collection of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 3.46 Rupert García, *Mao*, 1977, pastel on paper, 129.5 x 91.5 centimeters. Harcourts Gallery, San Francisco.

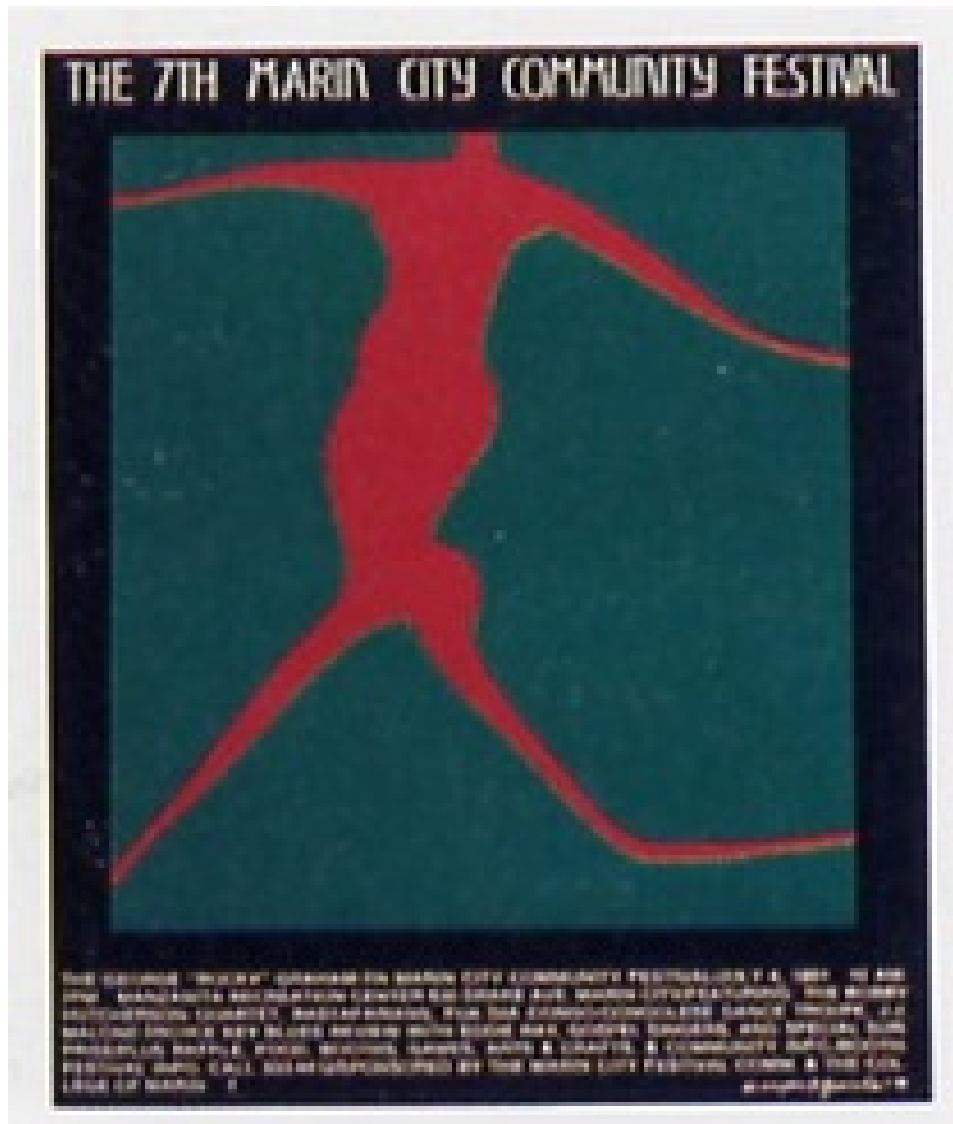


Fig. 3.47 Rupert García, *The 7th Marin City Community Festival*, 1981, color offset lithograph on white wove paper, 22 x 17 ½ inches sheet and image.



Fig. 3.48 Rupert García, *Assassination of a Striking Mexican Worker*, 1979, pastel on illustration board, 107.7 x 152.5 centimeters. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Banks, San Francisco.



Fig. 3.49 Rupert García, *Bertolt Brecht*, 1982, pastel on paper, 106.6 x 75.6 centimeters. Collection of Peter and Carole Selz, Berkeley.



Fig. 3.50 Rupert García, *Fenixes*, 1984, pastel on paper, 40 x 78 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Collection of the artist.



Fig. 3.51 Rupert García, *For Caravaggio and the A.L.B.*, 1985, pastel on paper, 48 ½ x 63 ¼ inches. Collection of Herbert Schwartz.



Fig. 3.52 Rupert García, *El Magritte/Magritte*, 1997, pastel on paper, 72 ¼ x 48 inches.



Fig. 3.53 Rupert García, *El Sapo/The Frog*, 1997, pastel on museum board, 32 x 40 inches.



Fig. 3.54 Richard Diebenkorn, *Figure on a Porch*, 1959, oil on canvas, 57 x 62 inches. Oakland Museum of California, Gift of Anonymous Donor.

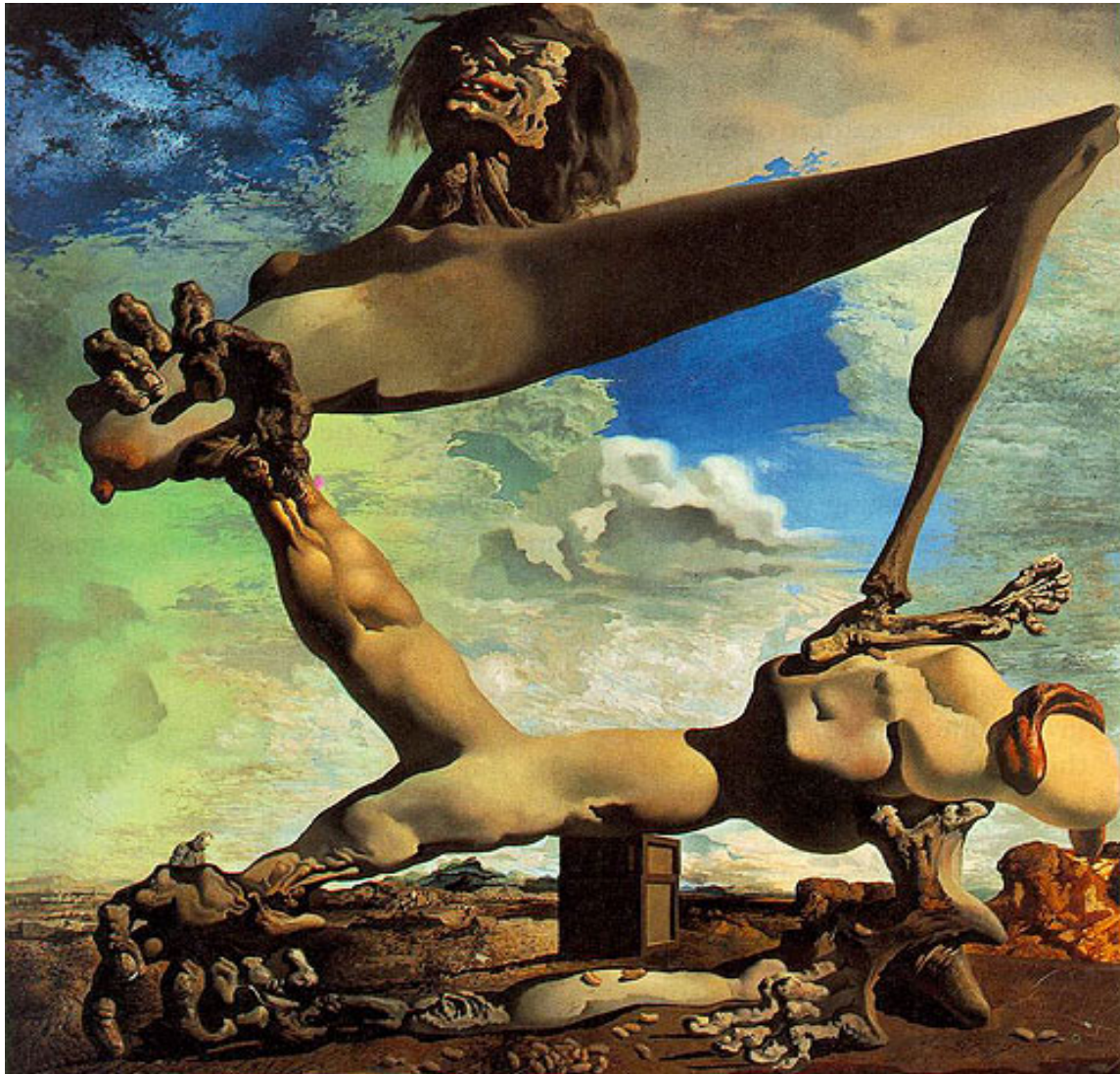


Fig. 3.55 Salvador Dalí, *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*, 1936, oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 39 inches. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950, The Philadelphia Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 3.56 Willem de Kooning, *Woman I*, 1950-1952, oil on canvas, 6' 3 7/8" x 4' 10". Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 3.57 Mel Ramos, *Invalid*, 1959, oil on canvas, 49 x 43 inches.
Collection of the artist. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York,
NY.

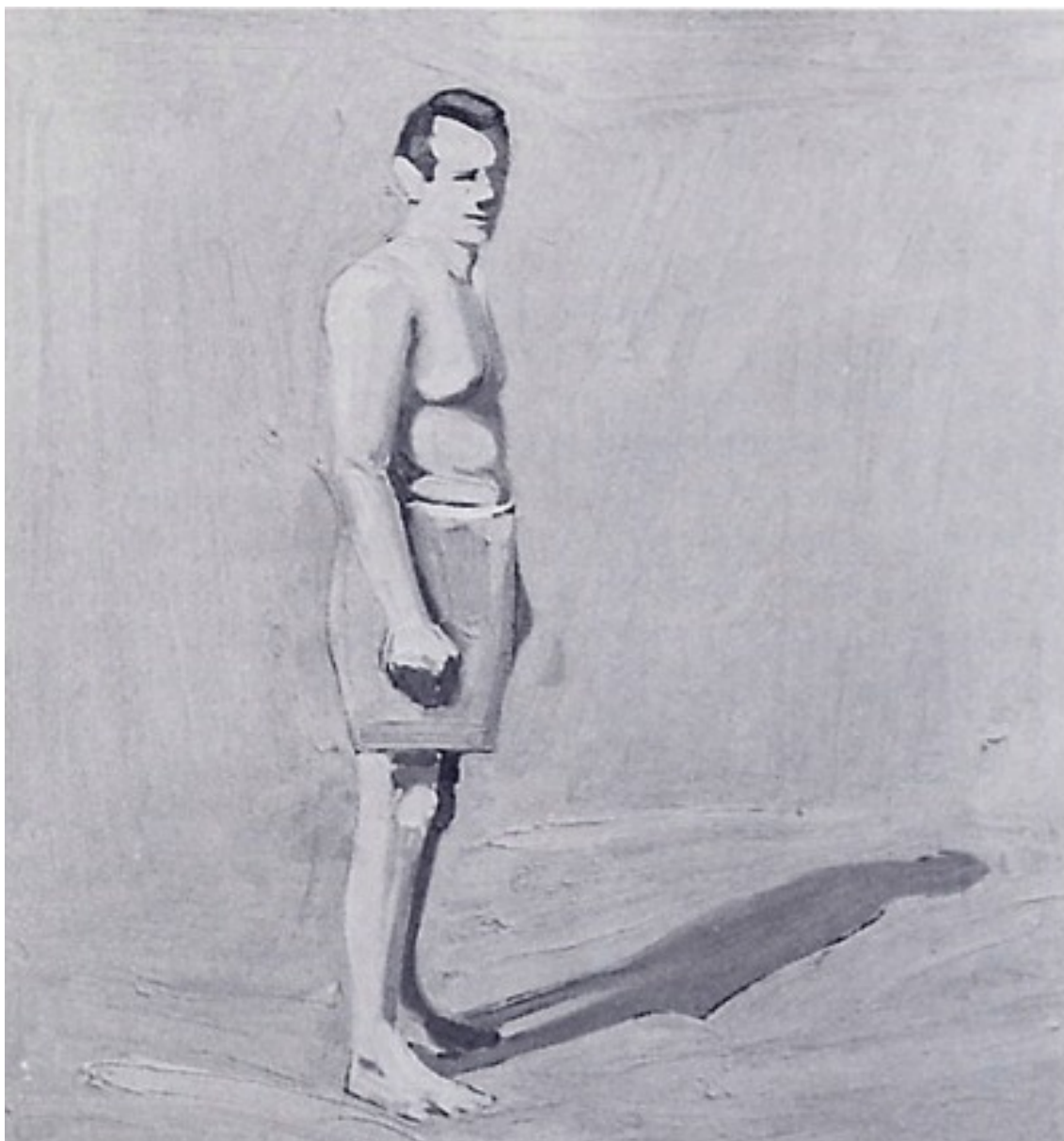


Fig. 3.58 Mel Ramos, *Tourist*, 1960, oil on canvas, 12 x 10 inches. Collection of the artist. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.59 Mel Ramos, *Pete*, 1961, oil on canvas, 11 x 9 inches. Private collection, Oakland. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.60 Wayne Thiebaud, *Beach Boys*, 1959, oil on canvas, 23 7/8 x 30 inches. Collection of Matthew L. Bult. © Wayne Thiebaud /Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

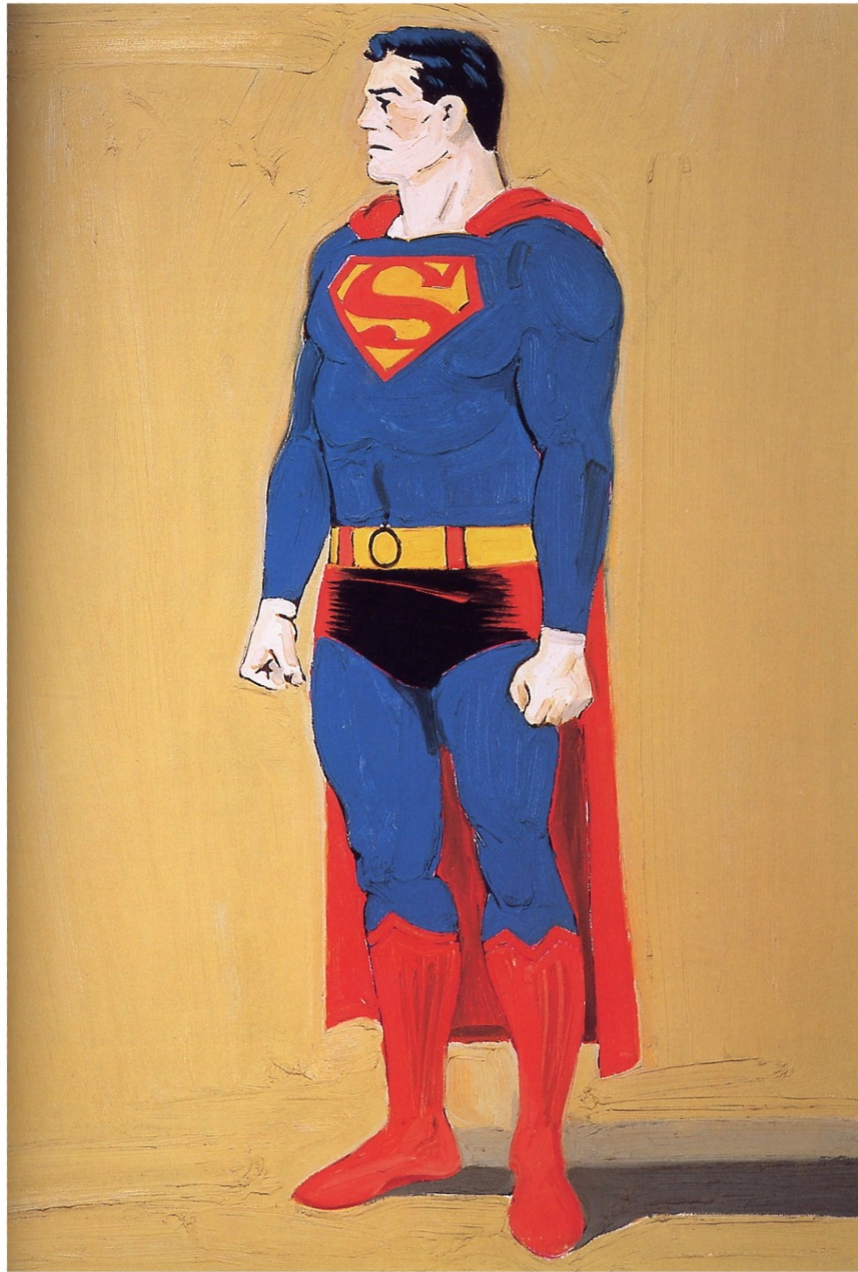


Fig. 3.61 Mel Ramos, *Superman*, 1961, oil on canvas, 45 x 32.5 inches. Collection of Skot Ramos, California. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.62 Mel Ramos, *Batman #2*, 1961, oil on canvas, 30 ½ x 26 inches. Collection of Skot Ramos, California. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.63 Mel Ramos, *Batmobile*, 1962, oil on canvas, 50 ¼ x 44 inches. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Ludwig Foundation, Vienna, Austria. On Loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.64 Mel Ramos, *Wonder Woman #1*, 1962, oil on canvas, 50 x 44 inches. Collection of Rochelle Jackson, California. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.65 Mel Ramos, *Miss Liberty-Frontier Heroine*, 1962, oil on canvas, 70 ½ x 51 inches. Collection of Louis K. Meisel, New York. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.66 Mel Ramos, *Wonder Woman #2*, 1963, oil on canvas, 40 x 32 inches. Private Collection. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.67 Mel Ramos, *Peek-a-boo, Platinum Blonde*, 1964, oil on canvas, 28 x 18 inches. Private collection, England. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.68 Mel Ramos, *Hubba Hubba*, 1984, oil on canvas, 18 x 18 inches. Collection of Russell and Doris Solomon, California. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.69 Mel Ramos, *Miss Grapefruit Festival*, 1964, oil on canvas, 40 x 34 inches. Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

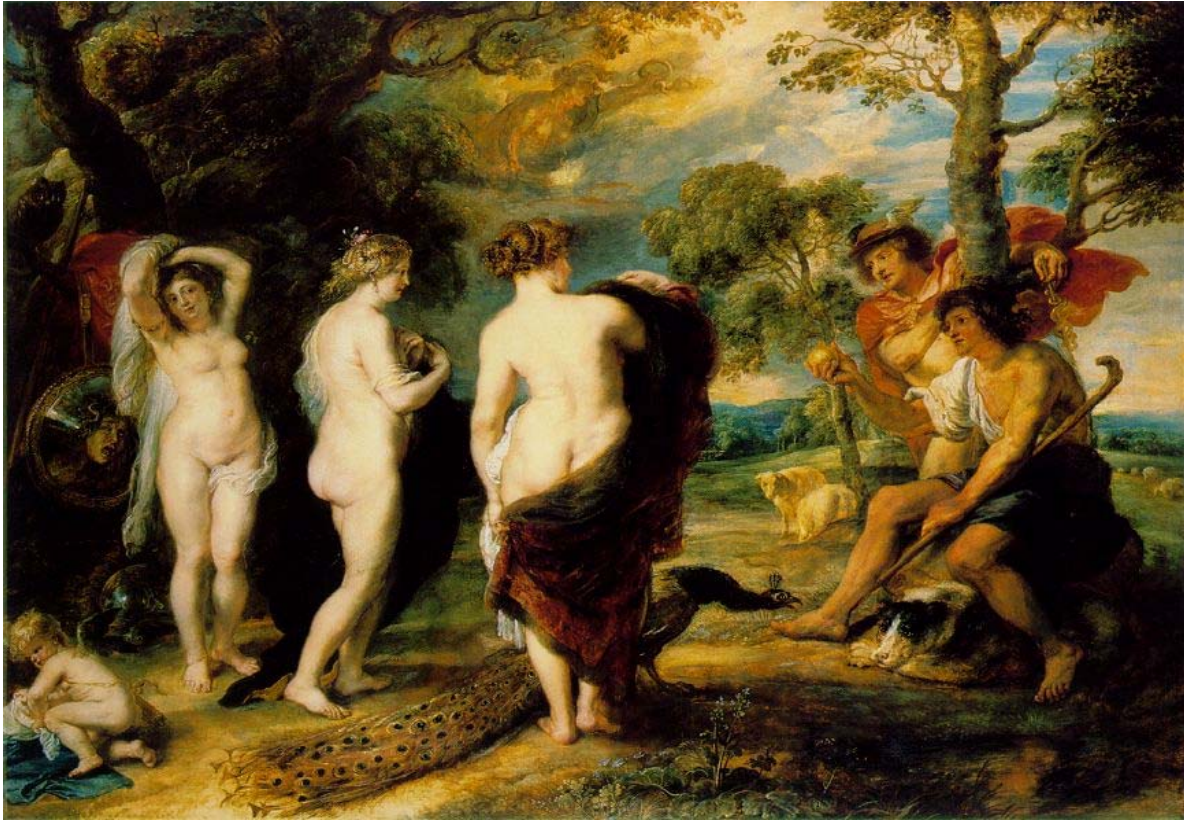


Fig. 3.70 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Judgment of Paris*, c. 1635-38, oil on panel, 57 x 76 1/4 inches, Collection of the National Gallery, London. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

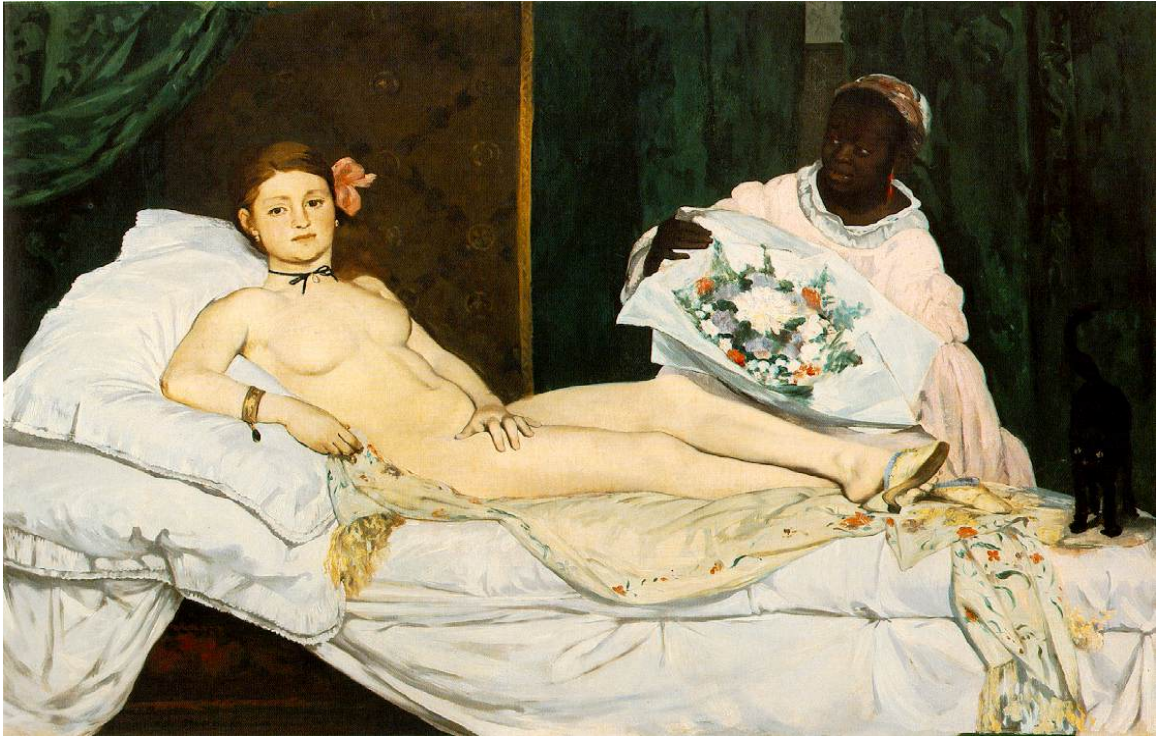


Fig. 3.71 Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 6' 3".
Collection of Musée d' Orsay, Paris. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 3.72 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Grand Odalisque*, 1814, oil on canvas, 2' 11" x 5' 4". Collection of Louvre, Paris. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 3.73 Mel Ramos, *Manet's Olympia*, 1973, oil on canvas, 48 x 70 inches. Neumann Family Collection. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.74 Mel Ramos, *Plenti-Grand Odalisque*, 1973, oil on canvas, 38 x 66 inches. Collection of Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.75 Mel Ramos, *I Get a Thrill When I See Bill #1*, 1975, oil on canvas, 80 x 70 inches. Collection of the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA; Rose Purchase Fund. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.76 Mel Ramos, *I Still Get a Thrill When I See Bill #3*, 1977, oil on canvas, 70 x 48 inches. Private collection, Italy. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.77 Robert Colescott, *I Gets a Thrill Too When I Sees DeKoo*, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 78 x 66 inches. Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery. Collection of Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, Gift of Senator and Mrs. William Bradley.



Fig. 3.78 Ester Hernández, *Sun Mad*, 1982, screenprint, 22 x 17 inches. Collection of the artist.

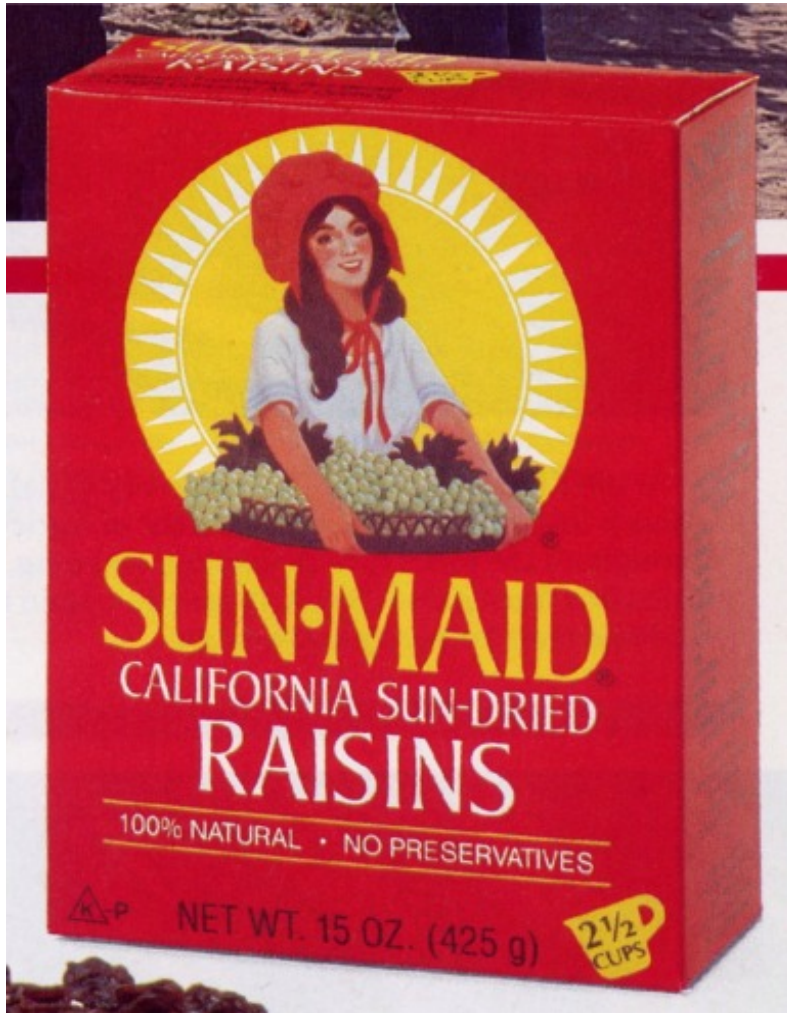


Fig. 3.79 Sun-Maid Growers of California, Photograph of the Sun-Maid raisin product, *Sun-Maid Informational Brochure*, (Kingburg, California: Sun-Maid Growers of California, 1992).



Fig. 3.80 Sun-Maid Growers of California, Photograph of the original Sun-Maid girl, Lorraine Collett, *Sun-Maid Informational Brochure*, (Kingburg, California: Sun-Maid Growers of California, 1992).



Fig. 3.81 Sun-Maid Growers of California, Photograph of Lorraine Collett as a living trademark in Fresno's annual Raisin Day parade, *Sun-Maid Informational Brochure*, (Kingburg, California: Sun-Maid Growers of California, 1992).



Fig. 3.82 Mel Ramos, *Crime Buster*, 1962, oil on canvas, 30 x 26 inches. Collection of Dr. Wolfgang Becker, Koln, Germany. © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Fig. 3.83 Mel Ramos, *Evil Empire*, album cover for Rage Against the Machine's CD, *Evil Empire*, (USA: Epic Records, 1996). © Mel Ramos/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

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VITA

Ellie Patricia Berkowitz was born in Baltimore, Maryland on April 28, 1973, the daughter of Dr. David Mark Berkowitz and Dr. Carol Diane Adler Berkowitz. After graduating from Palos Verdes High School, in Palos Verdes Estates, California, in 1991, she entered the University of California at Santa Barbara, where she studied art history and art studio. During the summer of 1993, she attended the University of Los Angeles' study abroad program in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England. During her senior year at UCSB, she served as the Student Honors Coordinator of the College of Liberal Arts Honors Program. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Art History with highest honors from UCSB in June 1995.

After college, she worked at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Latino Museum of History, Art, and Culture in Los Angeles, California. In August 1996, she entered the Graduate School at the University of Texas at Austin, specializing in Latino Art History. During the summer of 1997, she taught briefly as an English teacher at Pastoral do Menores, in Santarém, Brazil. In May 1998, she received a Master of Arts degree in Art History from the University of Texas at Austin.

In August 1998, she entered into the PhD program in the Department of Art and Art History at UT Austin. Upon finishing her coursework and exams, she worked as a lecturer in Art History for East Los Angeles College, and as an Assistant Professor at

Cerritos College, in Norwalk, California. She married Brendan Richard Handler in July 2003, and gave birth to their son, Hayden Micah Handler, in October of 2004.

Permanent Address: 30736 Cartier Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes, California 90275

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