

Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest

Volume 1
Issue 1 *Identity, Culture, and Art in New Mexico*

Article 48

2021

Aztlán del Sol

Marcus Zúñiga
Art Center College of Design, mzuniga.artist@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/chamisa>



Part of the [Art Practice Commons](#), [Chicana/o Studies Commons](#), [Contemporary Art Commons](#), [Cosmology, Relativity, and Gravity Commons](#), [Fine Arts Commons](#), [Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons](#), [Latina/o Studies Commons](#), [Poetry Commons](#), [Theory and Criticism Commons](#), and the [The Sun and the Solar System Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Zúñiga, Marcus. "Aztlán del Sol." *Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest* 1, 1 (2021). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/chamisa/vol1/iss1/48>

This Literary and other Creative Work is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Aztlán del Sol

by Marcus Zúñiga

This text is written in correspondence to my 2017 art installation. A video projection of a solar corona frames the gold disc while suns repetitiously march up and down along the central y-axis of the disc. Yellow light illuminates the space. A 40-minute score that fluctuates and blends recordings of Aztec dancers and solar radio waves together soundtracks the installation.



The form morphs in a circular migration, and shifts within cyclical movements activated by the dual narrative of the local and cosmic scaled people of the sun. They came from the north, the people of the sun. From stardust, to star¹, to solar system, to planet², to microorganisms, to humans, to aztlán del sol.

The Sun energizes itself from nuclear fusion of hydrogen into helium within its core. This material is limited. As described in the theory of Nucleosynthesis³, once the supply of this material vanishes, the

¹ Sun.

² Earth.

³ In 1957, scientists Margaret Burbidge, Geoffrey Burbidge, William A. Fowler, and Fred Hoyle published “The Synthesis of Elements in Stars” which largely promoted the theory of stellar nucleosynthesis in the astronomy field. It proposed that more complicated elements are produced where particles collide within the dense core of stars. Through supernova, the heavier elements are projected out into a spinning dust cloud of excess star matter from which satellites begin to form being shaped by gravity to orbit around young stars. Nucleosynthesis describes how a star system is formed, and how a planet, such as Earth, is built to become a suitable host and producer for life.

Sun will combust into a dust cloud and dematerialize its satellites into a new immaterial collection of matter.

The people of the sun are of multicultural nomadic consciousness cycling throughout regions of the desert landscape, *Aztlán*.⁴ They morph as they make the journey to survive the harsh conditions they encounter.

The collapsed parallel motions that principally underline *Aztlán* and Nucleosynthesis structurally attune a cosmic narrative with a cultural narrative. They portray two iterations of a cyclical story, as their themes and ideologies are interconnected within one another.

In the north, it is quiet, rural, and expansive. The vision of manifest destiny⁵ has left its mark adding to the dynamism of this narrative as an exodus of those fleeing violence go upstream to the north.

We see that as one leaves a site for another and then returns to the original site, one's identity expands in adapting to the new conditions of each site's current iteration.

The cultural landscape of the north is always present upon those sites which have “nothing” there. Trauma, love, family, food, music, dance, life, violence, art, loss, all experienced among the juniper, the mountains, the river, the mines, the brush, the forest, the Gila, the road, and even in their most remoteness, they embed a cultural identity. It is not a place populated by those without ancestry to the land. It is a home. As it dies, appropriated by a foreign social oversight, the place and its cultural peoples increasingly become forgotten. However, the site itself does not disconnect from the cultural landscape and history exemplified upon it.

Land is culture. We live our lives upon it, we grow our food from it, and when we die we are buried within it.

The human touch onto the Earth is most successful with ephemeral intention and soft gestures. If the human should choose to engage the landscape, they must rise to this challenge and embrace a new approach to spatial exploration that can apply to how the human should prepare for encounters of fields of exploration beyond the Earth.

At any given single place in the universe, one is always in many places simultaneously. The value of connection is vital to a new form of spatiotemporal exploration of the universe. To connect means to shift between the scale of the local and the cosmic sense of place and simultaneously retain the

⁴ In 1969, Alustria poetically connected Chicanismo with the myth of *Aztlán* to declare an emblem of identity for a people who have an inherent and undeniable connection to the North American continent. *Aztlán* is the origin story of the *Mexica* peoples. In the north is the paradise of seven caves where they came from. *Huitzilopochtli* told his people they must go in search of a new place where they will prosper. They left to the south. Upon an island deep within Lake Texcoco, the *Mexica* see an eagle devouring a serpent sat upon a prickly pear cactus. It is the sign that this is where their capital will be. They flourished for centuries, until the Spanish Conquest in 1521.

⁵ The 19th-century doctrine or belief that the expansion of the US throughout the American continents was both justified and inevitable.

consciousness for recognizing them together as the homeplace. With the mind, we can envision and locate the human within the cosmos to become more sensitive to the universe through a perception of an expansive place.

The places we inhabit on the Earth add to the existence and culture we live. The territory of *Aztlán* is the place of the people of the Sun who have generationally embodied cyclical models of existence. A life lived in ode to the Sun enables cosmic consciousness for seeing oneself within the cosmos always.

The lineage which describes the people of the sun remains consistent within a cyclical narrative. The dormant deserts of the world are intolerant of weak spirits among their harsh environments. The mountains and light dominate the setting of the cyclical narrative. People of the sun survive by a spiritual adherence to light. They pray to the energies from all the spiritual mestizo lineages.

Their prayer is reaffirmed by an illuminated sky consistently shining from above as they move to the north.

They are people of the sun, of the stars.

Marcus Zúñiga is an interdisciplinary artist, who creates time-based works that interact with their surroundings to embody specified spatiotemporal relationships between human and cosmic bodies. The primary theme of his work is locating place within the universe, and by extension, contemplating local and cosmic scales of place, simultaneously. Zúñiga received his B.F.A. in Studio Art from the University of New Mexico and his M.F.A. from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. Recent exhibitions include group shows at the Main Museum in Los Angeles, California; the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, California; the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and a forthcoming solo exhibition at the Philosophical Research Society in Los Angeles. *Aztlán del Sol* is an artistic writing that describes how multiculturalism enables us to see the universe through perspectives that map our stellar origin and the consciousness of our primordial self to the contemporary conditions we now inhabit. Zúñiga credits the disparate histories of New Mexico he inherited as the nourishment that supports the ideas in this writing. He wrote this piece to think through how his references are conflated and how the artwork he created under the same name of *Aztlán del Sol*, both, emphasizes where they intersect while also embracing all the conditions that constitute their individuality.