

A New Exhibit Deconstructs the Myth of Malinche

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The woman known as Hernán Cortés's tongue has no voice of her own in history. Men across centuries have crafted her story. Although she was fluent in many languages – no written records exist in her own words. *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, a recent exhibition co-curated by Victoria I. Lyall, Terezita Romo, and Matthew H. Robb,¹ presents this complex historical figure known as Malinche² within five frameworks: *La Lengua/The Interpreter*, *La Indígena/The Indigenous Woman*, *La Madre de Mestizaje/The Mother of a Mixed Race*, *La Traidora/The Traitor*, and *Chicana: Contemporary Reclamations*.³ The following text examines how these exhibition subsections give the museum viewer a better understanding of Malinche's complex history, including how men contributed to our perception of her as a traitor, and how more can be gleaned if she is investigated further from a contemporaneous native lens.

This is not the first notable exhibition focusing on reframing Malinche's negative mythology.

In 1994, *Rethinking La Malinche* at the Mexic-Arte Museum in Austin, Texas, did just that. The Texas exhibit was curated with works by contemporary women artists from the southwestern border states of the U.S. and Mexico.⁴ The current presentation differs because it includes historical artworks⁵ and works by male artists.⁶ In addition, a substantial catalogue accompanies this latest curatorial endeavor, and it is organized as a traveling exhibition that tours three U.S. cities.⁷ Aiming to, “examine the conditions that led to the (mis)appropriation of Malinche for the purposes of enacting cultural and political identities.”⁸ The organizers produced this, “exhibition and publication [to] establish and examine the symbolic import she has held for artists, writers, scholars, and activists, as well as everyday women on both sides of the border.”⁹

The exhibition looks at Malinche from many angles, including the ways in which Malinche's image and reputation have become so convoluted and unresolved. Not having produced any written records herself,¹⁰ Malinche didn't have any control over her historical legacy. Furthermore, Malinche's act of aiding the Spanish in the fall of the Aztec Empire by translating for Cortés has made her a complex and controversial historical figure. Terezita Romo provides a backdrop for the negative connotations Malinche became associated with in her 2005 article that inspired the exhibition's organization. Romo states that, “she is the common metaphor for the female traitor” and symbolic of a “person who sells out to foreign interest and values.”¹¹

Malinche's portrayal transforms throughout the centuries within both image and prose. She was recorded in paintings with Cortés as early as a month into their journey together.¹² The *Annals of Tlatelolco*, a Nahuatl manuscript written in Malinche's lifetime or close to it, describes her as an “intelligent, astute woman who wielded great power through her words.”¹³ A generation preceding her life, images flourished in codices. Historian Camilla Townsend states that in the Florentine Codex, she is mentioned with an “honorific” title and recorded as, “a woman speaking with such confidence was particularly remarkable to them: it meant, they thought that she was a powerful noblewoman speaking on behalf of her people.”¹⁴ Later, around the time of Mexican Independence, her narrative as a mythological traitor takes greater form. Scholars point to

Xicotèncatl, a novel published by an unknown author in 1826 as credit for adding the “lustful, conniving traitor”¹⁵ to Malinche’s myth of character.¹⁶

During the twentieth century, the negative view of Malinche grew greater. Poet Octavio Paz said the term *malinchista* became a common word in popular vernacular and was frequently used by the newspapers as a derogatory infliction towards “those who have been corrupted by foreign influence.”¹⁷ Many authors cite Paz for his sharp prose describing Malinche and his thoughts on the Mexican psyche in his book *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. Paz connects the linguistic history of the word *chingada* to Malinche as the emblem of the violated mother.¹⁸ By using the Spanish phrase “*hijo de puta* (son of a whore),” Paz illustrates the contrast of implying Malinche as the *chingada* to that who did not willingly give herself, but one who was transgressed or raped. The weight of a complex history further lain on her legacy as Paz describes her as an emblem of unresolved conflict within the Mexican soul.¹⁹ And denial of one’s roots, Paz posts, is at the heart of “isolation and solitude.”²⁰

The curators and authors of *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche* lay out the many facets of Malinche’s life and myth to educate the museumgoer. As a traveling exhibition, the display, and the artwork included are slightly different at each museum. As a result, not all artworks are included in the catalogue. However, the curators wished each venue could add a layer of understanding to Malinche’s narrative from their local perspectives.²¹ Entering the iteration at the Albuquerque Museum, the viewer encounters an introduction video about Malinche, a timeline of her life, and two artworks sit aside from the thematic divisions.

The first artwork, *Guerra y Tierra*, is a collaborative work by two New Mexican artists, Vicente Telles and Brandon Maldonado. (Figure 1) Formally constructed as an altarpiece, the painting style is a radical contemporary blend of *Nuevomexicano santero*, ancient codex,²² and folk-infused Pop-Surrealism. Malinche does not take the most prominent space on the altar;²³ the large top register is reserved for the men who have taken center stage for most of her narrative—the lead and opposing characters Cortés, Moctezuma, and an interpretation of their gods. Malinche appears in the middle register of the center panel next to the Mexican national emblem: an eagle, on top of a cactus, devouring a snake.²⁴ However, the bird in *Guerra y Tierra* does not seem to have a hungry grasp on the serpent as it traditionally does; it appears almost like a gentle resting perch. In this painting, the snake is about to submerge its fangs into Malinche’s flesh rather than through the heart of Copil. A snake can symbolize many things, such as a curse or trader. It could also connect to Coatlicue: the Aztec goddess of creation and destruction, Biblical Eve, and the concept of the original sin.²⁵ Nonetheless, this bite seems to reveal her unfortunate position of Malinche as the scapegoat for many generations in both Mexican and Chicano cultural narratives.



Figure 1. Brandon Maldonado and Vicente Telles, *Guerra y Tierra*, 2020, carved and painted wood. Image courtesy of the artists.

In correspondence with the artists, Maldonado clarifies the painters' intentions. He states, "the idea that Malinche would be a traitor is really silly. It becomes an almost racist perspective that reads as all these people looked the same so they must have had the same values, when in fact they were at war with each other." Furthermore, Maldonado elaborates on the Mexican emblem and how their contemporary altarpiece ties into the history of New Mexico, making it an excellent choice on the part of the curators for the introduction to the Albuquerque segment.

The problem with the creation of Mexican Nationalism as an identity in the past one hundred years tends to lead people to believe that Mexico was just Aztecs because that is the story that is most commonly shown. But in reality, there were many other groups that were being oppressed by this Empire. So that is why we show the Tlaxcalans fighting alongside Cortés in nearly every panel. The

Tlaxcalans came all the way up to New Mexico with the Spanish and founded Barrio Analco in Santa Fe. Their story is also nearly lost to time in these parts as well because during the Pueblo Revolt they were kicked out along with the Spanish Settlers.²⁶

Sandy Rodríguez's *Mapa for Malinche and our Stolen Sisters* solemnly contrasts the first artwork, and the juxtaposition of both works reveals to the museum visitor what multivalent perspectives are to follow throughout the exhibition. (Figure 2) Maps are colonizing devices, but this map is positioned to provide another perspective, and it is produced with materials derived from indigenous traditions and plants from the region.²⁷

Rodríguez plays with the idea of time by adding decorative elements like the vignette for the map's legend, swirling sea serpents, and employing pigment hues that lend to the appearance of an old map. Furthermore, the medium is an ancient process of the Americas; amate paper is the same paper used to produce the indigenous codices that were later burned and banned by the Spanish. Further nodding to cultural amalgamation, Rodríguez's map utilizes contemporaneous borders, delineating Mexico and the U.S. rather than mapping territories of Malinche's day.



Figure 2. Sandy Rodríguez, *Mapa for Malinche and our Stolen Sisters*, 2021–2022, hand-processed color on amate paper and 23k gold, 97 x 97 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

With cartography, Rodríguez not only interweaves the appearance of time aesthetically but also links femicide and subjugation of women through the centuries. Figurative representations of Malinche pictorially narrate the story of her life and pepper the map with eight significant moments as described in the key. In doing so, Rodríguez connects to Malinche's complex biography. She was either stolen or given by her family, which is not known for sure,²⁸ regardless, she was enslaved and trafficked far from her home and family. This map visually displays the distance she was transported and also makes a potent tie to women's issues today.

With this work, Rodríguez makes a powerful association with Malinche's story and directly links it to the violence against women today, which also finds cold silence and impunity. For example, Red hand prints dot the map marking missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW) in 2021. This thread of time-weaving is a theme in some of the most provoking works within the exhibit.

The first thematic section of the exhibition is *La Lengua/The Interpreter*, which focuses on Malinche in her role as translator. This is the smallest room in the exhibition, ironically because she is known first and foremost as the translator for Hernán Cortés, with most other identities that are laid on her, such as traitor, are rooted in this action. Additionally, reproductions dominate this section, but these copies are crucial for understanding the image of Malinche. They include the Florentine Codex, a comprehensive document by Indigenous artists under the commission of a Spanish Friar dating from 1575–1577, and *El Lienzo de Tlaxcala* from circa 1540, painted by the Tlaxcalans. These documents are the closest to Malinche's own time since she died in 1529.²⁹

In addition to providing a historical backdrop of imagery from the perspective closest to contemporaries of Malinche, the *La Lengua/The Interpreter* section also provides some humor to the contemporary viewer's experience. One example is Robert C. Buitrón's use of parody in the photograph *Malinche y Pocahontas Chismeando con PowerBooks (Malinche and Pocahontas gossiping with PowerBooks)* from the series *El Corrido de Happy Trails (Starring Pancho and Tonto)*. Buitrón identifies as “a Chicano of Mescalero Apache and Purépecha Indian heritage,” and he is known to mix “American and Mexican popular culture in his photographs in a manner that acknowledges and resolves the dualism inherent in individual and collective Mexican American identity.”³⁰ The two women portrayed in the photograph are from different tribes and times and are interwoven within two different sets of colonizers. Despite this, they share some commonalities. They both served as intermediaries, were treated as property, and had little to no agency over their lives. However, Buitrón sets the scene of this photo much differently. They not only speak the same language in this instance, but they are gossiping. Judging by the smiles and the laptops, they are even plotting something; therefore, taking agency, knowing that the men in the coffee shop are not paying close attention, perhaps dismissing their actions as merely women's chatter.

Buitrón's series was inspired by the depictions of indigenous characters from Hollywood.³¹ The artist states, “these are two women of mythic stature, albeit one, Malinche, as a cursed sellout and the other, Pocahontas, as fetishized princess-savage.”³² Now, in a coffeehouse from the 1990s, these women sit to tell the narrative from their perspectives. They are challenging the story that has been told “from a male point of view.” Buitrón brings these immense and complex icons of history down to a quotidian setting. These women are now as approachable as neighbors or extended family members. This is a reverse of the technique of Chicana feminist artists, such as Yolanda López, who inserted her family into the icon's placement, such as with her Guadalupe Series, providing admiration for the average woman to equal the venerated. By placing ordinary women, in a typical setting, within the mythicized seats of Pocahontas and Malinche, the viewer of Buitrón's photo can connect that these historical young ladies were also regular girls placed in extraordinary circumstances.

By far, the work that is most fitting for the subsection of *La Lengua/The Interpreter* is Jesusa Rodríguez's *La Conquista según La Malinche (The Conquest according to La Malinche)*. This video work literally steals the attention of the museum visitor with her quick tongue as the sound from the audio bleeds throughout the gallery. The camera pans and contrasts the modern-day city in the backdrop with the ancient ruins. In this "performative monologue," Rodríguez melds the past and the present as a humorous political satire alluding to politicians while reporting on the conquest as a television anchor³³ while descending from a half-covered pyramid; the Tower of Babel comes to mind.³⁴ A suitable symbolism since Malinche encountered many different languages and cultures that she needed to navigate as the bridge interpreter.

In today's society, many television viewers are well aware of alternative facts being spun by news anchors, and in Mexican television and film, the indigenous has long been ridiculed with the accent of "*La India María*."³⁵ Carolina A. Miranda, a critic from the Los Angeles Times, aptly describes the work as, "with its casual delivery and its deft use of slang, Rodríguez's piece is a tour de force of wordplay and innuendo, one that seems to borrow stylistically from fast-talking Mexican comedian Cantinflas... She tells the story of colonization as if she were relating a messy night out over a bucket of beers."³⁶

The audio is a whirlwind to keep up with, and the dialogue is purposely rapid and chaotic. The verb *Cantinflear* is to babble; in other words, to say nothing, and Rodríguez's monologue does just that, as the following excerpt from the museum's translated transcript exemplifies:

"Yo!, Moctezuma goes. 'Why would you say that?'"

"Well, I'm just saying"

"Saying, what, dumbass?"

"What I've just said"

La Indígena/The Indigenous Woman section is a little more enigmatic and eclectic in its organization. The works in this section highlight Indigenous fashion, romanticized ideas of indigeneity: including nineteenth-century paintings to the Hollywood version, and remnants from popular culture including *calendarios* and José Guadalupe Posada's children's books, and also mixed in with another Tlaxcalan document. The mediums range from feather paintings to bronze nudes. The signature painting of the exhibition that adorns the front cover of the publication and all of the advertisements—Alfredo Ramos Martínez, *La Malinche (Young Girl of Yalala, Oaxaca)*, resides in this room. The choice of this work is an understandable marketing choice because it is a stunning and commanding portrait.

The *huipil* on display commands further consideration among the great variety of works within the *La Indígena/The Indigenous Woman* section. Reading the museum's label, the viewer learns that this was a collaborative work between Carla Fernández, Feliciano Hernández Bautista, and María Bartola Rosa Carpintero Aguilar. This piece, *La nueva Malinche (the new Malinche)*, is designed as a "modern interpretation of a *huipil*." "It imagines what a 21st century Malinche would wear and shows a continuing evolution of Indigenous style."³⁷ The sections of pink fringe are symbols for tongues, and the center panel of the garment has a stitched portrait of Malinche. Since Malinche may have practiced weaving as a young girl,³⁸ and this piece is modeled from an ancient garment and techniques; these three artists bring the contemporary viewer the closest to Malinche's world.

The poetic symbolism of the collaborative *huipil* drastically differs from the collaborative textile found within the next section. Notably, there are no works by women artists in the *La Traidora/The Traitor* gallery. This is except for the anonymous Indigenous textile artists commissioned by Leslie Tillett,³⁹ a British man who was inspired by a European historical narrative textile, the Bayeux Tapestry.⁴⁰ Unlike the *La Nueva Malinche (the new Malinche)*, none of the women artists are credited by name. The story of the conquest is told in embroidery over the 100-foot long cloth, which only a small portion of it is on display. Large captions in English and Spanish are visible along the bottom of the cloth. Tillett designed the project, requiring “countless hands to complete the work.”⁴¹ However, Tillett is the only name on the credits.

None of the artworks within the exhibition fit within the curatorial divides definitively. Many objects seem like they can be in more than one of the thematic sections. For example, perhaps not surprisingly, the Modern Mexican Masters’ work best fits the *La Madre de Mestizaje/The Mother of a Mixed Race* section. All the themes are fluid; for example, the *Chicana: Contemporary Reclamations* gallery is not reserved solely for Chicana artists.⁴² And rightfully so as both Mexican and Chicana feminists in the 70s, 80s, and 90s are credited with highlighting the problematics of Malinche as an emblem of the vilified traitor.⁴³ Nonetheless, *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche* brings forth the complexities of Malinche’s story by guiding visitors through five categorical frameworks that feel like portals of connectivity to better understand her world.

Perhaps the exhibition would be enhanced with an additional subcategory: the myth of the double-figure. This topic can be viewed in several ways starting with its connections to the “bad omens” which were said to be predicting the fall of the Aztec empire.⁴⁴ Second, Frances Karttunen a Mesoamerican linguist and author posits that Malinche could have been perceived as the *Īxīptla*.

If we considered the long Mesoamerican tradition of two-headed and two-faced figures and the Aztec tradition of *Īxīptlayōtl*, ‘representation,’ there may be more to this matter of Cortés being ‘Malinche.’ In Aztec religious practice chosen human beings served as temporary embodiments of deities, providing them with a conduit through which to speak and act in the world inhabited by humans⁴⁵ ... “So far as I know, nothing has been made of the possibility that their interpreter was perceived as the *īxīptla* of a supernatural force. Yet it might help us to understand her remarkable nerve in situations of sheer terror.⁴⁶

An additional subsection of the exhibition would aid in understanding these complex ancient indigenous concepts and myths to contemporary U.S. museum-goers. Or perhaps this theme might warrant an exhibition of its own in the future.⁴⁷ Such an exhibition could include works such as (a reproduction of) Alfredo Castañeda *Nuestros primeros padres (Our first parents)*. It is a great example to illustrate the interwoven figure. Also, Coatlicue, for her inclusion of a double-headed snake face, connecting thematically as the mother that is both “creator and destroyer.” And Alejandro Arango’s *La mordida de Malinche* is yet another entanglement of character and John M. Valadez’s *Adam and Eva Double Exposed* are just a few examples for the proposed theme.

Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche contains multifaceted interpretations of a young woman we still know little about. However, leaving the exhibition, the visitor better understands the circumstances in which she lived. The organizers attempt to recover her from demonization and the slur of the traitor. Her life was a remarkable one. To think of a little girl gifted in a parcel of women as a child who would then assist in her lifetime divvying a group of women much like she was given.⁴⁸ Although that in itself must have been an unexpected course of her life, could she have even imagined that more than five hundred years later the spotlight would be on a culmination of her memory by image, word, and art objects in an attempt to tell her side of the story?

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¹ Organized by the Denver Art Museum, the press release lists the co-curators with their full titles: Victoria I. Lyall, Jan and Frederick Mayer Curator of Art of the Ancient Americas at the Denver Art Museum; Terezita Romo, Independent Curator, and Matthew H. Robb, Chief Curator at the Fowler Museum. Denver Art Museum “Denver Art Museum to Present First Comprehensive Exhibition Exploring the Life and Legacy of Malinche, the Iconic Indigenous Young Woman at the Heart of the Spanish and Aztec War (1519-1521),” July 13, 2021. <https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/press/release/la-malinche-premiere#:~:text=Denver%E2%80%94July%202021%E2%80%94,cultural%20legacy%20of%20La%20Malinche>

² “She has been given many names, including “Doña Marina,” “Malinalli,” and Malintzin,” and is known colloquially as “Malinche.”

Lyall, Victoria I, Terezita Romo, and Matthew H. Robb, “Introduction”, In *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, Edited by Victoria I. Lyall and Terezita Romo, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022, 1.

³ The concept for the subcategories for this exhibit spawn from Romo’s research. In her article the original categories were “La Malinche as Lengua/ Interpreter,” “La Malinche as Indianness,” “La Malinche as Seductive Traitor,” “La Malinche as Mestizaje” and finally, “La Malinche as Chicana.”

Tere Romo, “La Malinche as Metaphor,” In *Feminism, Nation and Myth: La Malinche*, ed. Rolando Romero and Amanda Nolacea Harris (Houston: Arte Público Press: 2005), 140.

⁴ The exhibition catalogue for the current exhibit nods to the previous exhibition, *Rethinking La Malinche* at the Mexic-Arte Museum in Austin, Texas, an exhibit curated by the director Sylvia Orozco in 1995. *Rethinking La Malinche* included fourteen female artists from Texas, Arizona, California, and Mexico. The original press release from the exhibit condenses the theme as the following:

“The exhibition evaluates historical information and questions this perception of Malintzin to give a better understanding of history and this woman’s role in the invasion of Mexico. Rather than an individual overcome by the negative qualities of ambition and unbridled sexuality, Malintzin can be viewed as a heroic survivor, a woman who employed her extraordinary talents to avoid - at least for a while- the fate of other Indigenous women who also involuntarily bore mestizo children to the Spanish conquerors and died anonymously.”

Mexic-Arte Museum, “Rethinking La Malinche” Press Release, December 10, 1994 - January 28, 1995.

⁵ Artworks referenced in this exhibition have a date range of from 1500 to 2021.

⁶ Furthermore, it borrows work from farther than Aztlán and Mesoamerica, including references to Minnesota and France in the checklist.

⁷ As a traveling exhibition, it was organized by the Denver art Museum; the exhibit is on display at the Albuquerque Museum from June 11 through September 4, 2022, and concludes at the San Antonio Museum of Art on display there from October 14, 2022, through January 8, 2023.

⁸ Lyall, et al., *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, 3-4.

⁹ Lyall, et al., *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, 4.

¹⁰ Lyall, Victoria I, Terezita Romo, and Matthew H. Robb, “Introduction”, In *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, 3.

¹¹ Romo, “La Malinche as Metaphor,” In *Feminism, Nation and Myth: La Malinche*, 140.

¹² Frances Karttunen, *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 1.

¹³ Lyall, et al., *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, 9.

¹⁴ Camilla Townsend “How Memories of Malintzin Shifted in the Sixteenth Century,” In *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, 13.

¹⁵ Camilla Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁶ Although two literature and literary translation experts have pointed to some direct translations in the 1999 version in English that may not have matched in meaning precisely, this includes replacing the concept of “a kept woman” with the word “lover.”. Nonetheless, “the stigma planted in the configuration of the character of historical extraction Malinche gains a darker image than in the original one.” Gilmei Francisco Fleck and Leila Shaí Del Pozo González, “Brief Notes on the Portrayal of the Character Malinche in the English Translation of the First Latin American Historical Novel *Xicotēncatl* (1826)” *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 5, No. 2 (December 2017):15 & 18.

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- ¹⁷ Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 86.
- ¹⁸ Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 79.
- ¹⁹ Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 87.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*
- ²¹ Josie Lopez, Terezita Romo, Victoria Lyall, *Curator's Introduction*, Albuquerque Museum of Art, June 11, 2022.
- ²² Object label for *Guerra y Tierra*. In exhibition *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche* at the Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Seen on: June 16, 2022.
- ²³ The artists did not intend for this altar to make a commentary specifically about Malinche. It is a complex multi-figure alter which the artists intended to "educate people who think all of central Mexico was peace and love before Cortés into seeing that there were actually many groups that were oppressed by the Aztecs and did not like getting their crops stolen or hearts ripped out."
- Brandon Maldonado, email communication with author, July 11, 2022.
- ²⁴ This symbolism is important to Mexico today as it takes the center spot of the national flag, but its origins are from the Aztecs and also connects to New Mexico as an emblem of Aztlán.
- ²⁵ The interpretation of the snake is purely the commentary of this author. In correspondence with the artists, Brandon Maldonado states, "We did not change the way the emblem looked to make a statement about Malinche. Rather we chose to use imagery from old codices as stylistic models and textural motifs. So, the variation in the image is due to the fact that the references we are looking at predate the modern flag." Brandon Maldonado, email communication with author, July 11, 2022.
- ²⁶ Brandon Maldonado, email communication with author, July 11, 2022.
- ²⁷ Laura Hubber, "Sandy Rodriguez: When art, geography and politics collide," *BBC World Service*. October 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0b05jcv>
- ²⁸ She was born near Coatzacoalco to a noble family. She may have been "stolen by merchants and sold." "Bernal Díaz weaves a more dramatic story of her being handed over secretly by her mother and stepfather to people of Xicalanco so as to clear the inheritance of her younger half-brother."
- Frances Karttunen "Rethinking Malinche" in *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, Edited by Susan Schroeder, Stephanie Wood, and Robert Haskett. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 299 -300.
- ²⁹ The exhibition catalogue explains the difficulty of obtaining the dates of her life exactly. "No historical documents surrounding her birth survive; therefore, her age at the time she was gifted to the Spanish remains contested. Scholars have placed her age anywhere between eleven and sixteen, but what is not in dispute is that she was young, a young girl or perhaps a teenager. The date of her death also varies in the scholarly record with some scholars citing 1527, 1529, or 1530."
- Lyall, Victoria I, Terezita Romo, and Matthew H. Robb, *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, xi.
- ³⁰ Gary D. Keller, ed. *Contemporary Chicana and Chicano Art: artists, works, culture, and education*, Vol 1, (Tempe, Arizona: Bilingual Press, 2002), 102.
- ³¹ Baugh, Scott L., and Sorell, Victor A., eds. *Born of Resistance : Cara a Cara Encounters with Chicana/o Visual Culture*, (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 208. Accessed June 27, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- ³² Baugh, et al. eds. *Born of Resistance : Cara a Cara Encounters with Chicana/o Visual Culture*, 211.
- ³³ Lyall, et al., *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche*, 32.
- ³⁴ The biblical explanation of why people speak different languages.
- ³⁵ Dorany Pineda, "Long before 'Roma's' Yalitza Aparicio, Mexican TV and cinema often parodied indigenous people," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-mn-yalitza-aparicio-brownface-history-20190309-story.html>
- ³⁶ Carolina A. Miranda, "She's been branded a traitor. A new exhibition says Mexican icon Malinche was anything but" *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 2022. https://news.yahoo.com/shes-branded-traitor-exhibition-says-120017866.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xiLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAJuM77muM0M3BrB6GPbYM9WFPZlhAsM98fB_2S5Cu0mERgFnU2Ei11DuVIXjVRs9MpPn0W_IKGCNyWxYd6ED0NT3TfiLFINGyHHtfiDe7aQ_S-7goG9EHvzm4GwuazmBUoXti5OMRxfnU8X8nyyPbZA0k280FipTOzfg93v5nI7
- ³⁷ Object label for *La nueva Malinche (the new Malinche)*. In the exhibition *Traitor, Survivor, Icon: The Legacy of La Malinche* at the Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Seen on: June 16, 2022.
- ³⁸ Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico*, 27.

³⁹ Josie Lopez, the Head Curator at the Albuquerque Museum, explained that the Denver Art Museum is “very aware of the presumed anonymity of the Haitian and Mexican women that embroidered the Tillett” and that they are currently working with Tillett’s heirs; “they are looking to identify” them now. Josie Lopez, email message to the author, July 6, 2022.

⁴⁰ Victoria I. Lyall, “Leslie Tillett’s Tapestry of the Conquest of Mexico,” Denver Art Museum, March 8, 2022, <https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/blog/leslie-tilletts-tapestry-conquest-mexico>.

⁴¹ Lyall, “Leslie Tillett’s Tapestry of the Conquest of Mexico.”

⁴² For example, Alfredo Arreguín, *La Malinche (con Tlaloc) 1993, oil paint on canvas*.

⁴³ Townsend mentions two significant contemporary waves of revisioning Malinche. She credits both Mexican and Chicana feminists in the 1970s for highlighting the problematics of Malinche as an emblem of selling out to foreign interests or as a vilified traitor because she was an enslaved person who was not within her own cultural group at the time Cortez obtained her as property. She was herself a victim. And states the second major wave happens during the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. She states that the authors of this period see complexity beyond the victim narrative and attempt to elaborate on her agency as “clearly a resourceful and intelligent young woman, a survivor.”

Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico*, 3.

⁴⁴ Miguel Leon-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 11.

The omens predicted, “that the end of the world was coming and that other peoples would be created to inhabit the earth.” This legend speaks of “deformed men with two heads but only one body. They were taken to the Black House and shown to Motecuhzoma.” This figure was known as *tlacantzolli* (“men-squeezed-together”).

⁴⁵ Karttunen, “Rethinking Malinche,” In *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, 294.

⁴⁶ *ibid*.

⁴⁷ Another possible exhibit could pair the visual images of Malinche with the written ones linking perceptions with possible influences.

⁴⁸ Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico*, 72.