Breaching Walls (Real and Imaginary): *Arte Hispano-Americano* [Latin American Art], 1000 C.E. to 2017 C.E.

A Guide to the Exhibition

by
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A STUDENT EXHIBITION GUIDE FOR EDUCATIONAL USE ONLY

Author's Note

This guide supports the art exhibition "Breaching Walls (Real and Imaginary)" held at Skyline Community College in November 2017, celebrating Latino Heritage Month. Many thanks to the administration and faculty of Skyline College for hosting and supporting it. Many thanks also to Arthur Takayama, Lorenzo Hernández and Cristina Hernández for organizing this exhibition. I am indebted to all of them for agreeing that a gallery guide might be of use and permitting me to author it. Thanks also to Professor Carlos Ugalde for taking the time to author "Comments on Art by Professor Carlos Ugalde for Lorenzo Hernández " which is included in this Exhibition Guide.

My own background in Mexican and Hispano-American history is far less than was necessary to take on this project, so I spent a lot of time reading, looking at art, listening and asking questions. I had studied the history of Mexico many years ago in Guanajuato, Mexico, although my greatest interest was in Mexico's Pre-Columbian urban heritage. As a professor and Associate Dean of Environmental Design (now a Professor Emerita) in the CSU system, I was able to incorporate some this information into my landscape architecture history courses. I also am aware that much that has been written in English about Mexican art history was written by non-Mexicans. This has resulted in the misunderstanding that Mexican art history has been driven almost entirely by Western European art movements, styles and artists. Instead, to the contrary, I have learned that el arte Hispano-Americano reflects many other indigenous and external influences -- as well as the lives and the vision of the individual artisans and artists who created the work. I am most grateful to Lorenzo Hernández for endless discussions about art, artists and history, and for showing me hundreds of artworks and for lending me dozens of books (both in English and in Spanish) to illustrate his and others' ideas. He also proofread multiple drafts of the text and pointed out both errors of fact as well as essential facts not yet incorporated. His daughter Cristina Hernández catalogued over two hundred and fifty images from her family's collections, some of which have been used (with many thanks to Arthur Takayama) to augment this Exhibition Guide text. Cristina also proofread the draft. Any remaining errors are mine.

This exhibition could not have happened without the highly capable support of Skyline College's administrators, faculty and staff. All of us especially wish to thank Skyline President, Dr. Regina Stanbeck Stroud and Dr. Tammy Robinson, Dean of Global Learning and Social Science and Creative Arts for their efforts in behalf of "Breaching Walls". We are indebted, also, to Skyline's Professor Paul Bridenbaugh for coordinating and setting up the gallery and to Connor Fitzpatrick, Communications Manager, for graphic design and web and print publication. And, not least, many thanks to the faculty members who supported this exhibition from the very beginning: Assistant Professor Fika Fabian, Professor Lori Slicton, and Instructor John Ulloa.

Writing the "Guide" has been a valuable on-going learning experience for me, as I hope the exhibition will be for all those able to visit and explore it.

-- Noel Dorsey Vernon,
Sierra Madre, CA
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Foreword

Among other events and programs, Skyline College and its Social Science/ Creative Arts Division celebrated Latino Heritage Month (November 2017) with an exhibition of Latin American Art – or, as many in the Latin American community would prefer it phrased, Arte Hispano-Americano. The intent of this show was to raise student understanding, discussion and appreciation of the importance of art and artists, and also give students a chance to explore and to better understand Hispano-American art from many cultural contexts. Art is not only about aesthetics. Art and art-making – and the artists themselves -- also can be studied in their political, religious, economic, historic, and political contexts. In addition, the individual artworks themselves (deliberately or not) may contain and convey a similarly broad range of content. Ultimately, as viewers, it is the artists' often complex visions that engage our undivided attention and call forth (and at times demand) our deep and inescapable response.

How the “Breaching Walls" Exhibition Evolved

These artworks were lent to Skyline College in recognition of Professor and Art Department Chair Arthur Takayama by his former student and good friend Lorenzo Hernández who took his photography course nearly forty years ago. Prof. Takayama’s academic and professional expertise embraces art, art history and chemistry. As a master photographer, Takayama’s work is noted both for the haunting aesthetic qualities of his black and white images and for his subtle and evocative use of color. To achieve these effects, he applies his knowledge of chemistry to invent new emulsions to coat his printing paper as well as to mix corresponding chemical combinations that he uses in developing his photographs. Few photographers today are capable of achieving such a remarkable symbiosis of artistic vision and technical mastery. Hernández appreciated Takayama's work and sought his professional advice: over time they forged a friendship enriched by art and photography. Takayama and Hernández had been talking for years about borrowing works from the Hernández family's Latin American art collections for an exhibition at Skyline College. These discussions culminated in 2017 with Takayama and Hernández agreeing that it was time to move forward with this plan. Takayama approached his colleagues and key Skyline administrators about this exhibition: all saw the multicultural and multi-disciplinary opportunities -- and thus "Breaching Walls" became a reality. The Collections from which this artwork has been loaned include:

Cityscape Foto Gallery
The Nicolas and Cristina Hernández Art Trust, Pasadena, CA
Lorenzo Hernández (personal collection)
Dolores Ramirez (Hernández)
Arthur Takayama (personal collection)
Noel Vernon (personal collection)

About the Collector

Much of the art in the "Breaching Walls" exhibition was purchased or inherited by Lorenzo Hernández. Some pieces were selected for purchase by his children, Nicolás and Cristina Hernández. Together, these family collections represent his family's shared cultural heritage. This collection has become even more important in an era when multiculturalism is under siege.

Born in 1951 in Calexico, California, Lorenzo grew up both in Mexico (with his grandfather) and in California (with his mother and her family). In Mexico, Lorenzo saw the disparity between his own life, the lives of his grandfather's laborers, and those of marginalized Mexican Indians. Living with his mother, he experienced first-hand the mistreatment and discrimination against people of color at all levels of society and the economy. These experiences shaped his worldview and led him to focus much of his collecting on Hispano-Americano (or 'Latino') art.

In his professional career, Lorenzo has worked to bridge engineering, architecture and the arts. As an aerospace and mechanical systems engineer as well as an art collector, Lorenzo sees his role at the intersection of art and commerce. Following University studies in Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering at UCSD, Lorenzo settled in Pasadena and worked for the Parsons Corporation, a firm doing global construction, design, engineering and project management. His first major job was in Alaska, where he worked as an engineer on the Alaska North Slope project. Early technical and engineering successes led to many other projects with a variety of major engineering and project management firms. In the early 1980s, he and his colleague Ron Rose received an AIA Los Angeles Chapter industrial building design honor award for a U.S. Navy technical test facility. Many of these projects took him away from his family for months at a time where working conditions were difficult and most often dangerous. However, engineering also provided him with the income he needed to support his family and give them greater educational choice. And, of course, he also was able to buy art. Later, he and his colleagues opened a professional office in his home community of Pasadena, offering architecture, transportation and specialty design services. One of his architecture and engineering projects was the seismic retrofit of Pasadena's city hall, with a budget of over $100,000,000. Lorenzo says that he was fortunate to be able to combine his education along with his drive and curiosity to become one of many Latino engineers.

As an art dealer, Lorenzo opened his first private gallery (Cityscape Foto Gallery) in Pasadena in July1976. Here, through the early 1980s, he showed photographs by artist-friends including Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Graciela Iturbide, Arthur Takayama, Pedro Mayer and Frank Styduhar. In the mid-1970s, he collaborated with Don Owens and Morrie Camhi in publishing first *Picture* magazine and then *Photoshow: the International Magazine of Photography and Ideas*. Beginning in the early 1980s, he collaborated with Jack Woody to exhibit alternative photography and important historical images that also were published in books by Twelve Trees Press and Twin Palms Press. Lorenzo later opened Future Perfect Gallery in the 1990s in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, with the artist/printmaker Richard Duardo. There Lorenzo showed the work of artists including Gronk, Duardo, Carlos Almaraz, and Carmen Lomas Garza. He

also hosted evening events at the gallery where artists and community members could come together to meet and discuss art and art-making. In addition to exhibiting their art, Lorenzo often supported early-career artists by purchasing their work and sometimes by buying materials and equipment for them.

At the request of Pasadena Mayor Rick Cole, in 1994, Lorenzo became involved in the establishment of Community Health Alliance Pasadena [CHAP], an early public/private healthcare partnership established to serve mostly lower-income clients. When the new organization required interim leadership, he served briefly as CHAP's Acting Director. To this day, as a multi-million dollar non-profit health care institution, CHAP provides both basic and urgent community health care to residents of Pasadena and the San Gabriel Valley.

Today, Hernández continues to participate in engineering projects and to collect, loan and sell art primarily to institutional and corporate collections, as well as to many major museums including the Whitney, MOCA and LACMA, the Museum of Modern Art [MOMA], the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum, and the Getty Museum. He thanks his children Cristina and Nicolás Hernández for their continuing and loyal support and participation in organizing and preparing of the artwork for the "Breaching Walls" exhibition: it would not have happened without them! He also thanks his brother Daniel for his support and generosity. In addition, he thanks his valued friends Arthur Takayama for suggesting and supporting this exhibition, Noel Vernon for volunteering to provide the written texts; and Jeff Kies and Greg Benge for their endurance and skill in helping to frame the artwork. His deepest thanks, also, to his friends Myrna and Fernando Tellez; Norma and Kent Kachigian; Margaret Hickman and family; Bill Bradburn; George Whenham and Robert Magahay; Arthur Green; and Carmelita Duzón. He also thanks Skyline College President Regina Stanbeck Stroud and Dean Tammy Robinson of the Social Science/Creative Arts Division for providing funding and gallery space. Much gratitude is due to Assistant Professor Fika Fabian, Professor Lori Slicton, and Instructor John Ulloa for their support of Arthur Takayama's original Barker Fund request. Lorenzo thanks Professor Paul Bridenbaugh for designing and setting up the "Breaching Walls" exhibition and Skyline's Communications Manager Connor Fitzpatrick for handling exhibition-related graphic design and publication. He also thanks Associate Professor Zachary Bruno and his jazz combo for the wonderful music at the opening reception; and Public Safety Captain Jim Vangele and his team for exhibition security.

Introduction to the Exhibition

The artists whose work is exhibited in "Breaching Walls" are primarily 20th century Mexican and Mexican-American painters, printmakers, photographers and sculptors. The exhibition also includes a few works by artists from other areas in the Americas once ruled by Spain that demonstrate cultural and geographic breadth. These works are supported by relevant examples of Pre-Columbian, Colonial and 19th century art. Some historic maps have been included to provide context. This exhibition guide is only an introduction to an important area of shared cultural heritage and of academic scholarly study.

The "Breaching Walls" exhibition focuses on the artists' use of symbols that have retained relevance over centuries: these symbols may have roots in pre-Columbian (or pre-Conquest) Mesoamerica. This area includes the land that today is Latin America and the U.S. Southwest, in the millennia prior to the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs and their allies in 1521. Many of these pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultural symbols, whether suppressed or co-opted, retained their importance through the Spanish colonial era and the advent of the Catholic Church in New Spain. Of course, new symbols came to Mexico from Spain (which had an Arabic as well as a Western European heritage) as well as from Catholicism.[1] Today, these symbols – whether identical or transformed -- continue to recur in Latino artwork, especially in works related to cultural/personal identity and political protest, as well as in *Cinco de Mayo* celebrations and the Day of the Dead.

Hopefully, you, yourself, may make the art of the future. However, you also may choose to support other artists and preserve some of the world's cultural heritage by becoming an art collector, an art historian, an art dealer, or an art center administrator -- or by becoming a member of your favorite art museum.

[1] Less easy to track are symbols that reflected the cultures of other immigrants to the New World, such as shipwrecked or escaped African slaves as well as Jews who had been expelled with the Arabs from Spain after the *Reconquista* of 1492.

Art in the Pre-Columbian Era

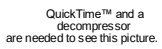
Please take time to understand this before you go any farther: In Mesoamerican times, art was powerful. As in many non-European regions, then and now, Mesoamerica had a well-established art-based economy. There were no factories, no stores, and no banking systems. Instead, all objects (metal, stone, ceramic, leather, fabric, etc.) were hand-crafted, and many of these were traded. From ancient times, communities traded with other tribes and ancient empires along well-established long distance trade routes. Artists within these groups often sought locally-unavailable raw materials that they used in the making of artwork. Silver, gold and copper were melted and formed into rough (but easily transportable) billet wire, while walrus and mastodon ivory, jade and turquoise were traded throughout the Americas -- some even went as far as Europe with the Vikings. Of course, these artists also used materials they found locally. These artists then could trade their finished artwork (ex.: jewelry, clay pots, fabrics, sculpture, knives and weapons) for other goods – including more materials with which to make more art. This art was personal/family/tribal wealth – and wealth, as is often the case, was power.

However, Mesoamerican art also had spiritual power: to begin with, energy (*xi*) was inherent in the materials themselves. Then additional energy flowed into the object from the maker, while more came from the symbols carved into (or painted on or attached to) its surface, and then still more came from any blessings the object received. All this spiritual energy resided in – literally was embodied in – the art object. The spiritual energy gathered in an art object could be general, or it might have a specific purpose. For example, if a dish was to be used for eating fish, a fish and fish-related images might be painted or carved into it to honor the *xi* from the cooked fish that would flow into the people who ate it. The fish images on the dish were the artist's symbolic way of respecting the fish.

Art objects also could be used in healing or curing illness, although most of this was done through herbal broths and the smoke from incense such as copal. But art also could be used to prevent such bad fortune: tiny *Milagros* (such as those representing a person's injured body parts – arms, legs, the heart – or one's animals) still are used today for protection. The premise is that evil powers would be attracted to and target these small bright talismans rather than the person him/herself. *Milagros* can be carried, worn as jewelry, or nailed to crosses and placed near one's bedside as they are today in Mexico (they also are sold in the Balkans: similar customs exist worldwide). In some cases, with highly sacred objects, even more power was necessary: the design and decoration of objects invoked or protected against sacred or malicious energies. Twenty-first century artists such as Roberto Gil de Montes (*Around the World*, 2007) and Teddy Sandoval (*Compadres*, 1993) make use of *Milagros* symbols in their paintings.

Wood cross with milagros
Circa 1940s
Dolores Ramirez Collection

Art in the Pre-Columbian era was not taken lightly, nor was it separated from daily and holiday life at all levels of society. From clay children's toys to surgical tools and knives, from cooking and storage pots to palaces and cities, from gold and jade necklaces and feathered capes to the flayed skins a warrior's old enemies (worn to show respect as well as to increase the victor's strength in battle) – every object carried energy and had power.



Warrior clay figure, drinking blood of slain warriors whose heads he wears. From Vera Cruz State, Mexico, collected 1947. Post-conquest style of eyes.

Death and life were two sides of the same world, and at times it was possible for the inhabitants of both worlds to wander back and forth. Mesoamerican pyramids were human-made mountains: at the apex (the 'liminal') point, a spiritual axis linked heaven and earth. This point was where humans and sacred beings were in immediate contact, the people and their gods: a most powerful place. Cities told tribal histories in *stelae* (tall stones carved is *bas*-relief), in carvings on the walls and paving of urban civic buildings, and in large colorfully painted wall murals: this was 'narrative' art – art that told a story. *At the time of the Spanish conquest, nothing in the world (with the exception perhaps of ancient Rome), had come near to equaling the art, engineering and sheer extent of Mesoamerican city- and road-building and their understanding of the cosmos.*

Roberto Montenegro
Mujer Maya, 1937
Etching

In sum, powerful energy was the force that determined whether one grew or withered, won or lost, prospered or starved, lived or died. Imagine collecting strong power in a family (its people, animals, crops and all its art objects), gathering the power of the related families in a clan, and then gathering the power (*xi*) of clans within a tribe and within a culture. Then one might be able to understand the value of "art" in the Americas in pre-Columbian times. Art was in every object made by human beings and was a central component of Mesoamerican culture – and art had *xi*: art was alive.

Now you're ready to understand the full effect of the Spanish Conquest on its "New World" possessions in Mesoamerica. It was not just a decimation of wealthy and advanced indigenous cultures.[2] It ultimately was an attempt to destroy its indigenous people's understanding of what was alive (what had *xi*) and what did not. To the Spanish, art itself did not contain energy: it could reference spiritual power, but the power was not contained in the object itself. The Spanish believed (intellectually and spiritually) that the art of Mesoamerica had power only in its raw materials and in its high-quality finished work (chiefly gold and silver). Much of it was deemed worthless and burned or broken. Much that was financially valuable in European terms was shipped to Spain. The Mesoamericans had no idea that their civilizations were being looted and destroyed so that a nearly bankrupt Spain could fund its costly European

[2] Of course, the "New World" of the Americas was not new to the tens of millions of people who lived in North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean prior to the arrival of the Europeans. These people were not "discovered": they dwelled here, and their many distinct indigenous populations had formed towns and cities and had used their own symbols in their own artwork for many hundreds of years. European contact (whether via invasion, trading, and immigration) decimated these indigenous American communities, their cities and their empires. Beyond the massacres, the starvation and the forced migrations, many millions – perhaps as many as 90 percent of native people in the Americas -- died from lack of immunity to Old World European diseases such as smallpox, typhus, and influenza.

wars. Indigenous royalty, clan leaders, engineers, architects and other leaders were exterminated. In the future, all spiritual power was to reside in the God of the Catholic Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost – and, by extension, the Holy Mother the Virgin Mary and the saints. Art itself did not contain *xi*: art no longer was alive.

Hispano-American Art in the Colonial Era

In Hispano-America (what many in the U.S. call 'Latin America'), the early 16th century Spanish conquests were brutal. Governmentally, Spain dominated its American colonies for over 300 hundred years, during which many indigenous survivors (tribal peoples) were enslaved, reduced to forced labor, and coerced to participate in Spanish incursions into other tribal areas to create the Spanish-colonial administrative units that followed. The tribal blood-feuds that resulted continue to this day. As part of Spain's mission to the Indians, Catholic priests indoctrinated and converted indigenous people to accept a new tri-partite monotheistic God (the Father, Son and Holy Ghost) rather than (for example) the father god Ometeotl and the four Tezcatlipocas of the Late Post-Classic Aztec/Nahua creation myth. Indigenous survivors were taught pray to a kindly foreign variant of the ancient Mother Goddess, the benign and loving Virgin Mary. Although many of the indigenous peoples of Mexico were literate in their own languages, most did not read Spanish. Thus the new religious stories were made visible through ornate Catholic religious structures and wall murals depicting biblical stories. Impressive gilding and intense jewel-like color also showed the wealth and power of the churches. Many colonial artists were indigenous people trained at the Catholic convents.[3]

These dual colonial-era interventions -- the secular and the sacred – permanently changed the indigenous cultures of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. In the process, some Mesoamerican symbols were (temporarily) lost, transformed or modified. Some of these (such as the "bleeding heart of Jesus") supplanted powerful traditional images from Mesoamerican times. And new symbols (such as the Christian cross and multi-pointed crown) entered the indigenous artistic vocabulary. While indigenous artists were taught to carve the bodies of the new religious icons (the Virgin Mary, the Christ Child, and the Catholic saints), discrimination against indigenous artists persisted. For example, indigenous wood sculptors carved the saints' bodies and might make the vestments; however, the pale European ivory[4] or poly-chromed wooden faces and hands, and the red or blond hair, would be arrive from far across the ocean -- shipped from Spain.

As with conquests at other times and in other parts of the world (and as with Spain itself, under the Ancient Romans), indigenous symbols and traditions persisted and retained a role in the culture of the Hispanic American colonies. Importantly, indigenous artists

[3] See James Oles, Art and Architecture in Mexico (2013) 20-53, for a discussion on the use of multiple art and graphic media and techniques (indigenous and imported) in the Spanish campaign to convert and acculturate its indigenous subjects. See also "Colonial Foundations: Points of Contact and Compatibility" by Elizabeth Hill Boone and Thomas B. F. Cummins in Newland, et al, The Arts in Latin American, 1492-1820 (2006), p. 15.

[4] The ivory came from Spanish colonies in North Africa or from Asia via Spain's Philippine Islands (along with other trade items) carried in Spain's "Manila galleons."

continued to incorporate some of their own pre-Conquest symbols into their art work, preserving an important cultural continuity. Sometimes these symbols were seen by the Spanish as purely decorative, when in fact they were carriers of pre-Columbian tribal culture. These included the “lightening” pattern in weaving and on ceramics, and the incorporation of images of ancient sacred animals (snakes, feathered birds, jaguars, frogs and deer). Seen today, these persistent Hispano-American symbols reflect centuries of both acculturation and hidden resistance (art remains alive).

As time went on, non-Hispanic Western and Asian Pacific immigrants (Chinese, Filipinos, Jews, Italians and Germans, and others) also came to Latin America. These groups included some tribal people from Africa. Some were escaped slaves or those few who survived the wreckage of slave ships; others may have come from Africa before the start of the European slave trade, perhaps sailors who were blown off-course and across the ocean by storms. Each new immigrant brought and added something of his or her own cultural heritage to the mix. Over time, immigrants and their descendants intermarried with the indigenous people of Latin America. Thus some Latinos today may be (for example) partly of Chinese, African, Irish or German descent. Many of these descendants, however, continue to identify with their indigenous roots – and with the new nations that emerged after the breakup of the Spanish colonies in the Americas.

By 1820, Spain found itself overcommitted in Europe and no longer could enforce its control of its American colonies. Beginning in the early 1800s onward, many of these former colonies (now the nations of Argentina, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) fought for – and won -- national independence. The Spanish American War of 1898 finally ended Spain's rule in the Americas, but did not bring self-rule to the indigenous populations of its former territories (such as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands). Instead, these lands were ceded to the United States, along with jurisdiction over Cuba. Needless to say, Latin America's new national power structures often remained filled with European-educated “Iberoamerican” (Spanish-American) administrators, only in part due to their skill sets. In fact, with a few exceptions in the 19th century (such as President Benito Juárez of Mexico), it was not until 1998 that voters elected an indigenous politician -- President Evo Moráles of Bolivia -- to a position of national leadership. Since then, he has been re-elected twice.

In the arts, three hundred years of Spanish control, contacts and trade with Europe brought new ways of making art to the Americas. New art media (oil painting, printmaking and water color) brought from Europe were added to and – and often merged with -- traditional pre-Conquest arts such as wood carving, weaving, stone sculpture, jewelry making and ceramics. Spanish religious art (showing the Virgin Many and the Christ Child, the saints, angels, and heaven and hell) was -- and has remained -- very popular.

In addition, secular European art also was brought from Spain in the 18th and 19th centuries. Much of this was what we call 'representational' art in that it attempted to replicate visual reality in

- portraits[5]

Unknown artist
Empress Carlotta of Mexico
ca. 1865

- landscape paintings,

ADD 'VALLEY OF MEXICO' small oil painting

- and historic events or places, including memorable battles.

Artist Unknown, Battle of Puebla
Oil on canvas
1862

Artists such as Valencian Rafael Jimeno y Planes (1759-1825) brought "representational art" skills to Mexico from Europe; some Mexicans, such as the portrait artist José María

[5] Historically, Mesoamerican artists also portrayed their greatest leaders, carving their images in stone or painting their likenesses as murals.

Vásquez (ca. 1760 - ca. 1855), learned these skills by attending art history and studio classes at the Academia de San Carlos in Mexico City. In these ways, the Spanish colonies were introduced to new European ways of 'seeing' (ex.: constructed and geometric perspective and the use of plaster models) and of evaluating and critiquing art (ex.: how accurate were the features and the pose, how skillful was the portrait, the foreground and background). These very elite and (relatively) small European paintings and drawings were intended to be framed and hung in an assembly hall or a private home. In Mexico, canvas -- and even wood -- would rot, so the best pictures were painted on metal, and almost all would receive heavy coats of lacquer to protect the paint. Obviously this European art tradition was unlike the earlier indigenous Mesoamerican art that portrayed gods and tribal conquests (whether painted or carved) at an often monumental civic scale—or incorporated religious and natural forms and designs into useful objects -- in traditional symbolic ways. While Spanish control of Mexico ended in 1821, the effects of three-hundred years of Hispanic cultural dominance remained. By them, many aspects of Spanish culture (including European ideas about art) had become part of Mexico's national heritage.

Hispano-American Art: The Mexican Context

Mexico won its War of Independence in 1821 and (technically) became a free country. Internally, the new nation was unused to self-governance, and it was difficult to overcome 300 years of Spanish colonial rule. Internal tribal divisions, coups, and regime changes resulted in a rocky start for the new Mexican nation. In addition, much of Mexico's ruling class remained Eurocentric and dismissive of the rights of its indigenous peoples (which consisted of hundreds of tribes) and its large *mestizo*[6] (mixed race) population. Thus Mexico faced an extreme identity crisis, unsure if it should look forward toward to Europe, back to its Spanish Colonial heritage or (further back) to its indigenous Mesoamerican legacy. Art would become a major force in the effort to establish a new identity for Mexico, one that would honor the nation's Mesoamerican heritage and respect the rights of its culturally diverse population.

Note that Mexico also faced external threats, one of which was the United States (a young and growing nation). Slavery in Mexico, already discredited, had been outlawed in 1829: this included both African and First Nation (American Indian) slaves. For Mexico, freedom from slavery was important both in the international fight against slavery and in confronting Mexico's longstanding acceptance of white Eurocentric privilege; beyond this, slavery also was costly and held little economic attraction in

[6] *Mestizo* is a general term for mixed-race ancestry. The Spanish codified this in their *Casta* system, employed throughout their colonies, in which every potential combination of races was rated for its presumed personality deficits that would bar people in that racial group from civil rights, jobs and social opportunities. It was assumed that white skin signified greater intelligence. The purer (meaning "whiter") a person's blood, the more status he or she could claim. Initiated in the 17th century, the racist concepts behind the *Casta* system have been totally discredited. Despite major efforts to eradicate it, racism continues to blight the careers and lives of many people with indigenous ancestry.

Mexico, where wage labor was cheap. The United States itself remained locked in increasing controversy over slavery, with "slave" states in the south and "free" (non-slavery) states to the north. Some powerful U.S. citizens already had moved into the eastern side of Tejas (Mexico's large territory north of the Rio Grande), where they had established a cotton-based plantation system that (in their opinion) required a slavery-based economy. In 1836, these white settlers seceded from Mexico and formed the pro-slavery Republic of Texas, which survived until 1845, despite economic problems and sporadic-but-deadly warfare with the region's Comanche and the Apache tribes. Early in 1845, the U.S. South succeeded in pressing the national government for annexation of Texas, fearing that it otherwise eventually might become a "free" (non-slavery) state. Texas became a state on December 29th, 1845. The annexation provoked the Mexican American war, which lasted from 1846-1848. In the end, Mexico lost all its northern territory, surrendering Texas – as well as much of the land that would become New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Nevada and California -- to the United States. The Rio Grande became part of the southern U.S. boarder, and Texas would remain a slave state until the end of the American Civil War and the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Thus Mexico as we know it today is smaller than it was in its first decades as an independent county – and many U. S. 'Southwesterners' live on land that once was part of Mexico.

Changes in artistic styles in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries brought new directions and opportunities for artists in Europe – and so, as well, for artists in Mexico. For example, during the neo-Classical era, Italian painters focused on the history of ancient Rome and its heroes. In response, Mexican painters and sculptors (whether at home or studying and working abroad) used art to glorify Mexico's own indigenous heritage -- for example, the warriors and kings of the Aztec empire. In pace with the social and environmental upheaval of the Industrial Revolution, painters also found a market for sentimental "picturesque" images of daily life in the city and the countryside. These pictures -- found in many countries with some Western cultural heritage -- remain popular today. This exhibition includes 'The Balut Seller' (1949) by Pilipino artist Romeo Borja Enriquez (1920 - 2017?). In it, a young woman coming from work is shown buying preserved goose eggs (*balut*) from a young vendor seated on the church steps.

Balút (egg) Seller, Rodriguez
Oil on canvas
1949

The second half of the 19th century also brought new ways to make popular, understandable and -- most importantly -- inexpensive art. Photographers began to document indigenous peoples and their landscapes. The popular press also came into being during these years. While the printing press had arrived in Latin America in the mid-1500s, and books were both published in Mexico and imported, reading (which implied literacy) was not widespread before Mexican Independence. Subject matter tended to be for the upper classes and focus on religion and scholarship. However, mass education – and literacy – began to improve during the 19th century. By the 1870s, publishers of cheap newsletters (the equivalent of U.S. "supermarket tabloids") and the latest *corridos* (narrative verses typically set to music) were employing cartoonists and illustrators. These were highly popular even in rural villages: those who did not read could hear the songs and could understand the pictures.

Jose Guadalupe Posada, *Buenos Valedores*
Woodblock print
1919

Throughout the 19th century, a small number of perhaps no more than three thousand wealthy Mexican city-dwellers (and those with pretensions to wealth) continued their demand for portrait, landscape and "historic scene" painters. At the same time, Mexico's internal economy and better access to education now gave urban artists a greater freedom to choose individual "career paths". One available path was that of "Artist."

In Europe, as the 19th century progressed, the social and economic chaos of the Industrial Revolution resulted in revolutionary and reform-oriented social justice movements. In Mexico, indigenous people such as Mexican President Benito Juárez (1806-1872) began to participate in governance and in all areas of national life. Their political "champions" increasingly sought political power for indigenous people and respect for their traditional cultures. As agricultural land was paved over for industry-and-transportation related uses (including access to industrial resources by road and railway), the rural poor lost their livelihood: migration to jobs added to the break-up of traditional indigenous communities and to pressures on urban centers. Mexico was becoming a modern technological, industrial state. While individual members of indigenous communities might rise to prominence in the army or in industry, power still continued to be held by a Eurocentric elite, mostly white European and *mestizo* – and (in part due to lack of education) only rarely by those of indigenous ancestry.

Understandably, however, questions of national identity – Eurocentric or indigenous - were not yet as important as absorbing the transition to nationhood and securing governmental and economic stability. For decades, a long-lasting central government for Mexico had proven elusive. Instead, the period between 1876 and 1911 encompassed the thirty-five year "presidential dictatorship" of José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz Mori, an era called the 'Porfiriato'. Díaz regime was divisive and rapacious; however, as with many dictatorships, the period was relatively stable[7]. While most Mexican provinces remained under the direct control of tribal leaders, Díaz resolved the lack of central government (and thus of limited national tax income) by negotiating contracts with private non-Mexican companies. In return for a cut of the profits (for Díaz, his government and his political colleagues), these private companies were given control of developing and extracting Mexican resources. Political pressure against Díaz' regime grew, ultimately resulting in the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920.

Early Mexican photographs show the lives of Nineteenth and early 20th century citizens citizens, both in the cities and in the countryside. These photographs, many taken during the Porfiriato and in the early years after the Mexican Revolution, include images of the Mexican landscape and of the daily life of men, women and children; they also allow us to see (in retrospect) the extreme poverty in which the majority lived.

Hugo Brehme, *Mitla*
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print
1930

Some of these images (taken by foreign photographers) were intended to be charmingly "Picturesque" – nostalgic for a pre-industrial way of life; however, some photographers were documenting the people and the ways of life of Mexico's tribal peoples. In the long run, however, the most significant artist of the Porfiriato was neither a photographer nor a painter. José Guadalupe Posada (1853-1913) grew up poor and died poor, and his area of artistic expertise was graphic illustration. Posada excelled both as a draughtsman and as a popular social and political caricaturist who lampooned both revolutionaries and the clergy, and the rich and poor alike. He was not an independent artist who could choose his own subject matter; instead, he drew whatever his employers thought their readership wanted to see. His "Calaveras" – thriving skeletons busy living their daily lives – owe a

[7] To draw a comparison, think about Syria and Iraq: when a longstanding nationally-unifying dictatorship is abolished, a country may splinter into tribal-area warfare.

debt to both Mesoamerican and Medieval European sources, as well as to political graphics circulating in Europe. However, Posada made these emphatically Mexican in their clothing and activities – reminding all his readers that, in the end, everyone was (and is) just a dancing skeleton after all.

Jose Guadalupe Posada, *Calaveras del Montón*
Woodblock print
1918

Longstanding post-Revolutionary claims that Posada supported popular leaders such as Zapata have been challenged recently: in fact, he is known to have supported the quasi-dictator Diaz. On the other hand, the Porfiriato was an era of comparative stability, and Posada also would have known that to go up against Diaz would be fatal. In any case, his graphic style permitted him to "mask" and then skewer those who abused power and behaved arrogantly without actually naming them (Posada's audience knew the actual identities).[8] Posada's work is often highly dramatic (he also illustrated sensationalist stories that might today appear in a supermarket tabloid), and he excelled at puncturing swollen egos. Some credit his vision to hard drinking and marijuana. But no one can dismiss the importance of Posada's artistic ability, prolific output, powerful and energetic visual narrative style, and in-your-face imagery – as well as his ability to deliver a gut-punch, a laugh, or a "!Si, así es la vida!" from his audience. Looking at the work of the Mexican muralists -- as well as that of many Hispano-American artists working in the U. S. between 1960 and the present, you can see the great debt that is owed to Posada.

[8] Take a look at Posada's work and decide for yourself if he was a champion of the "under classes" – or if he was just earning a living by pleasing his audience and making money for his employers? This dialog is not over yet!

David Siqueiros, *Angry Dog*
Lithograph
1925

Following the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920, the new government of President Álvaro Obregón sought to unify a war-torn and divided country through the establishment of a *mestizo* national identity. This new identity honored (and attempted to merge) the nation's widely diverse indigenous and mixed-race citizens as well as those of Hispanic ancestry. In the era before television and the internet, Mexican artists were called upon to lead in the transition to this new national identity. The government also needed these artists to help celebrate (and stimulate) the "workers" -- the engine of Mexico's young post-revolutionary economy. Some of greatest work produced during this era took the form of huge public murals, most notably those created by 'Los Tres' ('The Three'): Diego Rivera (1886-1957), José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949), and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974) -- as well as by the artist and printmaker Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991) and others. Most of these murals are in Mexico, while others were commissioned for locations in the United States. Some (much smaller) pieces by these artists – and one design for a mural that was lost in the 1985 Mexico City earthquake -- are included in this exhibition.

Diego Rivera, Las Espigas
Oil on panel
1937

For a while, the strong impetus to forge a new identity for Mexico – as Russia had transformed its image after its 1911 revolution – kept many artists focused on creating work carrying the government's social and political messages. Nationally-supported art schools helped train a new generation of Mexican artists, and printmaking (via groups such as LEAR and the Taller de Gráfico Popular [TGP]) took on a new life influenced by the methods of Posada, the ideals of the political left, the concept of an artists' "collective", and the powerful voice of social criticism found in the work of artists such as Kathe Kollwitz (1867-1945) and George Grosz (1893-1959) in Europe and Mariana Yampolsky (1925-2002) in Mexico.

Alfredo Zalce, *Biblioteca de las Leyes*
Woodblock print, TGP
1941

As the 1920s wore on, some artists who were committed to the revolutionary cause of either of Communism or of Socialism continued to believe that their primary duty (and the duty of art) was to foster the workers (the Masses) – and the Mexican State – through a nationwide, all-inclusive message of support for labor and for Mexico's indigenous/*mestizo*/Hispanic heritage. Without surrendering their political conscience, some others (such as Rivera) turned toward their artwork as an exploration of more subjective content of self- (rather than national) identity. The conflict between artists who strove together for a collective political future and those "self-indulgent" ones who (remaining true to themselves) chose to look inside themselves for inspiration would be repeated forty years later amongst Hispanic American artists involved (or not) in the Chicano movement in the United States.

One also can find both the forthright documentary images and the artist's sense of expression in the work of Mexican photographers of the 1920s and '30s. In the early 1920s, two German photographers (Guillermo [Wilhelm] Kahlo (1871-1941) and Hugo Brehme (1882-1954) and an Italian Communist (Tina Modotti, 1896-1942) worked in Mexico and documented what they saw there. Mariana Yampolsky (originally from Chicago) became both a print-maker at TGP and a world-class Mexican photographer.

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Tina Modotti, *Mural y pissaron*
Vintage gelatin silver print

All three served as mentors for the Mexican-born photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo (1902-2002), whose black and white images – often showing both the beauty and the great disparities of wealth and poverty in his homeland -- are highly respected today internationally. Several of Bravo's photographs are in this exhibition.[9] Bravo later taught Graciela Iturbide (1942-), whose work also is included in this show. Both Bravo and Iturbide are noted for the powerful visual poetry of their images and for the truths that they told about Mexico, its national character and its people.

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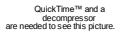
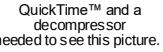
Manuel Alvarez Bravo,
Parabola Optica
Gelatin Silver Print
1931

[9] Bravo at first wanted to become a painter. In an interview with Mark Edward Harris (1994) he said, " . . . around 1922, the first Picasso book arrived in Mexico. When I saw it, it stirred up my mind. Until that time the only painters I knew were classic painters, and suddenly Picasso revolutionized my mind." (Harris' interview with Bravo in *Camera and Darkroom*, February, 1993, p. 28).



Graciela Iturbide,
Nuestra Señora de los Iguanas
1979

Note that there always has been an element of what one might call the "fantastic" in Mexican art ['El Arte Fantástico'], from ghostly and divine beings, to images that are part-human and part object, to representations that seem to invoke the spirits that animate plants and animals. This "fantastic" art referenced daily reality as revealed through artistic vision: it portrayed the hidden web of human relationships and ties to and within the natural world, as well as unmasking the intensity of subconscious emotions that many people cannot feel or choose to ignore. In this art, each being and each object – animate and inanimate alike – shares the same life in the world as we perceive it, in the world as it is, and in the ever-changing web of energy that embraces and sustains what many of us call the 'universe'. This is, in essence, a mystical vision. However, it is one in which each subject ultimately retains a unique identity. There are strong links here to indigenous spiritual knowledge and practice as well as to issues of personal and cultural identity, memory, and daily life, as seen in much of the work of Frida Kahlo (Guillermo Kahlo's daughter, 1907-1954). More recently, Francisco Toledo



Francisco Toledo, *Hombre Montado de Caballo con Mascara de Hierro*
Gouche on crepe de chine

(1940 -), Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991), María Izquierdo (1902-1955), Julio Castellanos (1905-1947) and José Luis Cuevas (1934-2017) have continued in this ancient tradition. In ceramics, master artists such as Rigoberto Mateos Ortega (1942-) have created animal figures in glazed pottery that evoke this same magical life-force. Mateos' ceramic dog, ca. 1948, is in the exhibition.

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Rufino Tamayo, *Retrato con Marco*
Mixographia

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Rigoberto Mateos Ortega,
Polychrome ceramic dog.
Jalisco, Mexico
ca. 1948

Note that "Arte Fantástico" was not the same as European Surrealism with which it often is confused (although both can seem dreamlike or nightmarish). Surrealism came to Mexico with European artists who found Mexico to be a haven for creative exiles (especially for those fleeing the Spanish Civil War and the rise of the Fascists). Famous Surrealists who at some point lived and worked in Mexico include André Breton (French, 1899-1966), Leonora Carrington (British, 1917-2011), and Remedios Varo (Spanish, 1908-1963). For the Surrealists, reality was the stepping stone to a complex inner vision where "real" objects are transmuted and combined into forms and relationships representing mystic traditions and human psychology: it is a very personal inner vision rooted in European artistic and (ultimately) intellectual mystic traditions.[10]

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Leonora Carrington, Untitled
Lithograph
1947

Hispano-American Artists in the United States

As with many other aspects of life in the United States, gaining respect as an Hispano-American artist was not easy. Culturally, did you view yourself as a Mexican artist in America? Or were you an American or a Mexican-American or a Chicano/a? Was your strongest influence your community, your family, and your tribal heritage? Or was it the television, which you watched as a child so you could learn to speak English? Just as importantly, did anyone care? Some of the artists in this show recall the anguish and embarrassment of being punished by teachers and bullied by other students for not

[10] See the bibliography for sources on Carrington and Varo as well as on the Surrealists in general. If you read Spanish, you might look for a copy of El Surrealismo y el Arte Fantástico de Mexico by Ida Rodriguez Prampolini (1969). You also might read Susan Aberth's Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art (2010), especially Chapter 4 ("The Alchemical Kitchen: Domestic Space as Sacred Space") where Aberth talks about the differences between Surrealism and Mexican "Arte Fantástico".

knowing English: in their artwork, this may show up in the symbolic guise of "dunce caps" and tiny kindergarten chairs. Many suffered the physical and emotional anguish of corporal punishment both at school and at home. Some faced the daily threat of local street gangs, and some lost friends to gang violence, drugs and alcohol. High schools (should one get that far) often shunted 'Latino' students into manual arts programs and trade schools where ceramics, printmaking, and carpentry (shop) classes were as close as students came to making art. Families -- if present -- were not always supportive ("So how are you going to make a living?"), and there were few if any role models.

In the 1930s and '40s, some Mexican-American (or higher-status 'Iberoamerican') artists survived, mostly making high quality representational art (ex.: Mexican-themed landscapes, scenes and portraits, for example) for white art dealers and clients. Of this era, the painters Hernando Villa (1881-1952) and Alberto Valdés (1918-1998) remain highly respected, as does the ceramicist Dora de Larios (1933 -) who used Mesoamerican themes in her work[11]. Domingo Ulloa (1919-1997) made the move in the 1940s to incorporate strong social and political commentary into his art, and Roberto Esteban Chavez (1932 --), a painter and muralist, went on to be the fifth member of Los Angeles' famous Los Four.[12] None of these artists, however, captured the audience and near godlike respect that flowed to 'Los Tres": Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros.

Many people in the United States as a whole were unaware and dismissive of much of Mexican culture: the U. S. revolution had occurred over 150 years earlier, and its own indigenous population had long ago been marginalized. As late as the 1920s, it still was possible to claim a bounty on an Indian in California as well as in other western states. In California by the 1930s and '40s, early Mexican ranchos had long ago been bought (or stolen) by white settlers. Even when they had the money, it was difficult or impossible for Hispano Americans to buy property in white neighborhoods (a situation that still was true in some areas in the 1970s), and urban-dwelling Mexican youth were stereotyped in the popular press (and by the police) as 'pachucos' – tough teenagers and young adults, posturing, fighting, and otherwise getting into trouble. Mexican-American army veterans returning from World War II and the Korean War to southwestern *barrios* (particularly in Arizona and New Mexico) still found it difficult to get jobs. Life became even more difficult for them, their wives and their families if they joined a labor union or wanted to unionize. Sporadic protests, documentaries, photographs and news stories, however, did little to change things.

The 1960s, of course, was a reality check for anyone living in the United States – and it was a wake up call for the many 'mainstream' white Americans who imagined that the fight for Black civil rights was the only fight out there. It was the era of the Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam protests and the overwhelming push for African American Civil Rights. In California, the United Farm Workers strike turned an entire nation off

[11] Gump's department store in San Francisco carried de Larios ceramics.

[12] Read more about these artists in Terezita Romo's essay, "Mexican Heritage, American Art: Six Angeleno Artists", in Chon Noriega, Terezita Romo, and Pilar Tomkins Rivas, L.A. Xicano, the exhibition catalog for Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980 (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2011).

Gallo wine. The work of El Teatro Campesino was seen as a voice of oppressed Latinos, and labor organizers became heroes to many young Americans across a wide range of races and cultures. In solidarity, but with little knowledge of the *Bracero* Program, dozens of white folk singers sang "Deportee (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos)" by Woody Guthrie (set to Martin Hoffman's music). Singer Richie Valens ('La Bamba"), a Mexican American singer from Los Angeles, became even more famous after his tragic death in 1959, while Marty Robbins immortalized 'El Paso' ("Down in the West Texas town of El Paso, I fell in love with a Mexican girl . . ."). The often humorous music of Lalo Guerrero[13] (2016-2005) and -- a generation later -- the music of Los Lobos -- helped to bring "Chicano" music into the mainstream. For many whites, however, the voices of the '60s and early '70s were Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. As a Mexican American, Baez' life-long reaction to discrimination was to actively support civil rights and social justice causes. In sum, the left and liberal white communities in the United States awoke to the fact that there was, indeed, a major struggle going on for Hispano-American civil rights.

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Death of Ruben Salazar
Frank Romero

Much more importantly, Hispano-Americanos/as themselves were organizing. This struggle had existed for decades, of course, but now it was visible and nation-wide. In addition to the Farm Workers, Chicano students began to take themselves and their power much more seriously. They were tired of – and then outraged at -- public schools that did not support their desires for an education that would help them get well-paying non-menial jobs – and (perhaps) get them into college. They no longer would tolerate discrimination and stereotyping. In Los Angeles, the "Walk Outs" and "Blow Outs" began in 1965 and continued until the city schools were reorganized. Taking a cue from Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros, communities looked toward large-scale mural art to express solidarity, heritage and self-respect. And young men and women decided to become artists, whether they worked together or alone and whether they called themselves 'Tejanos/as' or 'Chicanos/as' or 'Latinos/as'. Note the plurals here? Many Hispano-Americana women artists were strong feminists and rejected the *macho* culture prevalent in Latin America. Freedom of sexual orientation also was important, as a

[13] Lalo Guerrero (2016-2005) has been called "the father of Chicano music": he received the National Medal of Arts in 1996.

substantial number of these artists were gay or lesbian. Coming from families that often wanted acceptance and middle-class respect, their artwork might feature overt sexuality – or hide it (out in the open) via symbols. Unlike Mexico during the 1920s, however, the United States government was not their mentor: with the exception of some grant money and some dedicated faculty, these artists did the heavy lifting themselves. They often struggled to find the money for paint and art supplies. Ultimately, however, many of them awakened great power of expression from deep within themselves when they (individually and collectively) were able to combine serious technical chops with narrative content that reflected their lives, their complex personal identities, and their cultural heritage.

You may have heard that European explorers brought back tales of "an Island called California" – a fabled primeval paradise. The "cholo/as" and "pachuco/as" of the 1940s and '50s spoke of "Califas" as their own mythic homeland where "none of this s--- would be happening!". To the young Chicano/as of the 1960s, however, "Califas" was of their parent's generation. Instead, they invented and sought a lost all-Chicano agrarian homeland they named 'Atzlán'– the place from which the Aztecs had begun their ancient migration to Tenochtitlan, and they portrayed this place in their graphics.[14] Chicano artists Gilbert ['Magu'] Luján , Richard Duardo and Robert ['Beto'] de la Rocha, the Tejana artist Carmen Lomas Garza, and many others have explored the concept and portrayed their visions of the landscape of Aztlán. Lomas Garza, for example, focuses in extraordinary detail on the home-life in a Tejano/a household, painting indoor and outdoor scenes from daily life, featuring extended family and friends – and the occasional miracle.[15]

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El Milagro
Carmen Lomas Garza
1982

Two arts collectives (or gatherings of individual artists) of note during these years were

[14] See Aztlán: Art from a Mythic Homeland (Fields and Zamudio-Taylor, 2001). Richard Duardo called his printmaking studio 'Aztlán Multiples'.

[15] Discussions over the role of Atzlán and Chicanismo/a in cultural, gender and personal identity continued. For an informative example, see "There's No Place Like Atzlán: Embodied Aesthetics in Chicana Art" by Alicia Gaspar de Alba in *The New Centennial Review* 4.2 (2004), p. 103-140.

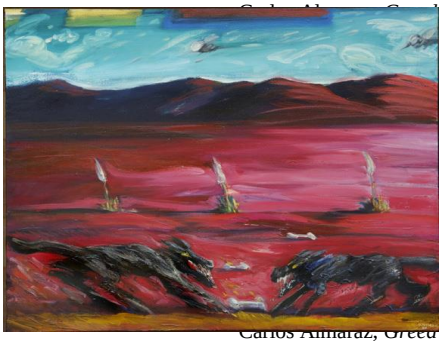
- 'Asco' (Spanish for ‘disgust’ or ‘nausea’) whose primary members were Glugio ‘Gronk’ Nicandro, Harry Gamboa, Jr., Diane Gamboa, William F. Herron III, Patssy Valdez, Humberto Sandoval, and Barbara Carrasco; and
- 'Los Four': Carlos Almaraz, Gilbert [Magu] Luján, Frank Romero and Beto de la Rocha, with Judithe Hernández and John Valadez arriving as the membership changed; Roberto Esteban Chavez also exhibited with 'Los Four' .

'Asco' was noted for its performance art, coming to prominence in the early 1970s with street processionals protesting the Vietnam War and the exclusion of alternative cultures from the dominant white for-profit media. They continued, also, to address the issue of Chicano/a stereotypes and self-imposed “politically-correct” boundaries: could Chicanismo/a embrace a highly verbal, artistically confrontational, courageous but anti-heroic arts collective that included unapologetic gays and lesbians? In 1972, three Asco members protested against the exclusion of Chicano/as from contemporary exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art [LACMA] by signing their names to the building: an example of protest-as-graffiti. The message ultimately got through, and an exhibition of current Chicano art by 'Los Four' followed in1974. Asco also did murals, produced plays and otherwise burned a lot of high-wattage creative energy. Read Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa, Jr., (1998) if you want to learn about Asco, its intents, its projects and the group of artists who fueled it all. Both Gronk and Pattsy Valdez also went on to successful careers as a solo artists.

Gronk, *La City Girl*

'Los Four', while no less energetic than 'Asco', were more traditional studio artists whose output was primarily drawing, paintings and prints plus some sculpture and ceramics. While 'Los Four' worked – for a time – collectively, their collaboration was with mural art as well as in continuous discussion and in mutual support of the group members, as artists and as politically-aware Chicanos in the turbulent 1970s and ‘80s. Their work, as a group, was strong, often intensely colorful, and highly symbolic – whether the symbols were universal (fire, cars, water, landscape, home-life, sexuality and plants and animals), cultural (clowns, *cholo* life, and Hispanic religious and spiritual references including the altars and *ofrendas* of el Día de los Muertos) or highly personal (the product of experiences, fantasies, dreams and nightmares). Nationally, their greatest barrier was that most U.S. artists (especially those in the art capitol of New York) were working as

Abstract Expressionists. 'Los Four' were experimenting within a narrative tradition – distilling the essence and capturing the events of Chicano life. So not only were they developing their work in a different cultural tradition, but they also were working outside the mainstream trend in Modern art. However, with the support of Jane Livingston, curator of 20th century art at LACMA (and those pioneering members of Asco who signed the LACMA wall in 1972), 'Los Four' were given their own exhibition at LACMA in 1974. While some critics still were unable to get their heads around Chicano art and/or narrative art, the show established the reputation of 'Los Four' which went on to be featured in numerous other shows (although Carlos Almaraz left for a highly successful solo career in about 1980). But this show and UCLA's 1990 "Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation" [CARA] were two important milestones in bringing Chicano artwork and perspective to mainstream U. S. art.



Carlos Almaraz, *Greed*
Oil on canvas

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Magu, *Artist as Success Meets La Peaches at Chinois's*
Dry point etching, 1989

Some of the other noted Hispanic-American artists in this show include Laura Aguilar, Miguel Ángel Reyes, Ron Arena, Louis Carlos Bernal, Richard Duardo, Margaret Garcia, Dyan Garza, Roberto Gil de Montes, Jef Huereque, Salomon Huerta, Jose Lozano, Paul Martinez, Teddy Sandoval, David Serrano, Linda Vallejo, Maria Vasquez,

and Ricardo Valverde. Brief biographical sketches (included in the exhibition pamphlet) tell some of their individual stories.[16] You might also want to check out the printmaking done at Self Help Graphics in Boyle Heights (East Los Angeles) and the murals done by Chicano/a and Hispanic-American artists all over California. This Gallery Guide gives you only a glimpse at all that is available!

[16] Fortunately, the Smithsonian and a number of University of California oral history projects have recorded these artists' recollections of their lives – their growing up, becoming politicized, and making art. A lot of this is now available on the web: see the bibliography for additional information.

Comments on Art by Professor Carlos Ugalde
for Lorenzo Hernandez

´´Si no es político no es arte´´
-- Diego Rivera

Art, whether it is painting, music, sculpture, architecture, drawing, muralism, dance, classical or modern, poetry or prose, film-cinema or photography, without a doubt is created and expressed within the prevailing political, economic and social reality one finds oneself in -- the determined society, the time and place in which the artist and art is born, created and hopefully disseminated. The purpose is to record, communicate and leave memory and interpretation of ones human condition and experience.

From the paintings in the caves or rocks and as time went on with more alternative means of expression, artists found themselves pleasing their patrons, their faith, the kings and queen and the popes. They also expanded their quest to question their plight and [that] of their fellow men in society. An emerging challenge became to be one to capture, educate and denounce the human condition of their historical moment.

Art is a language in itself and wishes to communicate, for art can be the sacred blood of life that moves us emotionally to embrace life itself, despite the horrors that art can and does capture along with beauty. Beauty could be defined by Benedetto Croce when he once wrote, ´´Beauty is the expression of the human spirit´´. Or one is also reminded of Miguel de Unamuno in saying something to the effect that, *´´El lenguaje es la sangre del la vida´´*. In essence, language and art is the blood of life due to the necessity for human beings to create to survive, to record, to express and hopefully leave such cherished memory of beauty and contradictions of human behavior and life as we know [it].

In speaking of contemporary Latin American Art, one must mention the role of Mexico in early 20th Century. The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 was the first major upheaval of the century to challenge 80 years of liberal, Euro-centric political economic policies that benefited 5% of any of the new Latin American nations that emerged after the independent movements of 1810-1820. The masses were left behind resulting in extraordinary inequality. The repressive regime of Porfirio Diaz(1886-1911) with the nefarious concentration of land, capital and political power was captured by the unforgettable pen of Guadalupe Posada with his *calaveras* bravely denouncing the horrors of a semi-feudal Mexico where 1% of the population, the ruling elites, own 95% of the land. U.S. and England own the railroad, mining and the banking system.

The Mexican Revolution gave rise to an enormous and powerful explosion of creativity in literature, film, music, poetry, photography and of course in the plastic arts such as the historical muralist movement which in turn influenced the cultural expression in the rest of ´´Our Latin America´´ or simply and beautifully stated by Jose Marti, ´´Nuestra América´´. He coined this term with great endearment in his famous essay ´´Nuestra

América´´ written in 1892. Marti advised the rest of Latin America that we need not look to the Greeks to understand or define ourselves. We are who we are, and we should waste no time to get to know each other, close ranks, define and defend our very essence before the greater power to the north that hovers [above] us, placing its claws upon our beloved America. They had already taken half of Mexico by the 1840s.

Concretely, the muralist movement led by Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros with the help of Jose Vasconcelos, Minister of Education and a visionary during the first post-armed struggle government of Alvaro Obregon, set the stage by using art as a vehicle to redefine the the Mexican reality, a reality constantly denied and rejected by the colonial and neo-colonial powers to be. The huge murals were giant history books revealing to the public (i.e., the ruling euro-centric elites) reluctant accept that, in Mexico and Latin America, we the masses -- Indigenous, Mestizo, Africans and Criollos -- plant, harvest and mine the wealth of Latin America. The walls screamed like the ´´March of Humanity´´ by Siqueiros, recording our memory so as not to allow our people to be exploited again. The said, ´´Basta Ya´´, Enough!!!!!! We will resist to the end, until victory shines upon the greater masses for the greater good for all. We are the constructors and protagonists of our own destiny. Hence, the Muralist Movement along with writers like Jose Marti, Ruben Dario, Pablo Neruda, Mariano Azuela, Jose Maria Mariatiqui and so many others armed with their pen and brushes, writing, painting, ´´Latinoamericanismo´´, in no doubt influenced the powerful and explosive Chicano and Latin American art movement in North America in the late 1960s along with the response to the adverse and grossly neglected social and political economic reality. A tremendous influence was also the Black Civil Rights movement, the Chicano farm labor and urban struggles as well as the Third World Liberation struggles, specially the Cuban Revolution. Art therefore continues to record, giving life and memory of and to the present human condition which in essence is the past, present and future all at the same time. We can therefore say as artists, ´´We struggle for social justice therefore we are.´´

´´Luchamos por eso somos´´
Hasta la victoria siempre y
Viva Companero Fidel

Carlos Ugalde
Zihuatanejo, Guerrero, Mexico
Agosto de 2017

Exploring the Exhibition, Looking for Symbols

Symbols incorporated within artwork may have universal, community or personal significance. These symbols – individually or together -- can be especially empowering for oppressed people whose indigenous cultural heritage had been suppressed following conquest by a foreign power. Mesoamerican symbols have demonstrated remarkable persistence – as have the cultures from which they came.

Humans have long sought the assistance of -- or have attempted to placate -- unpredictable natural forces. Today, many people continue to pray for protection from natural disasters (floods, fires, earthquakes, drought). To the indigenous inhabitants of the land that now is Mexico, early Mesoamerican gods personified some of these otherwise inexplicable forces, be they nurturing or deadly and disruptive. Over generations, tribal artists developed symbolic images to represent them. Some of these symbolic images include:

- The crescent moon
- Stars and planets (physically visible in the sky but representing the cosmos) that may be shown in the shape of wagon wheels (s symbol used also by the Plains Indians)
- Zapotec lightening symbols;
- the Aztec Quetzalcoatl (flying plumed serpent – found earlier at Teotihuacan). In many ways, Quetzalcoatl is similar to the Asian dragon: electric male energy emerging and arising to initiate change, the god of thunder.
- Tlaloc, the Aztec goggle-eyed rain god, ruling paradise from a cool womb-like cave Rain gods were essential in an environment where water was uncertain, precious and essential for crop irrigation. Cocijo was the Zapotec Rain God.
- Huehueteotl, the old Aztec fire god (similar to the Greek Hephaistos), and
- Coatlique, the ancient and terrifying Aztec mother god (similar to the Hindu Kali).

These images can be found on pottery, and in sculpture, weaving, murals, tools, funerary objects and ceremonial objects, architecture, ornaments and weaponry. The Spanish Conquest of the 16th century strove to impose Christianity over earlier tribal belief systems; however, whether openly or covertly, aspects of the older religions often blended into the new. The Devil, Jesus and the Virgin Mary found in Catholicism, however, had no Mesoamerican equivalent.

At a civic scale, sacred geometry both symbolized and secured the relationship between humans and the Cosmos (the sun, moon, and stars). At Teotihuacan, cardinal points (north/south, east/west), derived from the sun's path and the tied to the location of the Cerro Gordo ("Fat Hill"), determined the site of the city, its avenues, plazas, and pyramids. To the Aztec, "in effect, all of Teotihuacan was, to its inhabitants, the equivalent of a cathedral." (Pasztory, in Townsend, 139). This is in some ways similar to the system by which Chinese Feng Shui determined the location and layout of the Forbidden City; a similar system was used by the Japanese to site and plan Nara and Kyoto.

Members of Mesoamerican tribal groups also had more personal concerns about

securing good fortune that might bring wealth, health and plenty -- and seeking protection from evil forces that might bring illness, poor harvests, injury, sickness, and death. There were ways to address these also: for example, for illnesses, *curanderos/as* invoked spiritual powers (indigenous and/or Catholic) as they used herbal potions and objects made from plants and animals, to perform healing rituals. From the Spanish Colonial era onwards, people often owned *milagros* -- tiny figures in metal or stone -- that symbolized specific hopes and wishes and that could be worn or kept nearby to provide long-term protection and to promote healing. Typical *milagros* symbolized hearts, arms and legs, and farm animals. *Milagros* were not limited to Mexico, but also could be found as far away as the Balkans. The crescent moon guided sailors who watched the skies. The symbol of the (all seeing) Eyes of God may have come from the Mediterranean, while the symbol of the severed five-fingered hand may have come from Polynesian sailors who used their hands as sextants to navigate ocean voyages ("The hand of God is with you."). It may have been used in the days of the Spanish Moors (the medieval era Arabic kings of Spain). A similar symbol has been found in both North Africa and among the Southeast and Eastern Woodlands tribes of the United States: "It symbolized personal contact between the spirits and the individual and functioned as a signifier of possession or power." (Hunt, 196) While the cross was the central symbol of spiritual power under Spanish Catholicism, the *milagros* stood their ground -- and, in some cases, were nailed to wooden crosses to increase the symbolic strength of the request for blessing and spiritual assistance. In Roberto Gil de Montes painting, "The last Act (Death at Dawn" (1983), the *milagros* are pistols.

Wood cross with *milagros*
Circa 1940s
Dolores Ramirez Collection

Roberto Gil de Montes

The Last Act (Death at Dawn), 1983
Oil on board (retablo). Mixed media (Milagros) frame.

Indigenous people also wanted to gain or emulate the powers and abilities they saw in animals: thus battle armor or other clothing might be decorated with symbols of their powers (ex.: jaguar skins and claws or turtle or raven images). Today tigers and rhinoceroses are killed by poachers to obtain similar sources of animal power. Masks also allowed humans to invoke the spirits and powers of birds and animals. They also may be a form of social or political commentary. Today, for example, a popular scary or "devil" masks depicts President Trump. Beyond this, there is the basic oneness with the natural world: the patterns and colors of plants and animals still are used as decorative motifs craftwork, and stylized forms of plants and animals are painted on ceramics and woven into fabrics.

To tribal peoples, animals (as well as everything else in the universe) had individual identities (they were “themselves”); however, they could be benign, evil, or might warn of good or bad fortune to come. Coyotes, rabbits, deer, dogs, turtles, jaguar, ducks and geese, cats, cattle and sheep . . . humans tend to personify them, and give them human characteristics: it makes us take more notice of them – even if they are not used as symbols of passivity, patience, jealous, fear or greed. In the 20th century, perhaps the strongest use of symbolic animal imagery is in the work of Mexican artists Francisco Toledo and Rufino Tamayo [see images on pages 22 and 23].

Symbols also are found in the written languages of Mesoamerica. Glyphs – picture-writing – told stories and recorded names, dates and events. Certain symbols represented conversations. Again, in addition to the mural painting of Spanish Catholicism, Hispano-American artists were the inheritors of a long tradition of Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican “narrative” symbols. As with Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, and all the subcontinent Indian languages and in Africa (in fact, to almost everybody outside of those using Latin and Cyrillic alphabets), this was art that told a story.

Symbols also could come from dreams: well before psychiatry, Freud and Jung (and Fritz Perls), dreams (when correctly interpreted) could be used to understand hidden sources of deception or prophesy good fortune. Today, the vocabulary of dream symbols can be highly personal; some archetypes, however, are considered to be universal. For some Hispano-American artists of the 1960s onward, the symbols within their paintings took on a dreamlike character -- and, like dreams themselves, particular symbols or motifs might be repeated over and over by a single artist or shared as if in a dialog with several artists whether working together or across time. Some examples are the paintings that seem to show theatre sets (Picasso used this in the 1920s) with clowns and masks. Theater sets are incorporated into works by both Roberto Gil de Montes and Carlo Almaraz. Curtains often represent that which is hidden -- the idea of an "other" realm, reality or world, as the curtains in a church hid the Catholic Bible. In paintings, these open to reveal hidden spiritual or psychological truths -- or visions of the future.

Also look for "place" symbols, including images (such as those by Almaraz and Lomas Garza) that depict home as a source of support for one's personal identity. In many traditional societies, you knew who and where you were. Barring war, illness, and slavery, you did have a lot of choice about who or where you would be or what you

would do when you grew up. As an immigrant -- or as a descendent of people who already were here when the U.S. border shifted west and south, having a secure home and a family remains of tremendous importance. Conversely, the "place" symbols in some paintings -- Almaraz' paintings of highway car crashes (which he experienced first-hand), and Gronk's hotel series, for example -- express the powerlessness and absence of soul and joy of living in an urban place within a vast and dangerous consumer-driven society.

And then there are the symbols that remind us of our earthly pleasures and our mortality. The celebrations of the Day of the Dead – with altars, skulls and skeletons remind us that death and life co-exist. Images of wrestlers connect us with the excitement of competitive sports. Images of clowns, children and musicians remind us, across time and around the world, of the good days, fun, love and happiness.

Please remember that el arte Hispano-Americano includes many different cultures, tribes, and clans – and millennia of history. So there was (and is) a great range of symbols employed by and familiar to each indigenous group. In addition, recall that Hispano-American painters of the 20th century sometimes have created languages out of symbols – symbols used in combination with other symbols may carry a different message than a single symbol alone. For Carlos Almaraz, two dogs fighting over a single bone (when there are more to be had) takes the "Greed" of the dogs and the symbol of a desiccated, meatless bone to portray the fierce competition of capitalist society fighting over resources – when the resources have no power to defend themselves, and where there are many more bones to be had. So look for multiple symbols in combination, and remember that artists address the present as well as the past. Finally, every person has a unique personal identity, and cultural heritage -- while a source of strength -- is only one of the many influences that supported and challenged these artists as they created the work you see in the "Breaching Walls" exhibition.

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