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Chicano Artists and Neo-Mexicanists: (De) Constructions of National Identity

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Chicano Artists and Neo-Mexicanists:
(De) Constructions of National Identity

Teresa Eckmann



THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
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(De) Constructions of National Identity

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*Chicano Artists and Neo-Mexicanists: (De) Constructions of National Identity**

by Teresa Eckmann

Latin American and Iberian Institute

University of New Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

Waving the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe before an audience of 5,000 in Guanajuato, León on September 10, 1999, Vicente Fox Quesada, the Mexican Presidential candidate of the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) shouted “Viva México!” and “Death to bad government!” The image of Fox with the Virgin made the front page of the Mexican daily newspaper *La Reforma* under the headlines “Fox Wraps His Campaign in the Virgin of Guadalupe” (Figure 1).¹ To reproaches from the ruling PRI, the military, the PAN, and the bishop Onésimo Cepeda of the Catholic Church who spat “One doesn’t mess with the Virgin of Guadalupe!” Fox retorted “No one can stop me from carrying the Virgin’s image in my campaign [...] The Virgin is no one’s property, she belongs to all Mexicans.”² Why would Fox blatantly ignore the laws of Church and state separation, risking expulsion from the PAN and even arrest? Fox is clever. He knows that the predominant symbol of Mexican national unity, the beloved *Guadalupeana*, will surely win him votes.

Fox follows a long line of political leaders who have carried the Virgin’s banner as a means of protection, legitimization, and to rally mass support. He is preceded by Miguel Hidalgo, the *criollo* priest who led the fight for Mexican Independence from Spain, Emiliano Zapata, who led the fight for agrarian reform during the Mexican Revolution, and César Chávez, who led the United Farm Workers in the struggle for economic justice during the Chicano Civil Rights movement in the U.S. The Virgin of Guadalupe, the “Mother of the Mexican nation,” is arguably not only the single most important icon to the Mexican population, but a transcultural symbol as well. Since her initial appearance in 1531 in the New World, her cult has flourished and her influence has spread beyond Mexico throughout the Americas.

¹ All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

Waving the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe before an audience of 5,000 in Guanajuato, León on September 10, 1999, Vicente Fox Quesada, the Mexican Presidential candidate of the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) shouted “Viva México!” and “Death to bad government!” The image of Fox with the Virgin made the front page of the Mexican daily newspaper *La Reforma* under the headlines “Fox Wraps His Campaign in the Virgin of Guadalupe” (Figure 1).¹ To reproaches from the ruling PRI, the military, the PAN, and the bishop Onésimo Cepeda of the Catholic Church who spat “One doesn’t mess with the Virgin of Guadalupe!” Fox retorted “No one can stop me from carrying the Virgin’s image in my campaign [...] The Virgin is no one’s property, she belongs to all Mexicans.”² Why would Fox blatantly ignore the laws of Church and state separation, risking expulsion from the PAN and even arrest? Fox is clever. He knows that the predominant symbol of Mexican national unity, the beloved *Guadalupana*, will surely win him votes.

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In the U.S., we see a particular politicization of the Guadalupana as Chicano artists incorporate and transform her traditional image in their work beginning in the 1970s. In Mexico, we see a parallel development where contemporary artists of the *Neo-Mexicanista*, or Neo-Mexicanist movement similarly use this popular icon, among others, in their work. How have artists on both sides of the border represented the Virgin of Guadalupe and what were their motivations? Was their interest in producing Guadalupana imagery driven by the art market? Are mutual influence and/or parallel development evident in Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art? What was the public reception of such imagery? I will attempt to answer these questions through a comparison and analysis of several works by Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist artists examining them within their historical, political, and cultural contexts to show that the Virgin of Guadalupe indeed crosses borders as an instrument that promulgates rich, varying, and often contradictory discourses of self-representation.

This “coincidence,” or dialogue between Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art has been recognized by art historians such as Amelia Malagamba Ansótegui and Luis Carlos Emerich, as well as cultural critic Carlos Monsiváis and Mexican-born artist Felipe Ehrenberg, but has not yet received the scholarly inquiry or analysis that it deserves.³ The present study will determine to what extent mutual influences and shared consciousness in Neo-Mexicanist and Chicano art can be established.

For this analysis I have selected a total of twenty-one works, eleven by California and Texas based Chicano artists in comparison with ten by Neo-Mexicanists.⁴ Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art share a variety of recurring Mexican national symbols such as the sacred heart, pre-Columbian sculpture, depictions of Aztec warriors,

2 José Antonio Román, “Protesta la Iglesia por el manejo de Fox de la imagen de la Virgen,” *La Jornada*, (September 13, 1999): 5. Juan Manuel Venegas and David Aponte, “‘Me hacen los mandados’, contesta Vicente Fox a críticas del gobierno,” *La Jornada* (September 13, 1999): 3.

3 See Amelia Malagamba Ansótegui “Una historia de amores, resentimientos y olvidos. El arte chicano y la pintura neo-mexicanista” (1999), unpublished article presented at the Rockefeller Conference, *Representing Latin American/Latino Art in the New Millennium: Curatorial Issues and Propositions* (October 19-22, 1999). Luis Carlos Emerich, *Figuraciones y Desfiguros de los Ochentas* (Mexico: Diana, 1989); Carlos Monsiváis, “Perspectives on the Arts of Mexico” in *Latin American Art* (Fall 1990): 25-27; Felipe Ehrenberg, “The Case of the Unexpected Arts: Comments on the Links Between Mexican and Chicano Artists,” unpublished presentation at the symposium *Mutual Influences: Contemporary Mexican and Chicano Art* on October 19, 1991 at the Los Angeles Contemporary Art Museum in conjunction with the exhibition *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*.

4 See *List of Illustrations*.

mariachis, serapes, *nopales*, the Mexican flag, the revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, Frida Kahlo, and more. While a broad comparison of such iconography is a worthy undertaking, it is beyond the scope of this paper. In my research it became apparent that numerous Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist artists have incorporated the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe at least once, if not repeatedly in their work. Furthermore, the Virgin's image may dominate an artist's body of work, as exemplified by Chicana artist Yolanda M. Lopez and Neo-Mexicanist Nahum B. Zenil. I have therefore chosen to focus on representations of this one particular symbol, the Virgin of Guadalupe, in Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art. The origin and traditional iconography of the Virgin must first be examined in order to understand how Chicano artists and Neo-Mexicanists incorporate and transform her image in their art.

THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE: Tradition

The Virgin of Guadalupe initially presented herself to a Christianized native, Juan Diego, on the hill of Tepeyac on December 9, 1531. She requested that he ask the Bishop Zumárraga of Mexico to build a temple in her name.⁵ On the Virgin's fourth and final visit to Juan Diego, she provided him with a sign by filling his *tilma* (cloak made of cactus fiber *ayate* cloth) with out-of-season roses. When Juan Diego presented himself to the Bishop, he opened his *tilma* from which the roses tumbled revealing the image of the Virgin miraculously painted on his cloak. This image currently hangs in the Basílica of Guadalupe in Mexico City.⁶

The Virgin of Guadalupe's official iconography never deviates (Figure 2). Her head tilts slightly to the right and her glance is cast downwards. Her hands meet in prayer as she stands on a crescent moon supported by a winged angel. She is clothed in a red robe embroidered with a floral pattern and is covered by a blue mantle adorned

⁵ David A. Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge: Center of Latin American Studies, 1985), 12-13.

⁶ Dr. Kimberle S. Lopez, UNM professor of Anthropology, summarizes the historical background of popular Marian devotion in Catholic Europe: "In Catholic theology, Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, is held to have been conceived without sin by her mother and to have conceived her divine son without sexual intercourse. The Virgin Mary is believed to have ascended into heaven without dying, and to have made several apparitions in different parts of the world over the last two thousand years. Many of the names for the Virgin reflect geographic regions where devotion to her has been strong or where she has been believed to have made apparitions. Specific images of the Virgin can be associated with these

with gold stars and trim. The sun's rays emanate from her body and she is surrounded by an oval shaped aureole. Her eyes and hair are dark and her skin olive-toned.

The Guadalupana was thus introduced to the New World through the visual form, and she has been represented in countless reproductions since the mid-sixteenth century. Her image was imported from Guadalupe, Estremadura, a province in southern Spain from which many conquerors, including Hernán Cortés, originated. There she was a black madonna who carried a black child.⁷ Her white or black complexion transformed to bronze in the New World where she became a *mestiza*. Throughout the Spanish colonial era that spanned the early sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, the promulgation of the Virgin's cult in Mexico served as a means of native conversion. The Virgin, as both mediator and intercessor, was not only "a model of acceptance and legitimization of colonial authority" but also a symbol of the "spiritual conquest" of the Indian populations.⁸ To the Indians, the Guadalupana became a syncretic image symbolizing land, fertility, and redemption, a conflation of the Christian mother and the ancient Aztec earth and fertility goddess Tonantzin, whose name means "our revered Mother" in Náhuatl. The Virgin's shrine at Tepeyac, located at what is presently the northern end of the sprawling Federal District, had long been a place of pilgrimage to the ancient goddess Tonantzin prior to Conquest.

The Virgin's role in the colonial process may be dually seen as contributing to both native oppression and incorporation. Stripped of the power, strength, and aggression embodied by the ancient goddess, the new Mother is innocent, submissive, virginal, modest, and passive; she is pure receptivity. Within the historicity of the Guadalupe symbol are found multiple meanings: oppressor, liberator, protector, intercessor, and mother of the nation. In her article *The Virgin of Guadalupe, Symbol of Conquest or Liberation?* Jeanette Peterson challenges the notion that the Virgin's cult spontaneously unified all Mexican classes. She asserts that the Guadalupana was adopted early on by the upper classes of Mexico as a way to create a national identity

regions [...] in turn, each region developed an imagery that was associated with their Virgin." Email correspondence with the author on June, 15, 2000.

⁷ Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness 1531-1813* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 220-21.

⁸ William B. Taylor, "The Virgin of Guadalupe in New Spain: an Inquiry into the Social History of Marian Devotion" *American Ethnologist* 14.1 (February 1987): 20.

that was separate and distinct from Spain. Only when Emiliano Zapata embraced Guadalupe's image in association with social and agrarian reforms sought during the Mexican Revolution did the Virgin "become a viable symbol of freedom for all classes."⁹

In *Nuestra Madre (Our Mother*—Figure 3) of 1978, Yolanda M. Lopez comments on cultural syncretism by superimposing the image of the pre-Columbian deity Coatlicue, the earth mother from whom the Mexica originated, over the Virgin of Guadalupe leaving only parts of the aureole and the crescent moon visible to the viewer. Emblems of the four apparitions of the Virgin to Juan Diego surround *Nuestra Madre*. This image perfectly and literally illustrates the fusion of the pre-Columbian and Christian religious beliefs. And yet, Lopez has privileged the indigenous by centralizing Coatlicue and recasting the Virgin of Guadalupe in the margins; in contrast to the Spanish conquerors, who built their churches on the remains of Mesoamerican pyramids, Lopez has placed the pre-Columbian deity before, not behind the Virgin.

In her study *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, theologian Jeanette Rodríguez explores the role of the Virgin among Mexican-American women.¹⁰ She concludes that the Virgin is not only a symbol of cultural maintenance and cultural memory, but also a symbol of power for a powerless people. Rodríguez posits that Mexican-American women have long been the victims of sexism through the inherited *machismo* of their own culture and that of a dominant Anglo society. The limited, traditional, dual female archetype of the *Malinche*-Virgin, she who is a traitor, untrustworthy, violated, submissive, as well as passive, humble, obedient, and all-enduring, is contested by Mexican-American women who emphasize the positive qualities of the Guadalupeana by turning to her as a "source of competence, power, and responsibility."¹¹ It is not until the mid-1970s that we see the Virgin's official image appropriated and transformed by Chicano and Mexican artists thereby generating new visual discourses through their examinations of national culture.

9 Jeanette Faurot Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest or Liberation?" *Art Journal* 51, No. 4 (Winter 1992): 45.

10 Jeanette Rodríguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

11 Ibid., 132. The *Malinche*, or Doña Marina, was an indigenous woman who, as an interpreter for the Spaniards, played a key role in the Spanish Conquest of the native people. As Hernán Cortés's consort, she gave birth to the *mestizo* race. To be a *Malinchista* is to be a traitor and a prostitute. See for example Octavio Paz's description of the *Malinche* as the archetype of betrayal in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Mexico: Grove, 1985), 65-88.

NATIONALISM, ART, AND OFFICIAL CULTURE

It is significant that today a potential political leader would invoke the Virgin of Guadalupe to support his candidacy and would emulate a national hero, Miguel Hidalgo, indicating the continuing historical function of national symbols as objects of power, tools of legitimacy, and emblems of identity.¹² National symbols, which pertain to *la patria* (the nation), evoke a sense of place, the native land, territory, roots, ancestry, belief systems, and collective memory. They give legitimacy to the state and help to maintain the established order. They form part of a common patrimony and serve as instruments of social homogeneity and ruling class hegemony. Mexican artists historically have incorporated national symbols in their work to support concepts of *mexicanidad* or Mexicanness.

During the Porfirian era, from the late nineteenth century up until the 1910 Revolution, it was the European and non-indigenous that defined the national ideal. With the advent of the Revolution, the ideal shifted to the *mestizo*, culminating in the “bronze race” or the “new man” as presented by José Vasconcelos in his 1925 work, *La Raza Cosmica*.¹³ As the Minister of Education from 1921 to 1924, Vasconcelos commissioned young artists, such as *Los Tres Grandes* (the Great Three), David Alfaro Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco, to paint murals on public buildings. The muralists created a new national visual language as they covered miles of public walls with images of the Conquest, Independence, and Revolution.

The arts largely upheld the state’s monolithic, nationalist ideology that purportedly celebrated pre-Columbian origins and sought to unify the disparate races and classes of Mexican society. Indigenism, a celebration of indigenous tradition, physique, and *artesanía* (folk crafts) as ideal representations of *mexicanidad* became the cornerstone of the *Escuela Mexicana de Pintura* (Mexican School of Painting). This artistic movement encompassed the epic work of the Muralists, as well as the *Contracorriente* (Counter-Current), a modernist movement founded in the Open-Air

12 David A. Brading recounts “Padre Hidalgo deliberately raised the banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe to attract the populace, and his unorganized horde marched to the cries of ‘...Long Live Our Lady of Guadalupe! Death to the gachupines! Death to bad government!’” in *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge: Center of Latin American Studies, 1985), 48.

13 José Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cosmica/The Cosmic Race* (Los Angeles: Centro de Publicaciones, Department of Chicano Studies, California State University, 1979).

Schools that was composed of easel painters such as Abraham Ángel, Julio Castellanos, María Izquierdo, Frida Kahlo, Antonio Ruiz, and Rufino Tamayo. The *Contracorriente* described *mexicanidad* through their intimate portrayals of scenes of everyday life.¹⁴ Visual images, such as murals, easel-paintings, and prints, captured the revolutionary ideals and kept them alive long after social reform campaigns had come to a grinding halt. Jean Franco affirms:

Mexico's new civilization [...] was to be forged by the twin instruments of culture and nationalism [...] The impulse behind cultural nationalism was two-fold. First, there was the desire to bring all sections of the community into national life. Secondly, the elite now sought, in folk culture, in the indigenous peoples and the environment, the values they had previously accepted from Europe.¹⁵

During the 1950s and 1960s, called the *Ruptura* (Break) in art history, a group of dissident Mexican artists reacted against the insular vision of the Mexican School of Painting. They turned away from nationalist rhetoric and sought access to an international art market. Artist José Luis Cuevas publicly argued that Mexico was enclosed behind a *cortina de nopal* (cactus curtain).¹⁶ U.S. sponsored juried competitions in Mexico and throughout Latin America, that privileged non-figurative art, encouraged the fruition of abstraction in Mexico.¹⁷

Beginning in the early 1970s, artists diverged from the previous decades of the *Ruptura* era, by taking their work out of the galleries and onto the streets. An exciting artform emerged in Mexico from the general discontent expressed towards an authoritarian government that took repressive measures against segments of the populace, exemplified by the 1968 student massacre at Tlatelolco. Approximately one

14 Initiated by Alfredo Ramos Martínez in 1913, the Open-Air Schools flourished through the 1930s. See Laura González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura* (México: Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas, 1987). The *Contracorriente* movement is examined in Jorge Alberto Manrique's article "Las Contracorrientes de la pintura mexicana" in *El nacionalismo y el arte mexicano 1900-1940: IX coloquio de historia del arte del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* (México: UNAM, 1986): 259-70.

15 Jean Franco, "Back to the Roots: I. Cultural Nationalism" *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist* (New York: Frederick A. Prager, 1967), 71-72.

16 The phrase *la cortina de nopal* was coined by José Luis Cuevas in a letter to Fernando Benítez, the director of the "México en la Cultura" section of the newspaper *Novedades* (March 7, 1958). See José Luis Cuevas, "The Cactus Curtain: An Open Letter on Conformity in Mexican Art" trans. Lysander Kemp *Evergreen Review* 2 (Winter 1959): 111-20.

17 See Shifra M. Goldman, *Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981).

hundred twenty artists formed *Los Grupos* (The Groups), a dozen artist collectives that created experimental, public artwork for nearly a decade.¹⁸

Much of the work created by *Los Grupos* was ephemeral in nature, therefore documentation and reproductions are limited. Nonetheless, based on a few images produced by select members of *Los Grupos*, many of who later emerged as Neo-Mexicanists, it is apparent that Mexican artists began to incorporate images of the Virgin of Guadalupe in their work at approximately the same time as Chicanos—in the early 1970s. The Guadalupana was a key element for Neo-Mexicanist Adolfo Patiño, who directed the art collective *Peyote y la Compañía* (Figure 4) from 1973 to 1984, while Enrique Guzmán, an initiator of the Neo-Mexicanist movement included references to the Guadalupana in his 1973 painting *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*.

The largely politically motivated, consciousness-raising work of *Los Grupos* was initially exhibited in alternative spaces, outside of the gallery and museum system. Nonetheless, state intervention and appropriation prevailed as the work of *Los Grupos* was presented in government-sponsored exhibitions such as the *Tenth Paris Biennial* of 1977 and the juried *Salón Nacional de Artes Plásticas* of 1979 in Mexico City. Néstor García Canclini describes the latter:

The entire exhibition combines the Virgin of Guadalupe with mannequins, nudes of Marilyn Monroe with sugar skulls, ex-votos with the parodies of commercial advertisement, juxtapositions of cultural phenomenon confronting reality, new and old gods, recycled everyday materials of diverse origin with an ironic look that they [the artists] themselves call “newreadymadismo.”¹⁹

Los Grupos of the 1970s did open the way for a blossoming of Mexican artistic expression in the following decade and may have encouraged the subtle politicization in Neo-Mexicanist art. Neo-Mexicanists such as Alejandro Arango, Esteban Azamar, Enrique Guzmán, Eloy Tarcisio and Adolfo Patiño, who actively participated in artist collectives, emerged as prominent artists of the Neo-Mexicanist movement.²⁰

18 For more on *Los Grupos* see *De los grupos los individuos: artistas plásticos de los grupos metropolitanos* (Mexico City: Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, INBA, 1985).

19 Néstor García Canclini, “¿A donde va el arte mexicano?” in *Salón Nacional de Artes Plásticas: Sección Anual de Experimentación 1979* (Mexico City: INBA, 1979), 5. The word “newreadymadismo” appeared in this manner in the original text.

20 Alejandro Arango, Esteban Azamar, and Enrique Guzmán collaborated with the group *Peyote y la Compañía* that was founded and directed by Adolfo Patiño from 1973 to 1984. Eloy Tarcisio founded *Atención la Dirección* in 1976 and was marginally active with *Suma, Taller de Arte e Ideología (TAI)*,

Furthermore, artist Felipe Ehrenberg, who worked with the group *Proceso Pentágono*, comments on the relationship between *Los Grupos* and Chicano art:

[Through *Los Grupos*] links between the more nomadic Mexican artists, myself among them, and some of the more daring Chicano artists were established and grew almost subterraneously, in a one-to-one manner: individuals in both countries would somehow meet and simply exchange experiences. A closer look at the events of those years would show us some of the results of these rapprochements. What is most interesting here is that in their dynamics, in their methods, and in their commitments, artist members of the Groups not only coincided with the more advanced Chicano artists, they also recognized these coincidences.²¹

The new figuration in Mexican painting that took hold of the 1980s in the art of the Neo-Mexicanists was founded in part on the discoveries of *Los Grupos*, an observation which has been unexplored by art historical criticism.

NEO-MEXICANIST AND CHICANO ARTISTS: (Re)New(ed) Constructions of Identity

In the 1980s, Neo-Mexicanist artists responded to the nation's instability and illusion of well being. From their lived experiences, they revived images such as religious icons and national symbols in order to question, subvert, and challenge reality. These artists examined identity from multiple perspectives: individual, national, and international. Although they incorporated similar national imagery in their work, there are significant differences between the Mexican School of Painting of the 1920s, which largely supported the state project that sought to unify and rebuild the nation, and the Neo-Mexicanists, who often turned a critical eye on traditional constructs of identity. Neo-Mexicanists look back upon the more than seventy-year rule of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), or Institutional Revolutionary Party, the dominant political party which has shaped the post-Revolution nation-state. Their work expresses a multi-faceted, rather than monolithic perspective of official culture, which they equivocally examine, embrace, and criticize. Mexican anthropologist Roger Bartra further explains the relationship between Mexican art and "official culture":

Taller de Investigación Plástica, and *Proceso Pentágono*. Javier de la Garza was influenced by his peers, Olivero Hinojosa and Alfonso Moraza of *Suma* at the Academia San Carlos.

²¹ Ehrenberg, *The Case of the Unexpected Arts*, 9.

There is a culture which emanates from the offices of the government, and which impregnates the exercise of authority [...] we find that these same government offices issue a stamp of approval for artistic and literary creation, to restructure it in accordance with established canons [...] there is a close relationship between the folklore of government offices and the form that the reconstruction of official culture takes: together they can be seen as the practice of a Mexican *oficio*.²²

Official nationalism, an artificial unity used to deflect and obscure the reality of internal class and ethnic differences, produces official culture. Official culture maintains the historical continuity of a national ideology. Furthermore, we can understand and equate official ideology with what Mary Kay Vaughan defines as “‘cultural policy’—the creation of revolutionary symbols, didactic art, and collective theatrics—to build popular support among [the masses].”²³ Whereas Mexican artists of the 1920s-1940s incorporated images of distinct Mexican historical eras in their work, Neo-Mexicanists combine different epochs to comment on an ahistorical present. In Neo-Mexicanist work, fragmentation, artifice, the quotidian, the traditional, the sacred, and the profane come into play in a post-modern collage.

By combining multiple historical eras in a single painting, Neo-Mexicanists collapse boundaries to reflect the hybrid, or syncretic nature of Mexican culture. References to the pre-Columbian past, the Colonial era, and continuing indigenous cultural production are united in a painting such as Dulce María Núñez’s 1990 *Piedad* (*Piety*—Figure 5). Xipetotec, the flayed Aztec deity, is seated in a handcrafted, contemporary indigenous *artesanía* chair. He wears Juan Diego’s *tilma* while embracing the colonial image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. A flaming sacred heart is held in his right hand. Furthermore, kitsch elements, such as the winged angel heads and the decorative roses seen here, or the adhesion of *terciopelo* (shag carpet) in other works by Núñez, combines “low” and “high” art, or so-called “bad” and “good” taste. Georgina Quintana similarly combines colonial, Aztec, and national imagery by replacing the Virgin’s head with an eagle in *Juan Diego atrás* (*Juan Diego Behind*—Figure 6) of 1992. She describes the coming together of the European and the

22 Roger Bartra, “Mexican Oficio: the Miseries and Splendors of Culture” *Third Text* 14(1991): 7-8.

23 Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), 4.

indigenous to create the mixed blood *mestizo* by painting the Virgin's joined hands as one dark, and the other white.

As we saw with Yolanda M. Lopez's 1978 *Nuestra Madre* (Figure 3), which superimposed the goddess Coatlicue over the Virgin, Chicano artists, like Neo-Mexicanists, also create syncretic images, often with great irony. César Martínez takes liberties with the Virgin's image in his 1992 *Mona Lupe: The Epitome of Chicano Art* (Figure 9). Here, a European icon, Leonardo da Vinci's renowned *Mona Lisa* (1503-1505) has supplanted the Virgin. An altar, roses, and a nopal cactus frame her. As *Mona Lisa*, the Virgin has relaxed her pious pose; she does not hold her hands together in prayer, but rests them comfortably on the crescent moon. She gazes directly at us, challenging her viewers to contest her identity. The Virgin is no longer an innocent, pious, young maiden, but a buxom seductress in full power of her sexuality.

Similarly, Chicano Alfredo de Batuc creates an overt reinterpretation of the Virgin's sacred image with his 1987 *Seven Views of City Hall* (Figure 7).²⁴ Yolanda M. Lopez comments on the appeal of this particular painting "I like the ambiguity of it. It has penises and female genitalia mixed with a play on the Juan Diego emblems."²⁵ Indeed, de Batuc's tower of Guadalupe squirms and vibrates with sexual energy. Interestingly, the architectural form of Los Angeles's City Hall seen here could easily be mistaken for the Latin American Tower, a building which hovers over Mexico City's Alameda Central park.

Nationalism, albeit an ambivalent one, is arguably the most significant theme in Neo-Mexicanist and Chicano figurative art. We see formal (color, style, and technique), symbolic, and ideological similarities and differences in their work. The viewer will generally recognize a Mexican origin, but may not always be able to distinguish from which side of the border the artist of that work hails. These artists are not simply interested in reproducing archaic forms of nationalism. Neo-Mexicanists and Chicanos both appropriate and dissect stereotypes and official culture, and reassemble the parts as new expressions of national identities.

²⁴ Alfredo de Batuc is Mexican-born, but identifies himself with the Chicano movement.

²⁵ Telephone interview conducted by the author with Yolanda M. Lopez. November 3, 1999.

Adolfo Patiño's woven tapestry, *Proyecto para una bandera de una colonia mexicana II* (*Project for a Flag of a Mexican Colony II*—Figure 8) of 1987, is one of those works that can be read as pertaining to either, or both sides of the border, U.S. and/or Mexican. Furthermore, among its many interpretations, it may be viewed as a commentary on U.S. imperialism in Mexico, the absorption of Mexican culture into the U.S., or the bi-cultural status of Chicanos. Patiño, a Neo-Mexicanist, states "I remarked to a group of Chicano friends in Los Angeles that 'this flag should have been made by a Chicano. I am more Chicano than the Chicanos.'"²⁶ Patiño acknowledges the importance of the Guadalupana to Chicanos as a spiritual symbol; nonetheless, he believes that Chicano artists' understanding and treatment of her image is superficial. He states "the Virgin was an apparition forced by the Spaniards to subjugate the Indians. We have been guarding the traditions, the legends, but with a realistic, scientific understanding [...] not a superficial one."²⁷ Patiño's perspective is an interesting and relevant one; nonetheless, it also exemplifies how the complexity of the Mexican-American experience may at times be misinterpreted and over-simplified by Mexican nationals.

Neo-Mexicanist art, named by Mexican art historian Teresa del Conde, appears united primarily through a similarity of style and content.²⁸ The artwork has also been interpreted as reflecting the historical era from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, marked by a resurgent nationalism under the de la Madrid administration, in which these artists developed. Disenchantment or a vague social and political discontent is evidenced in the art of this generation. They experienced the oppressive regime of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, the 1968 massacre of students in Tlatelolco, two decades of economic crisis and devaluation, the dashed hopes of the oil boom under the presidency of José López Portillo, the broken promises of the Miguel de la Madrid and Carlos Salinas de Gortari governments, and the tragedy of the 1985 earthquakes. Neo-Mexicanist work reflects an era of change, crisis, hope, and disillusion. Neo-Mexicanists neither actively formed a group nor created a manifesto. They did indeed draw inspiration from the muralists and vanguard painters of the 1920s to 1940s, but

26 Interview conducted by the author with Adolfo Patiño and Carla Rippey. January 4, 2000. Mexico City.

27 Interview conducted by the author with Adolfo Patiño and Carla Rippey. January 4, 2000. Mexico City.

28 Teresa del Conde, "Nuevos mexicanismos," *Unomásuno*, (April 25, 1987): 22.

created a more personal, highly expressionistic art that was not singular in vision, nor specifically directed at generating social change.

It would be naive however, to view the common concerns of this generation of artists simply as reflections of the collective unconscious. The international art market and commercial gallery interests did have a hand in promoting and encouraging a “Mexican look” in the art production of the 1980s. Asked her opinion on the growing interest among young artists to use elements of popular culture in their work, in 1987 artist Georgina Quintana stated:

More than anything it is a pose on the part of many painters to try to ‘Mexicanize’ their work. Art makes reference to much of what is in style, but this always occurs. Whether it be a Coca cola [*sic*] or a calavera, what is important in the painting and in the creator is the sincerity with oneself, but in these times I feel that the presence of popular objects is overused simply for the sake of being in a pictorial [*sic*] ‘wave.’²⁹

Mexican artist Magali Lara reiterates that “The problem of Mexicanism is [...] if you don’t fulfill the requirement of painting *Virgenes de Guadalupe*, your work is not good.”³⁰

Neo-Mexicanist art is representational. Whether used metaphorically, allegorically, or literally, the presence of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, *artesanía*, the Mexican flag, Frida Kahlo, the *Santo*, Golden era movie stars, *chinas poblanas*, *charros*, pre-Columbian imagery and other popular icons did largely define Neo-Mexicanist art.³¹ By the early 1990s, when the market had become saturated with such images, many Neo-Mexicanists chose to abandon this direct, narrative style and completely changed directions in their work, while artists such as Dulce María Núñez, Nahum B. Zenil, and Arturo Elizondo continue to work in this vein. From interviews conducted with various Neo-Mexicanist artists during the past three years, I have found the general consensus is that they resent and reject the “Neo-Mexicanist” label from art historians and gallery dealers. The artists see this label as limiting and insist that their motivations were neither monolithic nor collective. While acknowledging the versatility of these artists, I employ the term in this essay to refer

29 Georgina Quintana interviewed by Angélica Abelleira in “Afinidad con Frida Kahlo e Izquierdo: Quintana,” *La Jornada* (June 12, 1987): 26

30 Quoted in *Fifteen Contemporary Artists of Mexico* (Chicago: Mexican Fine Arts Center, 1989), 15.

31 The *Santo* is a famous masked Mexican wrestler who is a popular, mythological figure who appeared in many films over several decades.

specifically to artists and works within the Neo-Mexicanist movement of the late 1970s to early 1990s that share particular themes and iconography.

Many Neo-Mexicanists received their art training at the National Art School, *La Esmeralda*, where they studied under teachers such as Javier Arévalo, Javier Anzures, Gilberto Aceves-Navarro and Luis Nishizawa. In addition to these teachers, many Neo-Mexicanists share the influence of Mexican artists of the 1920s to 1940s, such as Frida Kahlo, María Izquierdo, *Los Tres Grandes*, and Rufino Tamayo, on their work. Many Neo-Mexicanists developed careers as professional artists, and continue to live, make art, and raise families primarily in, or on the outskirts of Mexico City. Others reside in major cities such as Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Guanajuato, or travel between Mexico and U.S. cities such as Los Angeles and New York.

These artists' careers were initiated within the gallery system in Mexico. Through promotion of Neo-Mexicanist art by commercial galleries such as the Galería OMR and Galería Arte Mexicano in Mexico City, and the Galería Arte Actual and Ramis Barquet in Monterrey, in conjunction with cultural and political developments such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Latin American art boom of the late 1980s, and the major state and corporate sponsored cultural project *Mexico a Work of Art*, many of the artists gained access to the mainstream, international exposure, and artistic and financial success. The general attitude among many Neo-Mexicanists and art critics alike is that the movement became highly commercialized, succumbed to figurative decorativeness, and quickly ran its course.

Oswaldo Sánchez, Director of the Museo Carrillo Gil in Mexico City states that "the commercial success of this movement took everyone by surprise, yet nothing could be more appealing to the insatiable appetite of the United States for exoticism than this old phantom of *México profundo* warmed up."³² To this perspective Adolfo Patiño adds "The moment that it [Neo-Mexicanist art] became consumer merchandise, a product of

32 Sánchez, "Out of Bounds?," 25. The term *México profundo* or "Deep Mexico" clearly refers to Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's book *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996). Jorge Castañeda explains this term: "By the 1980s Mexico was once again a country of three nations: the *criollo* minority of elites and the upper-middle class, living in style and affluence; the huge, poor, *mestizo* majority; and the utterly destitute minority of what in colonial times was called the 'Republic of Indians'—the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Tabasco, Michoacán, Guerrero, Puebla, Chihuahua, and Sonora, all known today as el *México profundo*: deep Mexico." *The Mexican Shock: Its Meaning for the United States* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 38.

exportation that the First World awaited, the artists realized that they had found what I call 'the secret formula.' Upon finding the secret formula within Neo-Mexicanism, *advenedizos* (opportunists) began to arrive who [in actuality] had nothing to do with the movement."³³ He points out that many Neo-Mexicanists knew how to "situate themselves in the market" while he, and others "created work from the standpoint of a vanguard development."³⁴

Chicano art in turn, also responded to social and historical developments as it emerged in direct support of the 1960s Chicano Civil Rights movement. Chicano artists throughout the U. S., primarily in California, Texas, Illinois, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and the Pacific Northwest created art in the service of uniting and encouraging the Chicano community in its fight for improved economic and social conditions. Through the visual arts, and other art forms such as poetry, narrative, and theater, Chicanos celebrated and affirmed *la Raza* (the Race) and furthered *la causa* (the cause); the arts served as a tool for community building. Chicano art was, and continues to be, highly politicized and directed towards creating social change, positive role models, instilling ethnic pride, and raising social consciousness. Chicano art fundamentally is a multi-layered art of protest: spiritual, social, economic, aesthetic and political.

Chicano art in the 1970s was neither market driven nor conformed to external criteria of the dominant order. Chicano artists were not represented in commercial galleries. Not until the 1980s did Chicano artists begin to enter the "mainstream" art market. Nonetheless, exhibitions of Chicano art, often organized by the artists themselves, continue to take place primarily in alternative spaces, "ethnic" cultural centers, and select university art museums and galleries.³⁵ *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation* (CARA), a comprehensive national exhibition on the history of Chicano art that covered two decades and one hundred and fifty artists, traveled throughout the

33 Interview conducted by the author with Adolfo Patiño and Carla Rippey. January 4, 2000. Mexico City.

34 Ibid.

35 For more on Chicano art exhibition history see Holly J. Barnet, "From Tenochtitlán to Aztlán: Representations of Mexicanidad in Chicano/a Art" in the forthcoming anthology of articles written by Rockefeller Fellows in the Humanities at the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, 1994-1998, ed. Mari Carmen Ramírez.

U.S. from 1990-1993.³⁶ CARA made a significant contribution to the growing diffusion and recognition of Chicano art.

Mexican symbols play a significant role in this art as a means of affirming a bi-cultural Chicano identity. Chicano artists representing a culture of diaspora, incorporate specifically Mexican symbology to create a visual language that is largely viewed, by both Chicanos and Neo-Mexicanists as a mythological, political, and spiritual one. The use of Mexican symbology by Chicanos reflects a part of the Mexican-American cultural experience, whereas Neo-Mexicanist imagery is perceived as expressing the totality, albeit fragmented, of the artists' lived, cultural reality.

When I mentioned in an interview with San Francisco-based Chicana artist Yolanda M. Lopez that a Neo-Mexicanist (who wishes to remain anonymous) had commented "To us these cultural icons are taken for granted. They are a fact, a reality, while to them [Chicano artists], they are mythology," Lopez agreed.³⁷ Similarly, Neo-Mexicanist Adolfo Patiño has stated:

I believe that it was Mexican culture that influenced Chicano artists, not the other way around. The Chicanos view Mexico from a distance. From their side [of the border] they perceive the surface, the myth of ritual, or the myth of legend, but they do not know the depth of the legend or the history. I come from the popular, middle class, and I know the rituals intimately—the rituals of the Guadalupana, the murals in the Palace of Fine Arts that I visited as a child, those of Diego Rivera in the Ministry of Public Education, and the image of Frida Kahlo. They are images that are alive for me because I was close [to them] and I could listen, see, and get to know them. All of the iconography that has permeated my non-academic education, and most of all my visual education, comes from this nearness to all of the rituals, all of the legends, to art itself.³⁸

In the artwork examined for this analysis, both Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art employs alternately nostalgic, critical, affirming, and inventive approaches to establish multifaceted dialogues with culture.

Mexican symbols in Chicano artwork have predominantly been used to combat derogatory U.S. stereotypes of *lo mexicano* which have historically portrayed Mexicans as either lazy, ignorant, dirty, backwards, provincial, and inferior to Anglos, or in

³⁶ *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation: An Interpretive Exhibition of the Chicano Art Movement, 1965-1985* (Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, 1991).

³⁷ Telephone interview conducted by the author with Yolanda M. Lopez. October 25, 1999. Comment based on conversation between author and Neo-Mexicanist in August, 1999. Mexico City.

romanticized and folkloric ways. Through their bi-cultural experience in the U.S., Chicanos have acquired a whole other gamut of stereotypes: the *pachuco/zoot suiter* (representing the sub-culture of the 1940s), the *cholo/chola* (representing contemporary Chicano youth sub-culture), and the *vato* (cool dude), to name a few. Chicano artists combat these stereotypes by appropriating, transforming, and redirecting them as forms of positive self-identification. Chicano artists co-opt, convert, and subvert stereotypes as recycled labels of identity. Many aspects of Chicano culture can be defined as *rasquache*: "To be rasquache is to posit a bawdy, spunky consciousness, to seek to subvert and turn ruling paradigms upside down. It is a witty, irreverent, and impertinent posture that recodes and moves outside established boundaries."³⁹ Nostalgia, memory, and invention come together in the Chicano vision of Aztlán; the Chicano homeland is neither Mexico nor the U.S., but that of a historical/mythical place from whence the Aztecs originated. Aztlán represents the recuperation of what the Chicanos have been denied: territory, respect and equality. Aztlán represents that which will be (re)built as a result of the Chicano movement: the future Chicano nation.

Chicano art uses Mexican national imagery in a politicized and transformative manner. In addition to the Virgin of Guadalupe, symbols such as Frida Kahlo, the Mexican flag, the nopal cactus, the revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, and pre-Columbian imagery are "recuperated" in the construction and affirmation of a Chicano identity. As discussed above, there is a similar concern in the work of the Neo-Mexicanist artists, and yet, Chicano art differs in that it often combines Mexican iconography with that of the U.S., such as Mickey Mouse, George Washington, the dollar bill, the Statue of Liberty, the INS, barbed wire, Santa Claus, and more.⁴⁰ Amalia Mesa-Bains affirms the importance of the dual Mexican/U.S. heritage to Chicano artists:

Chicanos continue the process of cultural confluence which is the *mestizaje* by adding the experience of life in the United States to their indigenous and Hispanic heritage. For the visual artist, this vast, multi-layered cultural base

38 Interview conducted by the author with Adolfo Patiño and Carla Rippey. January 4, 2000. Mexico City.

39 Tomás Ybarra-Frausto "Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility" in *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation: An Interpretive Exhibition of the Chicano Art Movement, 1965-1985* (Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery), 155-62.

40 With less frequency than Chicano artists, Neo-Mexicanists such as Mónica Castillo, Adolfo Patiño, and Rubén Ortiz Torres have also incorporated U.S. symbols such as Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Marilyn Monroe, and "Chief Wahoo" of the Cleveland Indians baseball team in their works.

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provides inexhaustible mutations and combinations of symbols, images and signs that form the visual vocabulary of Chicano Art.⁴¹

Both Neo-Mexicanist and Chicano artists deconstruct official ideology to create new, hybrid identities by examining their unique realities of everyday life, the familiar, cultural icons, urban life, and institutions such as the Catholic Church and *machismo*. Neo-Mexicanists contest officially sanctioned cultural homogeneity by examining social fragmentation and disillusion. They critique cultural artifice, false nationalism, and the stereotypes promoted by the government, media and tourist industries, as do Chicano artists, who revel in such imagery as a way of celebrating their difference from dominant Anglo society.

While most Neo-Mexicanist and Chicano artists blatantly deny the mutual influence on, or any familiarity with, one another's work in general terms, in particular instances the work itself clearly provides evidence of shared influences. In fact, in 1991 the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio, Texas proposed this correlation as the organizing theme of an exhibition of contemporary Mexican and Chicano artwork titled *Mutual Influences/Influencias Mutuas*. Like Neo-Mexicanists, Chicano artists openly pay homage to Mexican artists such as *Los Tres Grandes*, María Izquierdo, Frida Kahlo, José Guadalupe Posada, the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* (TGP) and popular art forms such as *artesanía*, *retablos* and *ex-votos*.⁴² Chicano artist Amado Peña states outright that he and his peers turned to Mexican art of the national period as a model:

We were borrowing from Mexico and in some cases we were even painting like them [the Mexican Muralists]. Images were very much like Siqueiros, Orozco, and Rivera's. They were just like that because it was the only source. And I'm saying that is o.k.⁴³

Neo-Mexicanists generally deny any affinity with Chicano art, and in particular, reject the notion of any the influence of Chicano art on their work. Neo-Mexicanist Javier de la Garza states:

41 Amalia Mesa-Bains, *Lo del Corazón: Heartbeat of a Culture* (San Francisco: the Mexican Museum, 1986), 11.

42 *Retablos* and *ex-votos* are small, votive images often painted on tin, produced from the nineteenth century to the present, which honor the saints and generally offer thanks for miraculous recoveries. *Ex-votos* typically incorporate a legend in the bottom register of the image with text documenting the date, subject, and circumstance of the miracle performed.

43 Interview conducted by the author with Amado Peña. May 20, 2000. Albuquerque, NM.

We are utilizing the same language [...] But I believe that we take very different positions. They use it to create for themselves an identity. That which we reject, and they don't have, is what makes them feel part of a culture [...] [Chicanos and Neomexicanists] are speaking with the same elements, but from completely distant places.⁴⁴

Looking at this relationship from a different vantage point, Mexican artist Felipe Ehrenberg asked an audience in Los Angeles:

[...] How many of you have not, at one time or another, felt belittled by Mexican nationals who insult Chicanos by calling them 'pochos' or who question you for 'abandoning' the so-called Mother Country? How many here who've visited Mexico have not been ridiculed for looking like Mexicans but acting and talking like blondes? [...] The fact that more and more people in Mexico are beginning to take notice of Chicano art depends not so much on our open-mindedness but rather on an extra-cultural element—its market value. And this awareness in turn is intimately linked to mass media and telecommunications.⁴⁵

One additional point regarding the relationship between Neo-Mexicanist and Chicano art is made by Neo-Mexicanist Georgina Quintana—in her opinion, it is not that Mexican artists reject Chicano art, but that their work is simply not known.⁴⁶

Chicana artist Yolanda M. Lopez discusses the appropriation of U.S.-generated, Mexican stereotypes as a basis for constructing Chicano identity:

You have to look at folk culture, the church, popular culture, advertising, television, magazines [...] What do I know about Mexico? Zip. My mother is from Shreveport, Louisiana. She worked in laundries and spoke English. My father is from Arizona. Yes, we had Jesús Helguera calendars on the walls of our living room. It wasn't until I was thirty-two years old and was in college that I found out about [Mexican Muralist David Alfaro] Siqueiros [...] Chicanos look to tourist arts. Pyramids, Aztecs, what are they? Where else were we going to get it [Mexican iconography]? Tourist arts are corrupted folk art; commercially made arts for non-Mexicans; quaint culture. Tourist art is a thread for looking at our culture.⁴⁷

In this comment based on her personal experience, Lopez presents her perspective of the Chicano's relationship to Mexican culture. She points out that this relationship has developed not only through family ties, migration, and community, but, like Felipe Ehrenberg, she believes that it has also been shaped by Mexican stereotypes propagated by the media (that of the U.S. and Mexico), and popular tourist art—from the

44 Interview conducted by the author with Javier de la Garza. July 22, 1988. Mexico City.

45 Ehrenberg, *The Case of the Unexpected Arts*, 4, 6.

46 Telephone conversation between the author and Georgina Quintana. October, 1999.

kitsch Helguera calendars (Figure 10) that display hyper-romantic images of Aztec warriors, Indian princesses, *chinas poblanas*, and *charros*, to the Tijuana donkey cart and “sleeping Mexican.” Lopez, and other Chicano artists, gather a visual vocabulary from the cultural stereotypes presented by the media and tourist art in order to reclaim and construct a sense of identity.

In his polemical work the *Labyrinth of Solitude*, initially published in Mexico in 1950 and translated into English in 1964, Octavio Paz imprinted on the Western mind his depiction of Mexican-American culture in Los Angeles. He portrays the *pachuco*, or supposed Chicano gang youth, as representative of the degraded, victimized, maladjusted, “impassive and contemptuous” Mexican-American who neither wants to return to his homeland nor is willing to acculturate. The *pachuco* “denies the society from which he originated and that of North America.”⁴⁸ While Paz presents a negative view of the Chicano experience, Chicano art expresses the strength and desire of a marginalized people to elevate themselves from a place of invisibility.

Chicanos assert that they didn’t cross the border, “The border crossed us!”⁴⁹ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 created an internal colony of the 75,000 Mexicans living North of the Río Bravo in what became upon signing the treaty parts of the U.S. Southwestern states. In addition, approximately 1.5 million Mexicans migrated northward between 1900 and 1930.⁵⁰ The Mexican-American population continued to grow when over four and a half million Mexicans were imported as migrant labor under the Bracero program between 1942 to 1964.⁵¹ Mexicans in the U.S. worked on the railroads, in the mines, in factories, and were a major component of the agricultural labor force. The experience of Mexican-Americans in the U.S. from annexation to the present has largely been one of a minority culture fighting oppression, exploitation, and domination. Chicanos have historically resisted acculturation, have established

47 Telephone interview conducted by the author with Yolanda M. Lopez. November 3, 1999.

48 Octavio Paz, *Labyrinth of Solitude*, 17.

49 This phrase is used by Chicano activists such as writer Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987) in reference to the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which changed the Mexican–U.S. border significantly, shifting territory from Mexico to what are now parts of the U.S. states of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

50 George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18.

51 Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 265.

solidarity with other minorities, and have fought for equal rights through community organization and labor unions.

Although the debate continues as to the exact historical origins of the term “Chicano,” it originally was used by Anglos as a derogatory label and an insult, and was later reclaimed by a politicized Mexican-American community as a means of self-definition. This self-identifier came into prominence in the mid-1960s with the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. The term, which unites politicized Mexican-Americans, linguistically reflects the indigenous pre-Columbian roots of Chicano culture and emphasizes a common ethnic heritage. While identities are unquestionably in continual flux and transformation, the Chicano defined himself in the 1970s as “a Mexican-American with a non-Anglo image of himself,” and “a Mexican-American involved in a socio-political struggle to create a relevant, contemporary and revolutionary consciousness as a means of accelerating social change and actualizing an autonomous cultural reality among other americans [sic] of Mexican descent.”⁵² Chicanas have equally fought for visibility and a voice not only against dominant Anglo culture, but within the male-dominated patriarchal Chicano community as well.

THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE: Transformation and Public Reception

Yolanda M. Lopez and Ester Hernandez turned to the Guadalupana in creating the earliest known images of Chicana feminist art. They led the way in transforming the icon of the Virgin into a personal and collective symbol of feminist action. Lopez affirms this initiative:

Men see her [the Guadalupana] as the all-compassionate one. She is the all-forgiving mother. She may scold you a bit, but always loves and never rejects. She gives unconditional love. In the early work men didn't change her much. There was some variation, but they treated her icon as one of sacredness. They wouldn't tamper with the fact that it is a sacred object. Men see the glamour of the image. They think what they do is risqué but they are not totally questioning the sacred aspect; it is the women that redefine the sacred image. Women identify with the Virgin's pain. She has lost a son. All mothers suffer and they

⁵² Ruben Salazar, “Chicanismo” in *Dáale Gas: Chicano Art of Texas: An Exhibition of Contemporary Chicano Art* (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 1977), 8. Santos Martinez, Jr., “Chicanismo: Chicano Art in Texas” in *Raíces Antiguas/Visiones Nuevas: Ancient Roots/New Visions* (Tucson: Tucson Museum of Art, 1977), 8.

can't control their male children. They are in horrible pain. Chicana artists such as Ester Hernandez dealt with the image from the inside out.⁵³

Lopez and Hernandez use self-portraiture to aggressively embody the Virgin's form and give her agency. They transform the Virgin from a static, passive figure, into a woman warrior. Hernandez's *Virgen de Guadalupe defendiendo los derechos de los Xicanos* (*The Virgin of Guadalupe Defending the Rights of Chicanos*—Figure 12) of 1975 encountered public criticism and even death threats when her karate kicking Virgin was published on the front cover of KBBF FM 89 Santa Rosa's programming guide. One angry reader stated "whoever came up with such idea must be out of his/her mind [...]. I can not find the words to expree [*sic*] my indignation [...] for an unreal, insulting, and sacrilegious depiction of our lady of guadalupe [*sic*]."⁵⁴ The editor aptly responded "It was intended as an encouragement for all chicanos [*sic*] and mexicanos [*sic*] to be strong in bringing their cultural heritage to bear on the North American situation."⁵⁵ The outrage was such that a town meeting was called; told that her physical presence could be dangerous, Hernandez clarified her stance over the air: "I told them that my image came not out of disrespect but was a rallying cry for Chicanas to get active. I wanted to make the image of the Virgin more contemporary and immediate."⁵⁶

Irrespective of a few initial cries of indignation expressed by the Santa Rosa community, today Hernandez's *Virgen de Guadalupe defendiendo los derechos de los Xicanos* and Yolanda M. Lopez's *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe* (Figure 13) are perceived as hallmarks in Chicano art history. Nonetheless, this incident does exemplify the degree of loyalty that many Catholics feel toward the Virgin's sacred image. A similar scandal with graver consequences occurred in Mexico City on January 23, 1988. The press estimated that on that day from five hundred to three thousand civilians and religious fanatics stormed the Museo de Arte Moderno (MAM) in Chapultepec park threatening to burn it down and to lynch one of the artists, Rolando de la Rosa, whose work was included in the government-sponsored, national

53 Telephone interview conducted by the author with Yolanda M. Lopez. November 3, 1999.

54 Jorge Cendejas in his letter to the editor Stephen Harlow. *En Frecuencia: A Monthly Bilingual Magazine and Guide to Programming on KBBF FM 89*, Santa Rosa, California, (January, 1980): n.p. The image is published on the cover of the December, 1979 issue.

55 Response by Harlow. Ibid.

juried biennial competition, *Sálón de Espacios Alternativos*. At the center of the controversy was an otherwise traditional portrait of the Virgin of Guadalupe mounted on a bed frame, displaying the text *Ni mi hermana, ni mi madre* (neither my mother, nor my sister), with Marilyn Monroe's face superimposed over that of the Virgin's and her bared breasts covered by the words *Moda...Y Todo* (Style...and Everything) (Figure 11). In defense of de la Rosa, Senator Armando Trasviña Taylos stated that the work was "not an attack on patriotic symbols or on the Mexican community," but rather, a commentary on U.S. cultural imperialism.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, de la Rosa was publicly accused of insulting the Mother of the Mexican nation. Guillermo Bustamante, the president of the National Association of Parents, angrily stated to the press:

For Mexicans, the Virgin of Guadalupe is the essence of our real identity as a people [...] the Virgin is not only the mother of God and the mother of the Christian family, but the symbol of all of Mexican mothers [...] Freedom of expression has a limit. When a pseudo artist presents our mother as a sex symbol or prostitute, that is an offense not protected by liberty of expression.⁵⁸

De la Rosa's works were removed, the director of the museum, Jorge Alberto Manrique was forced to resign, and the artist appeared on public television to apologize for "having offended the sensibilities of the Mexican people."⁵⁹

The next day, the irate mob succeeded in closing the Galería del Auditorio Nacional where Neo-Mexicanist Gustavo Monroy's prints using altered religious iconography were on exhibition. At the same time, the Centro Cultural de Arte Contemporáneo, owned and operated by the media conglomerate Televisa, and located less than a mile away from both the MAM and the Auditorio Nacional, presented over three hundred images of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the well-attended exhibition *Imágenes Guadalupanas*. The selection of contemporary images included works by

56 Ester Hernandez, *Keynote Address: An Artist*, NALAC Conference, San Antonio, Texas (September 26, 1992): 5.

57 Sonia Morales, "Resultado de la intimidación sinarquista: Retiro de cuadros, una polémica de largos alcances y dos demandas judiciales" *Proceso* 587(1 February, 1988): 50.

58 Larry Rohter, "Marilyn and Virgin: Art or Sacrilege?" *The New York Times* (2 April 1988): 4. See also Guadalupe Báez and Víctor Torres, "Ocupan el Museo de Arte Moderno y obligan su cierre temporal" *Unomásuno* (24 January 1988): 1; Rubén Álvarez, "Desmontan muestra de arte ante presión de católicos," in *La Jornada* (24 January 1988): 13; Juárez Blancas, "Peligrosos, los actos de intolerancia y fanatismo" in *El Día* (26 January 1988): 1, 3, 16; and Olivier Debrouse, "Heart Attacks: on a Culture of Missed Encounters and Misunderstandings" *El Corazón Sangrante/The Bleeding Heart* (Boston: The Institute of Contemporary Art, 1991), 33-37.

59 Rohter, *Marilyn and the Virgin*, 4.

Adolfo Patiño, Georgina Quintana, and Nahum B. Zenil (Figures 8, 6, 21), none of which were as polemical as Rolando de la Rosa's piece. The exhibition was blessed by the Archbishop of Mexico City, Cardinal Corripio Ahumada, who attended the inauguration. With its more traditional images, *Imágenes Guadalupanas* escaped both the attentions of the irate mob and public criticism alike.

These incidents in the U.S. and Mexico show that the public of both countries does not largely sanction the alteration of sacred imagery by artists. With the exception of Rolando de la Rosa, Neo-Mexicanists generally do not transform the Guadalupe's iconography to the extent that Chicano artists do. Nonetheless, religious iconography is a unifying theme that pervades Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art; it is used to affirm, question, and/or denounce constructions of identity.

Three works by a Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist artists that span two decades exemplify a loyalty, with slight variations, to the traditional iconography of the Virgin. Executed with a brash use of color, in a deliberately "naive" style, these works place tradition in a contemporary setting. The subject of Neo-Mexicanist Alejandro Arango's work of 1988 *Juan Diego* (Figure 14), for example, is easily recognized. And yet, with Arango's use of two-dimensionality, and hot, saturated color punctuated by vibrating dots and dashes that create rhythmic patterns, the painting evokes the graphic design qualities of a slick advertisement, a billboard, or an animated painting akin to the work of U.S. graffiti artist, Keith Haring. Neo-Mexicanist Agustín Portillo's *Virgen de Guadalupe* (Figure 15) of 1989, in turn, is reminiscent of a religious *retablo*. Chicano artist Amado Peña uses the photographic medium of silkscreen to produce his work *Rosa de Tepeyac* (Figure 16) of 1974. Peña acknowledges the influence of early twentieth century Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada on this and other of his works. Regarding *Rosa de Tepeyac*, Peña states:

The thing that I tried to do that was really important was to just take that image itself and say 'this is part of our culture.' In fact, this is about the only image I made that had anything to do with religion and that was the whole purpose. When we think of religion and we think of Catholics, Chicanos being mostly Catholic, the Guadalupe is the mother of all. It [the image] is not the Virgin Mary; it is the Guadalupe. That is why I called it *Rosa de Tepeyac*, because of the roses that were given to Juan Diego and that it [the apparitions] happened in Tepeyac. So the image is related to it historically; it didn't mean anything more than that. In my interpretation I was making a statement about religion and about

being Catholic. That was it; so, there was no need to divert from the traditional image.⁶⁰

While these three artists deviate little from the Virgin's traditional iconography, it is interesting to note their varying interpretations of her skin color as her complexion ranges from pale to dark brown.

Yolanda M. Lopez followed in Ester Hernandez's footsteps with *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe* in 1978 (Figure 13). Both of these artists created strong feminist statements intended to reshape stereotypes and awaken audiences to the inherent strength and power of Chicanas. Lopez, like Hernandez, takes a critical stance; she questions the construction of the ideal Mexican woman as docile, subservient, serene and passive by substituting the Virgin with images of "ordinary" women such as Lopez, her mother, and her grandmother who "deserve the respect and love lavished on Guadalupe."⁶¹ Lopez liberates the Virgin and presents her as a positive role model for the Chicano community. In this piece we can also take note that the angel, who traditionally supports the Virgin, is being crushed under her feet and his wings display, not the traditional colors of the Mexican flag, but the United States' red, white, and blue.

Another image by Lopez, *Guadalupe Walking*, from 1978, was published six years later on the cover of the Mexican magazine *Fem* (Figure 17). Lopez comments on this image in comparison with the image in the Basílica of Guadalupe: "The angel under her is a middle-aged balding man who is holding on to her dress. She has all this cloth at her feet, so I gave her a street-length dress."⁶² Asked how audiences reacted to her images, Lopez asserts that they received no attention at the time they were produced; their circulation was "nil."⁶³ Nonetheless, Kathy Vargas of the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio, Texas commented that *Fem* magazine received a bomb threat in 1984 as a result of the publication of Lopez's controversial image.⁶⁴ I was amazed to find that in the Zimmerman Library at the University of New Mexico, not

60 Interview conducted by the author with Amado Peña. May 20, 2000. Albuquerque, NM.

61 Yolanda M. Lopez, "Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mujer Mestiza" in *Yolanda M. Lopez Works: 1975-1978* (San Diego:Yolanda M. Lopez, 1978): n.p.

62 Telephone interview conducted by the author with Yolanda M. Lopez. October 25, 1999.

63 Ibid.

64 Telephone conversation between the author and Kathy Vargas. November 8, 1999.

only had the cover been removed from this particular issue of *Fem* but also the Virgin's legs had been torn off of the Xerox copy that replaced it. Lopez's images undeniably produce strong responses from her viewers.

Upon seeing the *Guadalupe Walking* I was reminded of a later painting by Neo-Mexicanist artist Rocío Maldonado (Figure 18). Certainly not as literal a reference to the Guadalupana as that of Lopez, Maldonado depicts a popular Mexican doll from Puebla wearing black pumps. She is surrounded by floating body parts, phalluses, sperm, female organs, severed hands and feet, a high-heeled pump, a sacred heart, and doves within a rich, blood-red background. Here, among other discourses, Maldonado questions the Virgin-Whore double standard so often imposed on women by traditional *machismo*. She has turned an innocent wide-eyed doll into a monolithic, even monstrous being (the painting is lifesize in scale). In this work Maldonado appears to reject the Immaculate Conception and affirm the sensual, painful, life-giving, fertile, procreative capacity of woman. What is most telling is the work's title: *La Virgen* (The Virgin). Although Lopez and Maldonado are unfamiliar with one another's art, they both, to different degrees, question the stereotype of the submissive female in their work.⁶⁵

A striking conceptual coincidence occurs between an image from Lopez's *Guadalupe Series* (Figure 19) of 1978 and Nahum B. Zenil's *Gracias Virgencita de Guadalupe* (Figure 20) of 1988. Both Lopez and Zenil replace the face of the Virgin with that of a family member's: in Lopez's case, that of her grandmother, and Zenil's, his mother. Zenil states:

[...] Since very young I have had a special devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe. For me, the Virgin was and is my protector. She is my spiritual mother. She is the one who takes care of me [...] there is always this little knife which is poking at you, hurting you, because I cannot be sufficiently good to have the love of God, the love of the Virgin. I can't be good enough. I feel guilty.⁶⁶

Nahum B. Zenil's work often emits a tension between the erotic and the sacred. In *Gracias Virgencita de Guadalupe* (Figure 21) of 1984, he creates a window onto his bedroom where he and his lover Gerardo lie partially nude while the Virgin showers her

⁶⁵ Upon showing Maldonado a reproduction of Yolanda Lopez's the *Guadalupe Walking* in January of 2000 she expressed that she had not seen the work previously. See footnote eighty-one for Maldonado's disputed response to feminist readings of her work.

blessings upon the two men. They are framed by the national past: the four apparitions of the Virgin to Juan Diego surround them. Here, Zenil evokes the Virgin's presence as a sign of the divine acceptance of homosexual union. Zenil's sense of marginality as a homosexual is parallel to the work of Chicano artists seeking their rightful place in the predominantly Anglo U.S. culture. Both artists have transferred the reverence and power historically showered on the Virgin of Guadalupe to living, ordinary (and extraordinary) role models.

One way to further personalize the Virgin is to literally tattoo her image on the body as seen in Hernandez's *La Ofrenda* (*The Offering*—Figure 22) and César Martínez's *Hombre que le gustan las mujeres* (*Man Who Likes Women*—Figure 23). We can further consider these works as collapsing the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, or better yet, bringing together spirituality and humanity. The intimacy of Hernandez's *La Ofrenda* is heightened by the fact that the woman on whose bare back the Virgin is tattooed or painted is the artist's female companion. Hernandez has created an icon of divine acceptance for lesbian women; a gesture that is similar to that expressed in the work of Neo-Mexicanist Nahum B. Zenil as discussed above. Martínez also combines the sacred and the sexual--the Virgin shares the man's body with a nude femme fatale and an *adelita*.⁶⁷ Martínez and Hernandez's images remind us that prisoners frequently display tattoos of the Virgin. The Virgin's suffering and pain are appropriated through the act of puncturing the skin to ensure her immediate and constant presence.

In his work of the 1980s, Neo-Mexicanist Javier de la Garza deconstructs gender stereotypes of Mexican identity as they are portrayed in legends, Golden era cinema, *telenovelas* (soap operas), and advertising. For example, art historian Olivier Debroise has called de la Garza's *Aparición de la papaya* (*Apparition of the Papaya*—Figure 24) a "sexualization of affected piety."⁶⁸ The artist has placed this *india* clothed in traditional Tehuana dress in the midst of a prickly nopal cactus, an emblem of the national flag.

66 Quoted in Daniel J. Bender, *In Search of Nahum B. Zenil*, (Ma. Thesis, Art Institute of Chicago, 1997): 93.

67 *Adelita* is a generic term for a woman who "serves her man" as in those women also called *soldaderas* who cared for and followed the male soldiers during the Mexican Revolution.

68 Olivier Debroise, "Javier de la Garza: fusiones" in *Javier de la Garza* (Mexico: Galería OMR, 1993): n.p.

He has substituted the Virgin's image with a halved papaya, a sexual metaphor, that hovers within a crown of thorns in an ominous night sky. De la Garza plays with dualities—the sacred and profane, innocence and danger, freedom and incarceration, desire and passivity. Ultimately, he finds the traditional, virginal construction of the feminine to be a farce.

This type of conflation of the sacred and the profane culminates in the work *Virgen de las sandías* (*The Virgin of the Watermelons*—Figure 25) by Los Angeles-based Chicana artist Mita Cuaron. Completely disrobed, the naked body of this bronze Virgin confronts the viewer. Here the artist clearly makes reference to the sexual metaphor of the *sandía*, or watermelon, as an image of women's genitalia.⁶⁹ Even more sexually explicit is the embedding of the Virgin as a bronze "pearl" within a fluted clam shape. The sacred and the profane are fused in this modern rendition of a Mexican Venus.⁷⁰

In Julio Galán's *Virgen de Guadalupe* (Figure 26) we see a constrained rendition of the Guadalupana by Mexico's arguably most radical artist. Galán, known as the "bad boy" of the Mexican art scene, is an openly gay artist who often creates sexually explicit works. Following in the footsteps of Enrique Guzmán (1952-1986), and strongly influenced by the work of Frida Kahlo, Galán gave impetus to the irreverent and ironic use of national symbols that has pervaded Neo-Mexicanist work. Surprisingly, up until 1990, the date of this particular image, the Virgin had not appeared among the *chinas poblanas*, *mariachis*, *tehuanas*, and Mexican flags that infiltrate Galán's *oeuvre*.⁷¹ "I never wanted to paint her" states Galán, but when the Grupo Monterrey (a wealthy group of industrialists who have championed Neo-Mexicanist art) asked Galán, among other artists, to create and donate a painting on the theme of the Virgin as a fund-raising

69 The watermelon is a symbol significant to many Mexican artists to include Frida Kahlo; Chicana artists often use the watermelon as a direct reference to the legacy of Frida Kahlo's imagery.

70 This reference is to the 1482 painting *The Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli.

71 A *mariachi* is a traditional Mexican folk singer who wears a particular costume and the *tehuana* refers to a female who wears a traditional dress that pertains to the matriarchal society of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec off the Pacific Coast south of Oaxaca, Mexico. Additionally, the donning of Tehuana dress became popular among mestiza women during the post-Revolutionary era. The artist Frida Kahlo frequently costumed and portrayed herself in her paintings in Tehuana attire.

device for the new Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MARCO), he did so even though he “didn’t feel inspired to make the painting.”⁷²

It is fascinating that corporations such as the Monterrey Group, Televisa, and Jumex use contemporary art as a means of cultural, political and economic legitimization. For example, art historian Carlos Blas Galindo has shown that over a ten year period (1987-1997) the prices for Neo-Mexicanist Julio Galán’s work rose an amazing 4,900 percent largely due to the selling (and *buying*) of his work at Sotheby’s auctions by elite corporate moguls of the Monterrey Group along with Emilio Azcárraga of Televisa.⁷³ Neo-Mexicanist works displayed in the *Casa de Campanas*, the private office/house of corporate elites of Televisa, in the offices of the Garza Sada family of the Grupo Monterrey, and in museums such as the now defunct Museo Cultural de Arte Contemporáneo of Mexico City, and the MARCO of Monterrey, at once aligns these elites with that which is national, modern, and popular. Art both enhances the corporate image and serves corporate economic interests. When I asked Patricia Ortiz Monasterio, the director of the Galería OMR in Mexico City and the strongest promoter of Neo-Mexicanist art during the 1980s, why it is that corporations collect and finance exhibitions of contemporary Mexican art, she responded:

First, it is in the interest of people like Lorenzo Zambrano [a member of the Monterrey Group] and other businessmen to promote cultural projects. They are interested in contemporary art and they want to help. Second, they get tax breaks on their investments. Everything that they give you [the gallery] can be taken off their taxes. If you give me two hundred pesos and I put it in a bank account and I give you a receipt that says it is for art, you can deduct it from your taxes. And furthermore, it’s a kind of business curriculum--to support the arts. But basically, I can dance the *jarabe tapatío* and promise tax deductions to a company that is not interested in art, and they are simply not interested. They won’t do it. It is the particular interest of the owner, plus the tax deductions, and well, additionally, it is a ‘good thing’ for their company.⁷⁴

72 See Galán’s own brief but insightful commentary on this work in Margaret Sayers Peden, *Out of the Volcano: Portraits of Contemporary Mexican Artists* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1991), 197-99.

73 This information was presented in a class lecture by Carlos Blas Galindo that I attended on July 7, 1998 at the Centro de Enseñanza Para Extranjeros, UNAM, Mexico City and is detailed in his publication “Comercio especulativo y colecciones del estado” in *Especulación y Patrimonio* 4 (Mexico City: UNAM/Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1997): 27-35.

74 Interview conducted by the author with Patricia Ortiz Monasterio. November 23, 1998. Mexico City.

As major arts patrons, corporations have a hand in art production. With the Monterrey Group asking select artists to create works of the Virgin for auction as mentioned above, we have an example of how elites intercede to impose themes on the work generated by artists. The state has also helped redirect art production. Beginning in the 1980s the state increased its sponsorship of national juried competitions and biennials such as those in Oaxaca and Guanajuato for young artists. Traditional themes such as the “life and myth of Diego Rivera,” the “poetry of Ramón López Velarde” (author of *La suave patria*), “maternity”, and the “discovery of America/encounter of two worlds,” undoubtedly encouraged a “Mexican look” in the art of the Neo-Mexicanist generation.⁷⁵

CONCLUSIONS

By comparing a number of Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist works that incorporate images of the Virgin of Guadalupe I have shown that there is clearly a stylistic and aesthetic dialogue between Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art. Both groups of artists look to a shared cultural and artistic heritage, among other sources; Mexican artists of the 1920s to 1940s, as well as the media have influenced their work. This analysis has shown that differences are as significant as similarities in this cross-border dialogue. The Neo-Mexicanist “style” largely depends on the incorporation of representational, identifiably Mexican imagery, as does Chicano art. Chicano artists additionally express their bi-cultural experience by combining U.S. and Mexican national symbols along with elements that pertain specifically to Chicano culture.

Neo-Mexicanists are supported by a gallery system while Chicano art continues to vie for recognition. Chicano artists, while predominately U.S. academy trained, have developed on the periphery of the art market, while Neo-Mexicanists participate in the mainstream. Chicano art that speaks to issues of self-representation and identity continues to flourish, while Neo-Mexicanist art is largely seen as a phase in Mexican art history that in the opinion of many Neo-Mexicanists, art historians, curators, and gallery directors had reached saturation by the early 1990s. Neo-Mexicanist Adolfo Patiño suggests that the movement’s demise resulted from its abandonment by art critics such as Olivier Debrouse in favor of foreign-born, Mexican resident Neo-Conceptualists such

⁷⁵ Antonio Espinoza, “La Bienal Nacional Diego Rivera” *Quinto Bienal Diego Rivera* (Mexico: Gobierno

as Sylvia Gruner, Melanie Smith, and Eugenia Vargas.⁷⁶ The movement “phased out” in the early 1990s as evidenced by the fact that the majority of artists addressed in this essay have dramatically changed stylistic and contextual directions in their artwork. Nevertheless, a few artists such as Arturo Elizondo, Dulce María Nuñez, and Nahum B. Zenil continue to work within the Neo-Mexicanist style.

It is nearly impossible to make claims of the direct influence of Chicano art on Neo-Mexicanist art, and vice versa, when the artists claim ignorance of each others’ work. Ironically, Chicano and Neo-Mexicanists have seen each others’ work without the awareness that the work is specifically “Chicano” or “Neo-Mexicanist.” For example, Yolanda M. Lopez remarked that she is unfamiliar with the work of contemporary Mexican artists. When asked if she had seen Nahum B. Zenil’s exhibition at the Mexican Museum in San Francisco in 1996, however, she recalled that she had.⁷⁷ On the other hand, a Neo-Mexicanist (who wishes to remain anonymous), while expressing unfamiliarity with Chicano art, had nevertheless seen Chicano artist Rupert García’s 1990 exhibition at the Centro Cultural de Arte Contemporáneo.⁷⁸ Georgina Quintana also expressed her unfamiliarity with Chicano art and yet she, along with Adolfo Patiño and Nahum B. Zenil among others, exhibited work beside that of Chicano artists such as Rupert García, Patssi Valdez, Alfredo de Batuc, and Ester Hernandez in the 1991-92 *Pasión por Frida* exhibition which was held at the Museo Estudio Diego Rivera in Mexico City and subsequently travelled to Tucson, Arizona.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the proof lies in the document: Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art undoubtedly exhibits a relationship that developed in a stylistically parallel manner.⁸⁰

del Estado de Guanajuato, 1992), 7-13.

76 Interview conducted by the author with Adolfo Patiño and Carla Rippey. January 4, 2000. Mexico City.

77 Telephone interview conducted by the author with Yolanda M. Lopez. November 3, 1999.

78 Telephone conversation between author and Neo-Mexicanist artist in November, 1999.

79 Telephone conversation between the author and Georgina Quintana in November, 1999.

80 Neo-Mexicanists had access to Chicano art as works by artists such as Yolanda M. Lopez, Rupert García, Yreina Cervántez, Patssi Valdez, John Valadez, Carmen Lóme Garza, and Ester Hernandez to name a few were included in exhibitions in Mexico such as those curated by Arnulfo Aquino in 1972 and 1975 at the Lotería Nacional, and in *Raíces Antiguas* (1977-79), *Através de la Frontera* (1983), *Aquí y Allá* (1989), *Tejanos Artistas Mexicano-Norteamericanos* (1990), the *Rupert García* retrospective (1991), *Pasión por Frida* (1992), and the *Art of Other Mexico* (1994), and in magazines such as the 1981 issue of *Artes Visuales*, the 1984 issue of *Fem*, and various articles in *Proceso*. Chicano artists would have seen collective and individual exhibitions by Neo-Mexicanist artists in Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and San Antonio in the late 1980s through the mid-1990s.

I have shown examples in this analysis that demonstrate that Chicano artists are more aggressive than Neo-Mexicanists in manipulating a particular national symbol, the Virgin of Guadalupe. This is not a criticism, for Neo-Mexicanist and Chicano artists are equally innovative; this phenomenon indicates the intimacy, strength, and loyalty of Neo-Mexicanist cultural ties, whereas Chicano artists, separated from their culture of origin through physical distance, have frequently transformed the Virgin's image in a politicized manner. As posited by Neo-Mexicanist and Chicano artists, it is quite plausible that a greater sense of artistic freedom in the U.S. and little or no real punitive consequences for potentially offensive imagery allows Chicanos to take greater "risks." Chicana artists such as Yolanda M. Lopez and Ester Hernandez transform the Guadalupana's image into a feminist flag, while Neo-Mexicanist artists Rocío Maldonado and Georgina Quintana, whose work has been read as commenting on the oppressed female condition, deny any such intentions.⁸¹ Julio Galán and Nahum B. Zenil deconstruct stereotypes and institutions such as *machismo* while leaving the Virgin's traditional image intact; within Javier de la Garza's *oeuvre*, on the other hand, the artist both does and does not alter the Virgin's traditional iconography. While the use of national symbols in Chicano and Neo-Mexicanist art results in varying degrees of irony, militancy, irreverence, devotion, pride, and sarcasm, without a doubt these artists share a common dialogue. The work reflects a global era in which divisions such as distance, time, space, politics, religion, sexuality, and morality begin to collapse and conflate. The Virgin of Guadalupe belongs to a transcultural patrimony; her image, and national symbols in general are not bound by borders.

⁸¹ Neither Quintana nor Maldonado claim to be or have been feminists. They favor personal expression over audience reception. When questioned various times by this author regarding symbolic or metaphoric meaning of prone female figures and the use of dolls in her work, Maldonado has explained her imagery in terms of composition or simply as objects (i.e. actual dolls) that she is drawn to. The beauty (as well as frustration for an art historian) of her unwillingness to ascribe symbolic meaning to her imagery, is that she leaves the interpretation of her work open to the viewers' discretion. Nonetheless, Maldonado disagrees with feminist readings of her work such as those by Holliday T. Day and Hollister Sturges in *Art of the Fantastic*, 184, and by Edward Sullivan "the doll stands for the concept of woman as a plaything to be manipulated, sets up a feminist polemic that has been more or less consistent in her work since that time.... Maldonado is here commenting [*The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*] on the specifically male view of eroticism—that of the woman subjugated by both sacred and profane love" in *Aspects of Contemporary Art*, 79. On the other hand, Lopez and Hernandez unequivocally assert that their work supports Chicano and feminist goals. This is also not intended as a criticism on the author's behalf, or to assert artistic and/or aesthetic superiority of one group over another, rather, it is the author's wish to point out discrepancies between artistic intention and art historical/art critical interpretation and reception.

EPILOGUE

In an unprecedented victory over the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), on July 2, 2000 opposition candidate Vicente Fox Quesada of the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) won Mexico's presidential elections thereby ending the PRI's seventy-one year hold on the presidency. May his leadership generate prosperity and peace among the Mexican populace and a healthy relationship with the nation's northern neighbor, the United States.

Abandera Fox campaña con Virgen de Guadalupe

Encabeza ex Gobernador de Guanajuato mitin ante 5 mil personas

Por Luis Alegre y Fabián Muñoz

LEÓN.- Con la Virgen de Guadalupe como estandarte, y al grito de "Viva México" y "Muera el mal gobierno", el panista Vicente Fox Quesada, saldrá de Guanajuato para recorrer el país en busca de la Presidencia de la República.

Luego de encabezar un mitin ante 5 mil panistas, Fox Quesada recibió de manos de sus hijos Paulina y Roberto un lienzo con la imagen de la Guadalupeana para que lo protaga e ilumine en su camino "hacia el cambio por México", le dijeron.

Cuestionado al final del evento sobre la portación del estandarte, el panista explicó que el uso de esa imagen es altamente representativo al salir de nuevo desde Guanajuato.

El acto, realizado en el Domo de la feria de esta ciudad, representó el cierre de campaña del ex gobernador de Guanajuato, previo a la elección interna de mañana.

El precandidato panista tomó la imagen de la Virgen y la alzó provocando la emoción de los asistentes al mitin.

Ante la pregunta de que si va a utilizar el estandarte en todos los actos públicos de campaña, Fox respondió afirmativamente.

"Ciertamente que sí. No sé si en todos los actos públicos de campaña. Me parece que fue algo de lo más significativo", dijo.

El 15 de septiembre de 1830, el cura Miguel Hidalgo inició la lucha por la independencia, acompañado de un estandarte de la Virgen de Guadalupe.

Al respecto, Fox señaló que no sería malo remitir a Miguel Hidalgo y a Francisco I. Madero, ya que son ejemplos dig-



COBIJADO... El panista Vicente Fox levanta la imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe, que usará en su lucha por obtener la Presidencia de la República en el año 2000.

FIGURE 1

PAN Presidential Candidate Vicente Fox Quesada holding the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Front page of *La Reforma*. September 11, 1999. Mexico City.



FIGURE 2

Virgin of Guadalupe Circa Seventeenth Century



FIGURE 4

Insignia Peyote y la Compañía

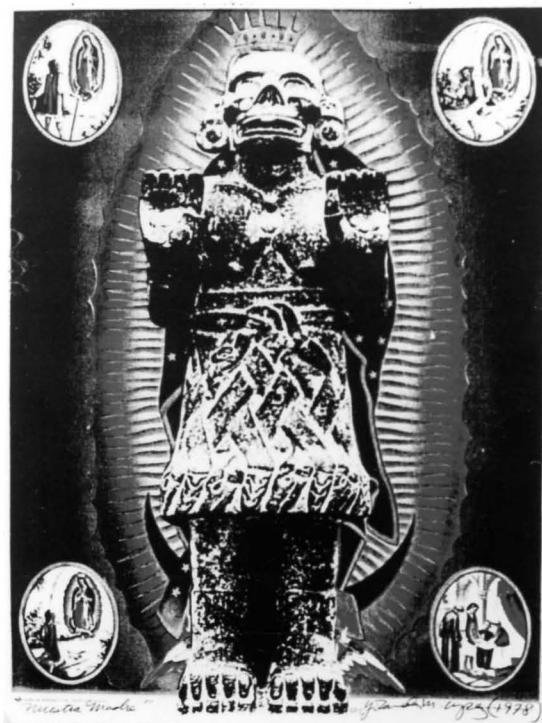


FIGURE 3

Yolanda M. Lopez, *Nuestra Madre*, 1978



FIGURE 5

Dulce María Núñez, *Piedad*, 1990



FIGURE 6
Georgina Quintana, *Juan Diego atrás*,
1992



FIGURE 7
Alfredo de Batuc, *Seven Views of City Hall*, 1987

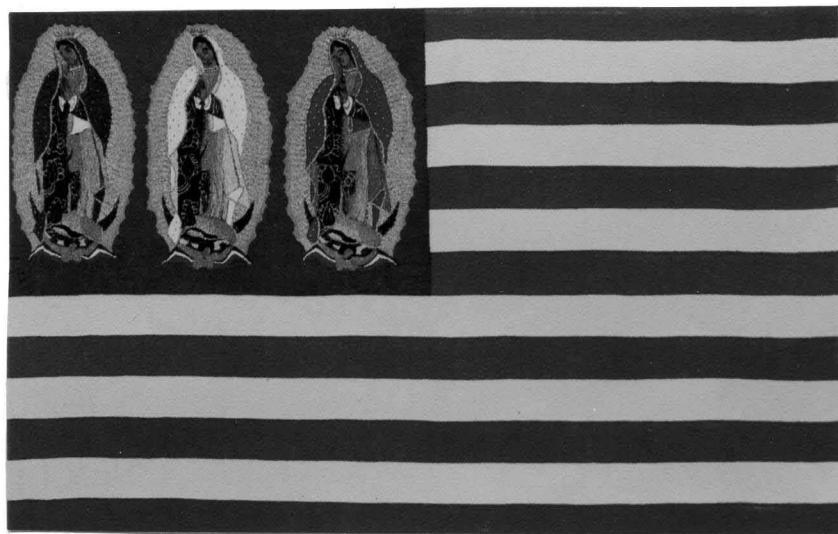


FIGURE 8 Adolfo Patiño
*Proyecto para una bandera de una colonia
Mexicana II*, Tapestry, 1987

FIGURE 9 César Martínez
Mona Lupe: The Epitome of Chicano Art,
1992





FIGURE 10 Jesús de la Helguera
Gesto Azteca, 1961, Offset (Calendar)
Col. Galas de México/Museo Soumaya



FIGURE 11 Rolando de la Rosa, *Title Unknown*
(detail)



FIGURE 12 Ester Hernandez
La Virgen de Guadalupe defendiendo los derechos de los Xicanos, ©1976



FIGURE 13 Yolanda M. Lopez
Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe, 1978



FIGURE 14 Alejandro Arango,
Juan Diego, 1988



FIGURE 16 Amado Peña
Rosa de Tepeyac, 1974

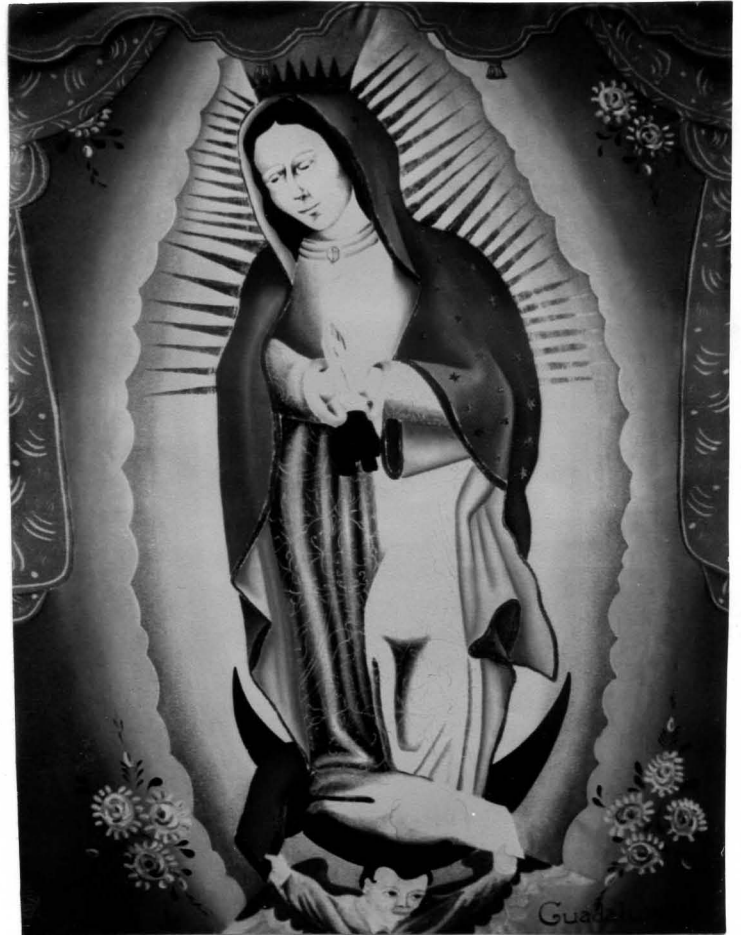


FIGURE 15 Agustín Portillo, *Virgen de Guadalupe*,
1989

FIGURE 17 Yolanda M. Lopez
Guadalupe Walking, 1978, reproduced
 on the cover of Fem Magazine, No. 34
 June-July, 1984. Mexico City.



FIGURE 18 Rocío Maldonado, *La Virgen*,
 1985





FIGURE 19 Yolanda M. Lopez, *Guadalupe Series*, 1978, reproduced in *Maize: Xicano Art and Literature Notebooks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Summer, 1978



FIGURE 20 Nahum B. Zenil, *Gracias Virgencita de Guadalupe*, 1988



FIGURE 21 Nahum B. Zenil, *Gracias Virgencita de Guadalupe*, 1984

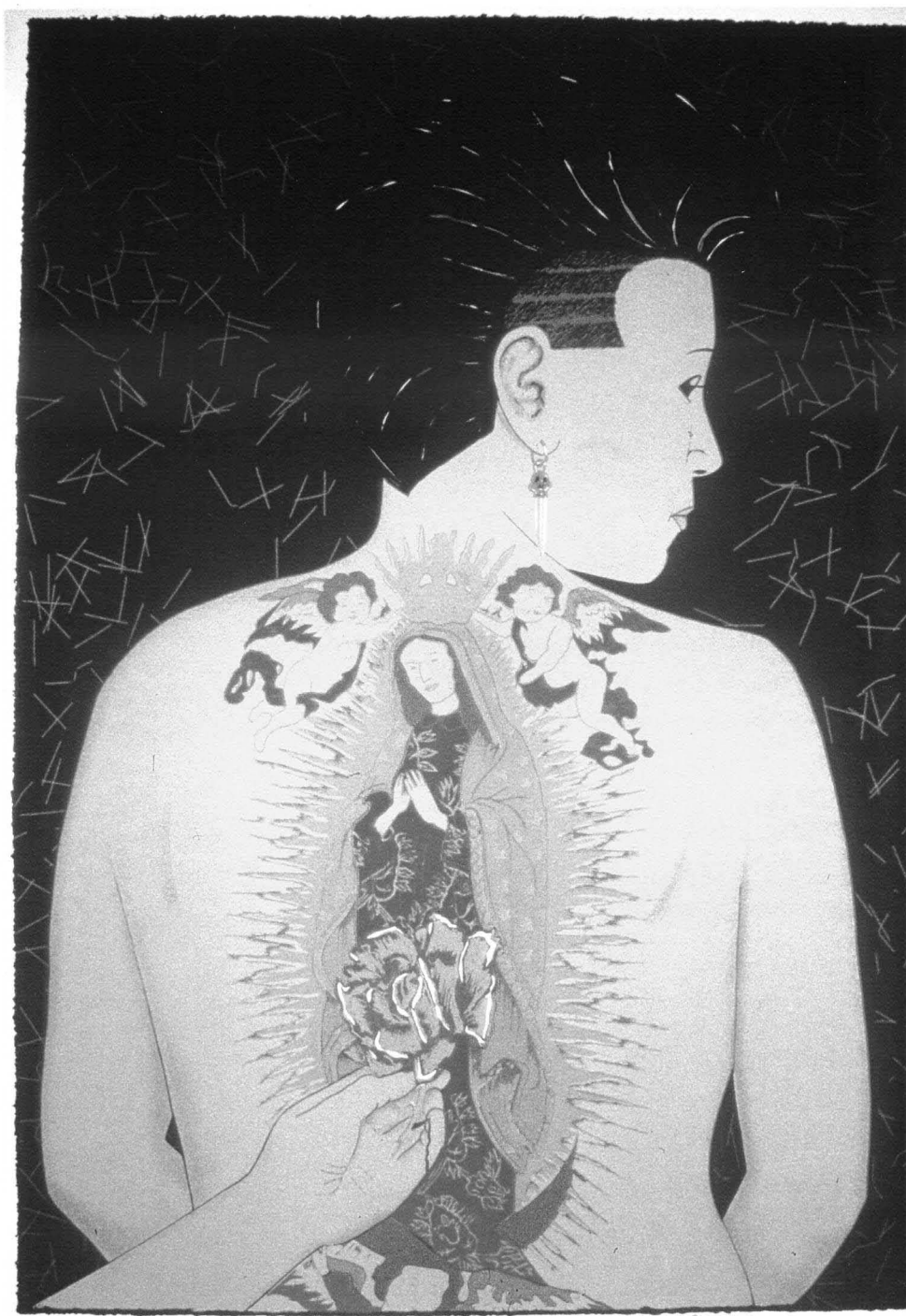


FIGURE 22 Ester Hernandez, *La Ofrenda*, ©1990

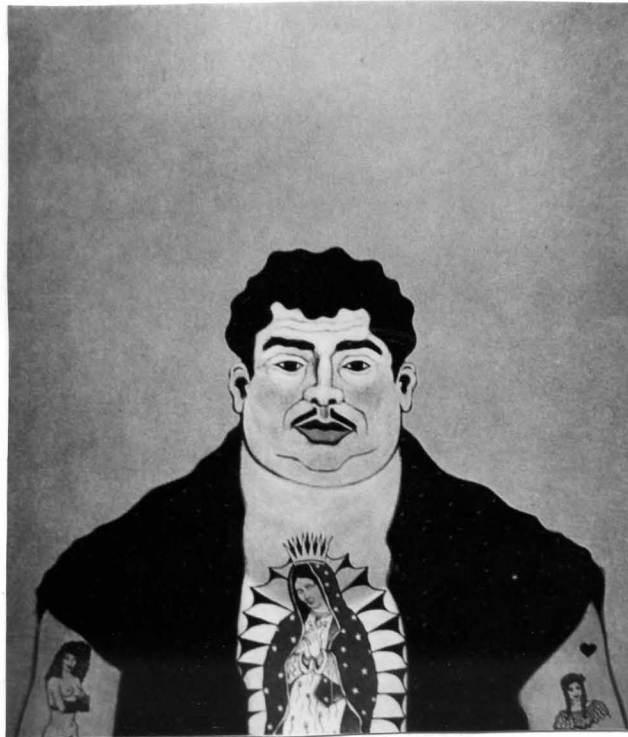


FIGURE 23 César Martínez,
Hombre que le gustan las mujeres, @1986



FIGURE 24 Javier de la Garza,
Aparición de la papaya, 1990



FIGURE 25 Mita Cuarón,
Virgen de las sandías, 1986



FIGURE 26 Julio Galán
Virgen de Guadalupe, 1990

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