

Panel Discussion: “Don’t Mess with Tejanas: Texan Feminist Artists and Zine Publishing as Resistance”

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INTRODUCTION

The panel discussion, held on April 6, 2019 at the Latino Art Now! 2019 conference at the University of Houston in Houston, Texas, was moderated by Claudia Zapata, Ph.D. Candidate in Art History at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. The panel featured four *Tejana* zine creators: Isabel Ann Castro, Maribel Falcón, Suzy González, and Daisy Salinas. Each panelist discussed their experience as creative entrepreneurs and artists, and their role as part of radical publishing.

Isabel Ann Castro (she/her) is a visual artist from San Antonio, Texas. She received a B.F.A. in Communication Design from Texas State University. Isabel is co-founder and art director of *St. Sucia*, a DIY, international, Latina/x feminist magazine. *St. Sucia* focuses on collecting, curating, and publishing contemporary Latina/x writing and art. Isabel is also an organizer for *San Anto Zine Fest* and zine librarian. She is a 2018 National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (N.A.L.A.C.) Leadership Institute Fellow.

Maribel Falcón is a *Tejana* creatrix currently based in Austin, Texas. In 2013, she received her B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin in Sociology and Latin American Studies. She is co-founder and collective member of *Colectiva Cósmica*, an art collective made of *mujeres* who teach workshops, make zines, and curate art shows of work by emerging artists. Her art work tends to convey political messaging and Indigenous-based spirituality. She has been featured in *Remezcla* and *Bitch Magazine*.

Suzy González is an artist, curator, zinester, educator, and community organizer living and working in San Antonio, Texas. Giving attention to the origins of, both, food and art materials, she analyzes what it means to decolonize art and art history. She co-publishes, *Yes, Ma'am* zine, co-organizes the *San Anto Zine Fest*, and is half of the collective, *Dos Mestizxs*. She is currently co-curating a contemporary Xicanx art exhibit that will travel from New York to San Antonio in late 2019 and early 2020. She's an alumna of the N.A.L.A.C. Leadership Institute and is now serving as a mentor with the N.Y.F.A. Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program. Suzy holds an M.F.A. from the Rhode Island School of Design and a B.F.A. from Texas State University.

Daisy Salinas is a San Antonio-based Xicana feminist zinester, punk musician, festival organizer, activist, and poet. She obtained her B.A. in English from Middle Tennessee State University and an M.A. in Multicultural Women's Studies from Texas Woman's

University. Through her independent publication, *Muchacha* Fanzine, Daisy amplifies the voices of marginalized artists of color. Along with zine-making, Daisy also founded the decolonial feminist punk collective, *Xingonas in the Pit*, sings and plays bass with the punk band, *Frijolera Riot*, and performs poetry with the bilingual poetry collective, WAKE-UP (Womxn Artistically Collecting *Experiencias - Unidxs Prosperando*).

Subject Areas: Art History, Studio Art, Latinx Studies, Chicax Studies, Feminist Studies, Mexican American Studies, artist books, independent publishing, Visual Culture

PANEL DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT

Claudia Zapata: What is Texas' unique role in zine history?

Isabel Ann Castro: We started organizing, started doing our zines, and found out that Suzy González was doing zines so we started getting together with *La Liga Zine*, and then we were like, "We should have a zine fest." Dr. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto had created the Latino Collection at the San Antonio Public Library. I go there to look at stuff, explore, and be inspired. I've really just realized we are just a continuation of papers and publishing that have been happening since the 1960's. I'm just pulling stuff off the library shelves and just blowing through it and being like, "Ah, this is cool, I really like this," and making scans, taking it home, and reading stuff. We're really a continuation of stuff that has already been created. In San Antonio, there was lots of independent newspapers for neighborhoods. I found out about the Alazán-Apache Courts, where low income people lived. They had their own newspaper. I really feel like we're just a continuation of that, and luckily, we have that resource available to the public; I can just go through and get weird with it. The *San Anto Zine Fest*, it's *St. Sucia*, *Yes Ma'am Zine*, *La Liga Zine*, but we're kind of curating the space. Emma Hernández at the San Antonio library, she's really opened that space to us, making it accessible. We get that space for free so we could host a zine fest. We have money left over to invite all of these people who make zines that we've met along the way, people from, not only our city but people in the Southwest region, *La Horchata Zine* in D.C., people we met in Oakland. We curate these spaces and then collect these zines, like with the zine library, and are continuing what Dr. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto has done. We have social media, so it maybe feels like it's more out there now because we're just Tweeting, Instagramming, and posting and sharing, but this has been happening for a long time. Texas feels like a really awesome hub because we're not on the East coast or the West coast. We're kind of like, "Well, we'll do our own fucking thing," and ignore what's going on over there. It's fun.

Claudia Zapata: How do zines radicalize the concept of the book?

Maribel Falcón: Well, we don't have to get anybody to approve it to publish it, so I love it because people stress about getting their book published online. I'm like, you could just do it yourself; you could put it into a little booklet. Our zines are archived in the libraries. I know a lot of our zines are purchased by major institutions, and so, what's the difference except that I don't have to get a publisher to approve it or accept what I want to say. We can say whatever we want, we can print whatever we want. I mean it's not extremist or violence-inducing but I think it's just as good as a paperback on the shelf.

Suzy González: That's the most empowering part is that you don't need that validation, you only need your own validation and that's what I try to tell other folks, to just do it: you know, that DIY.

Daisy Salinas: It's like unlearning what gets to count as knowledge, so I've been unlearning that the whole time I've been publishing zines and not needing validation from publishing companies. Also, not having to censor yourself is really important because even in grad school, I would have to censor myself all the time. It was just like regurgitating a bunch of academic jargon, whereas in a zine, I can talk about what really matters to me without feeling like I have to compromise it.

Suzy González: I think whether you're conscious of it or not, it's anti-capitalist, right? And it's like you're creating, we're creating, our own kind of economies. You buy something and then someone buys something from you, and you're like, "Oh, we should just trade." It's that kind of money that's supporting each other in a bunch of ways.

Audience: As a bookseller, I have a bookstore in Santa Ana, I know some of you already. Your validation comes from all of the youth that comes looking for your zines. You become relevant role models and inspire other youth to create their own zine. So, I want to applaud all of you for that because I have young *Chicanitas* that are coming in like, "Oh, do you have this person?" And you have to get their zine. There's this mass fanbase for y'all and it's affordable, and that's the best part because a lot of folks cannot afford books, but they can afford the zines.

Maribel Falcón: Not to dismiss books or writers because they are just as important; zines aren't better. We are able to do so with less money and more timing.

Claudia Zapata: Do you identify as a creative entrepreneur?

Isabel Ann Castro: When we were doing the zine we were like, "Oh, shit," we have a lump of money from the zine sales; we need to put it somewhere, so we had to get a bank account and put it there. Then people were like, "Hey, where can I get this," and we're like, "Oh, I guess we'll sell them online." We had to create an online store and a lot of us are figuring stuff out. As an artist, I already had an online store for my posters and stuff. Natasha Hernández is a full-time nurse, so I handle all the store stuff. We just try and make it as accessible as possible, but it's also having to call a bookstore in Austin and saying, "Hey, we've run out of this. Someone's looking for this; do you have it?" And really learning how to talk to other folks, put things online, and then market them with Instagram. I mean, just so you can say, "Hey, this is made, it exists, it's there if you want it," just trying to figure that out. I took one marketing class in college for credit and it helped out, but it's stuff that you could easily go on a marketing 101 and Google it. All of what we do, like book-making, is all googleable now. You just take a YouTube video, watch it, and you're like, "Cool, got it." So, learning how to sell it, that's been pretty easy.

Claudia Zapata: What roles do zines play in institutional learning?

Suzy González: Well, there have been more and more schools approaching us, like, *St. Lucia*, a whole lot. They approach us and want to do workshops and that kind of thing. Our first thing is asking, "How much are y'all paying us?" And then trying to get them to give us credit and to have that confidence. We're doing a good thing, and this shouldn't be taken advantage of just because it's not like a fancy painting in a white-wall gallery kind of art.

Daisy Salinas: Yeah, I think artists of color really need to be compensated for our work as creators of culture. I think it's long overdue, like recognition and reparations, and everything. I feel like we deal with so much and we're not taken seriously a lot of the time, so I think it's really important to compensate artists of color. I feel like it's the definition of entitlement to not to.

Isabel Ann Castro: Also, it was teachers of color that put us on their syllabus that got us into an academic realm. We were getting a bunch of orders from the same place in California, and we're like, maybe it's a book club. Then we actually checked our email and it was a professor who had picked up our zine while she was visiting San Antonio and her friend was like, "Hey, you need to read this." So, she went back and was going to teach a Chicana Gender Studies class and was like, "I need to include zines in my syllabus," so she had us with Third Woman Press. We were the cheapest for that semester for any of the students. It was like seven bucks, or, I think Third Woman Press had a PDF download that they were getting. They introduced contemporary women of color artists and zinemaking into their academic realm. When we did a zine tour through California, we got to do a guest lecture and they gave us pizza and lemonade, and we hung out and it was really cool. Now, we're at the space where we're just like, hey, we need to be more compensated. When we went to Texas A&M Corpus Christi a couple of weeks ago, they paid for our hotel, we got a stipend, and we did a whole two-hour workshop. They took us to dinner, and it was like, yes, this is nice. But it started with teachers of color saying, "Hey! Something's missing. I found something so now, let's pay these people to come out here because they're missing work just to be here." It's been a real journey understanding what our worth is, because it was just like, "Oh, I make zines and we fold paper, and it's cool." Now, it's like, "Okay, there's an academic breakdown of this and now they want me to speak on it. Should I charge? How much should I charge?" It's been a whole learning process getting into institutions because I know there's a book institutional fee when you get a book through the library. We've been acquired by some libraries and archives. We're just seven bucks, it's cool, but apparently, there's so much that we don't know that we don't know. So, it's been a whole learning process for everything.

Audience: I just wanted to share that I'm so grateful to be here. Thank you for everyone that shared. You know, I'm a librarian at a community college in San Antonio. I introduce information literacy through zines and it's really taken off. I'm collaborating with faculty members by helping them design assignments to use with zines because the thing is that a lot of the intro classes and the instructors will require them to pull five to seven peer-reviewed articles. It's so overwhelming that the students don't see themselves in this work, and so having them create a zine as a reflective piece or a how-to guide, there's so many options, you know, and because of people like everyone on this panel, I'm sharing. I'm sharing it on my campus and it's only been a short time, so if anybody in the audience...because just that spark, just do it. Like you were saying, just do it. I'm doing instructional search strategies, Boolean Operators, stuff like that, like library citations. The students are like, "Ok, I see it because I'm doing it. I'm visually explaining it." I want to prepare them to be better researchers, to evaluate your sources, to do all that good stuff. But I hope to make a zine, *A Day in the Life of a Librarian of Color*.

Claudia Zapata: What are your hopes for the future of zines?

Suzy González: I hope someone can look back at *Tejana* zinesters like the way that we look back at *Riot Grrls*, that'd be cool, and be like, "That was a movement and it's still happening." I didn't think that that was a thing until, Claudia Zapata, you invited us to this and are validating us as an art form and whoa, art history, that's a part of it. You know, I didn't really consider that before.

Isabel Ann Castro: I hope that there's a very accessible, digitized archive like the Latino collections. There are some of our zines that are already barcoded. That was such a big deal to be barcoded in like San Antonio Public Library because me and Natasha Hernández both went as kids and would fill milk crates full of books. Knowing we're barcoded, on a shelf, and really physically taking up space, that there's rows of books, of the weight of all the zines, that's something that's very magical. We're really hoping to expand on that, that people start to, like, if they've never collected zines before that pique their interest. There's something for everyone and people individually building a catalog of their own library. There still will be underrepresented folks in the future. No matter what, somebody's going to get lost there and hopefully, they see zines as a powerful source to tell their own stories. They take up physical space, like in all archives, everywhere, not just specifically Latino archives, but American archives. We're in a zine library in Spain. I've never seen it but I know the name of it from an e-mail. I'm just like, "We're out there with this," and somebody out there knows we exist and that's dope. So, hopefully everybody feels seen and heard. That's what I hope.

Daisy Salinas: My hope is that women of color are supported when we are alive because I feel like we're romanticized and worshipped when we're dead. I feel we're hardly supported or archived when we are alive, so I want to change that for the next generation of women of color artists and zinesters.

Audience: It is great, everything that you do. I think I'm in one of those zines. It was just amazing to submit and then I realized at one point I started seeing, *La Horchata* zine go all over the different festivals. I was like, "Man, that's really cool that everyone gets to see your work in other places," and you make it go other places. Right, so what you are doing is pretty great, and for artists giving that resource to other people, so thank you.

CLAUDIA ZAPATA is a doctoral candidate in the Rhetorics of Art, Space, and Culture (R.A.S.C./a) Graduate Program in Art History at Southern Methodist University. She received her B.A. and M.A. from the University of Texas in Austin in Art History, specializing in Classic Maya art. Her research interests include curatorial methodologies of identity-based exhibitions, Chicanx and Latinx art, exhibition design/digital humanities, people of color zines, and designer toys. From 2010 to 2014, she served as the Curator of Exhibitions and Programs at the *Mexic-Arte* Museum in Austin, Texas. Zapata has curated over 30 exhibitions at the *Mexic-Arte* Museum and other Texas institutions, including, *A Viva Voz: Carmen Lomas Garza* (2010), *Sam Coronado: A Retrospective* (2011), *Death to Dollars: The Commercialization of Day of the Dead* (2011), and *Fantastic & Grotesque: José Clemente Orozco in Print* (2014). Her recent projects include co-founding the Latinx art collective, *Puro Chingón* Collective in 2012. Within this experimental arts group, she develops art zines, prints, apparel, design, and art toys. Claudia has published articles in *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, *Jollas: Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, and *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*. She is currently pursuing her dissertation project, “Chicano Art is Not Dead: Politics on Display within Major U.S. Exhibitions.” This year, Claudia is the Latino art curatorial assistant at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in support of the exhibition, *¡Printing the Revolution! Chicano Graphics from the Civil Rights Era to the Present*.
