Chicano and Latino Artists in the Pacific Northwest

Exhibit Catalog
Reformatted for use on the Chicano/Latino Archive Web site at The Evergreen State College

www.evergreen.edu/library/chicanolatino
Chicano and Latino Artists in the Pacific Northwest

A touring exhibition and catalog, with interpretive historical and cultural materials, featuring recent work of nine contemporary artists and essays by five humanist scholars.

This project was produced at The Evergreen State College with primary funding support from the Washington Commission for the Humanities and the Washington State Arts Commission.

Preliminary research for this arts and humanities project was carried out in 1982 with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Exhibiting Artists

Cecilia Alvarez
Alfredo Arreguín
Arturo Artorez
Paul Berger
Eduardo Calderón
José E. Orantes
José Reynoso
José Luís Rodríguez
Rubén Trejo

Contributing Authors

Lauro Flores
Erasmo Gamboa
Pat Matheny-White
Sid White
Tomás Ybarra-Frausto

Contents ©1984
Introduction and Acknowledgements

The *Chicano and Latino Artists in the Pacific Northwest* project is the first effort to develop a major touring exhibition presenting works by Pacific Northwest Chicano and Latino artists. This project also features a catalog and other interpretive materials which describe the society and culture of Chicano/Latino people who have lived in this region for generations, and the popular and public art that has expressed the heritage, struggles and aspirations of this community.

The *Chicano and Latino Artists* exhibit and catalog is the result of almost three years of research and planning which produced new information in areas of scholarship that have suffered long neglect. This groundbreaking work was carried out in close consultation with scholars, artists and community leaders in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, Texas, and Illinois.

Authors of the catalog essays, who served as key participants in the project as researchers and planners, were Lauro Flores, Director of El Centro de Estudios Chicanos, University of Washington; Erasmo Gamboa, University of Washington historian; Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Stanford University humanist; Pat Matheny-White, Arts and Humanities faculty librarian at The Evergreen State College; and Sid White, member of the faculty and Director of Evergreen Galleries, The Evergreen State College. Consultants who reviewed the catalog essays were Shifra Goldman, Santa Ana College/University of Southern California art historian and art critic, and Victor Sorell, Art Historian and Chairman of the Art Department, Chicago State University.

During the first phase of this project, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1982, primary field research was completed to identify artists’ public and personal work, and to gather information on social, cultural and demographic patterns in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Materials developed in the NEH project included a demographic study by Gamboa, an unpublished social history of artists by Ybarra-Frausto, and a survey of public and personal artistic production by White and Matheny-White. Gamboa’s and White/Matheny-White’s studies were published in the 1983 issue of *Metamorfosis: Northwest Chicano Magazine of Art and Culture*.

Funding support from a variety of sources has been provided for the *Chicano and Latino Artists* project, with primary grant support for the catalog and exhibit awarded by the Washington Commission for the Humanities and the Washington State Arts Commission. Three other agencies, the King County Arts Commission, the Idaho Commission for the Arts and the Spokane Arts Commission, provided funding for Eduardo Calderón to photograph the exhibiting artists in their working environments. The Idaho Commission for the Arts also provided support for curatorial work, including consultation by José Luís Rodríguez.

Special acknowledgement is made to Bob Haft, The Evergreen State College Library Slide Curator (field photography); Brad Clemmons, College Senior Graphic Designer (design of catalog and interpretive panels) and Evergreen student interns Greg Skei (graphic design assistant) and Sandra Riccolo (curatorial assistant).

Appreciation is expressed, on behalf of the nine artists and the five scholars who are key participants in the Chicano and Latino Artists project, for the support that has been provided by so many individuals and organizations.

Sid White, Project Director/Curator
(Currently Faculty Emeritus, The Evergreen State College)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction and Acknowledgments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical/Cultural Background</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Two Hundred Year Presence</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicano and Other Latin American Artists in the Pacific Northwest</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>by Lauro Flores</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Social Portrait</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicano and Latino People of the Pacific Northwest</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>by Erasmo Gamboa</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chicano Culture</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Life in the Pacific Northwest</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Developments</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Regional Overview</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicano and Latino Artists in the Pacific Northwest in the 1970’s and 1980’s</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>by Sid White and Pat Matheny-White</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine Contemporary Artists</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia Alvarez</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfredo Arreguín</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arturo Artorez</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Berger</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo Calderón</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José E. Orantes</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Reynoso</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Luís Rodríguez</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubén Trejo</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits and Bibliography</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contrary to commonly held views, the artistic activity of people of Mexican descent and other Hispanics is not a recent phenomenon in the Pacific Northwest. After the conquest and consolidation of power in Mexico (New Spain), the Spanish crown began to make incursions first into Northern California and then further north, with the express purpose of occupying the territories she had claimed in 1493 under the papal bull of Alexander VI. While the first exploration voyages to the Northwest took place as early as 1774, the more important expeditions were undertaken during the last decade of the eighteenth century: Malaspina, 1791; Bodega y Quadra, 1792; and Alcalá Galiano-Valdés, 1792.

In accord with the scientific interests of Spain—as part of this nation's often overlooked participation in the Enlightenment of the 18th century—detailed documentation of the newly discovered lands was a primary task of the expeditionary parties. This endeavor was accomplished not only in a narrative form, but also through the utilization of charts, sketches and drawings. For this purpose, many scientists, technicians and artists were recruited as members of the expeditions. Best known among the latter are Spanish-born Tomás Súria and José Cardero, both of whom accompanied Malaspina in his 1791 visit to the Nootka Sound and compiled a vast amount of graphic data depicting the landscape, the Spanish vessels and settlements, and the garments, utensils, buildings and art of the natives. Cardero also participated in the Alcalá Galiano-Valdés trip the following year.

Similarly, José Mariano Moziño, a brilliant physician-naturalist born in Temascaltepec, Mexico, was commissioned by Dr. Martín de Sesse y Lacasta—director of the Royal Scientific Expedition to New Spain—to participate in the Bodega y Quadra exploration of the Nootka Sound in order to conduct a survey of the flora and fauna of the area. Along with his commission, Moziño received instructions to take as his assistant “the best artist he could find.” Accordingly, Moziño chose Anastasio Echeverría y Godoy, an artist he had met while attending the Royal Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City, and with his aid collected an enormous amount of information upon arriving at Nootka.

Spanish galleons such as plied the Manila-Acapulco route in the seventeenth-century.
Given the nature of such projects and the immediate objectives of their mission, the drawings and sketches made by Echeverría and others like him are usually regarded as “technical” works and their artistic value is either entirely denied or glossed over. Nonetheless, some commentators have attempted to make a fair assessment not only of the scientific importance of these men’s endeavors but also their aesthetic qualities. In 1803, for example, the famous Baron Alexander von Humboldt made the following statement regarding Moziño’s and Echeverría’s activities at Nootka:

*The distinguished doctor José Moziño and Señor Echeverría, painter of plants and animals and whose works can compete with the most perfect which Europe has produced of this class (of artist), were both born in New Spain and both occupy a very distinguished place among learned persons and artists without having left their native country.1.*

Upon completion of this assignment, Echeverría, returned to Mexico where he was appointed Second Director of Painting at the San Carlos Academy in 1804.

Although the history of Chicano and other Latin American art in the Northwest is a puzzle yet to be assembled as a whole, it is difficult to imagine anybody conceiving that no artworks were produced by these groups between the arrival of the first explorers and the more solid formation of a Chicano community in the region after World War II. For the most part, however, this information has not been gathered. Some facts are beginning to be documented now but, in the main, lack of interest and biased views have made the powers that be ignore even some of the most important examples.

Salient in this puzzle and yet not widely known, is *The Struggle Against Racial Discrimination*, a mural originally painted in 1945 by Pablo O’Higgins under a commission of Seattle’s Local 541 of the Shipscalers, Dry Dock and Miscellaneous Boat Yard Workers Union. A United States citizen by birth, but Mexican by choice, O’Higgins moved to Mexico at age twenty and studied there under the guidance of Diego Rivera, one of the great masters of twentieth century muralism. By the time he was called to paint *La Lucha Contra la Discriminación Racial*, O’Higgins was already an internationally recognized figure.

Currently housed at the University of Washington, the O’Higgins mural remained hidden and almost forgotten for nearly twenty years (1955-1975), first because of the pressures of the infamous McCarthy era and then out of mere institutional negligence, until the impetus of the Chicano Movement forced its restoration and vindication. This was a small but important step, indeed, toward recognizing the cultural heritage and artistic contributions of Chicanos and Latinos in the Pacific Northwest.

With the social reforms brought about by the effervescence of the Chicano Movement in the 1970’s a large number of fresh artistic works were produced: murals, sculptures, portraits, posters, etc. Murals, because of their nature, predominated and were, quite literally, most visible. Naturally, then, upon being referred to as “Chicano Art” or “Latino Art” of the Northwest, uninformed persons tend to think exclusively of these works and of this particular epoch. The phenomenon of Chicano art, however, overflows such historical boundaries, as has already been suggested. Taking into account the vast—and for the most part anonymous—production of objects generally relegated to a position of lesser importance and labeled as “crafts” or popular arts,” (e.g. piñatas, home altars, clothing embroidery, religious artifacts), the continuum of Chicano/Latino art becomes even more evident.
The panorama of excitement and profuse activity that prevailed among Chicanos during the 70’s has changed drastically in the 80’s. Social programs and agencies—such as the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) and Northwest Rural Opportunities (NRO)—which facilitated the painting of murals and the assumption of similar projects during the previous decade are now confronted with either financial cutbacks to total elimination. In the academic arena the situation for the arts and humanities is alarming, and the pattern demonstrates that these are generally the areas under most serious attack. The negative repercussions of the current economic crisis have spread and are felt across the United States: Chicano art of the Northwest is no exception.

It is interesting to notice that the production of “public” artworks (especially murals) has diminished substantially during the current decade. Instead, Chicano and Latino artists seem to be channeling their attention and energy into the production of what can be termed as “private” art (ceramic sculpture, drawings, small watercolors and oils, etc.). The relationship between the social conditions and the artistic creation is painfully clear in this case: Financial and space restrictions seem to determine the type of projects that artists conduct. In a parallel manner, the thematic content of recent works (even though it varies from artist to artist) has also shifted. In general, the social images (farm laborers, Zapata, Villa, Che Guevara, and other revolutionary figures) and cultural motifs (calaveras, pre-Columbian deities, the Virgen de Guadalupe, etc.) that prevailed in the murals and other “public” works during the 70’s, seem to have been cast aside giving way to more abstract and subjective compositions.

Beyond pinpointing the effects of the crisis and the radical change of social conditions, one is tempted to believe that part of the explanation for this situation may lie in the fact that some of the most influential of the Movimiento artists (notably Pedro Rodríguez and Daniel Desiga—both with an immediate working-class background) have left the region. Some of the more recent arrivals, on the other hand, are professionally trained artists and have a middle-class background. Their consciousness, one might think in a mechanical manner, could be somewhat different. Perhaps the change is due to the circumstances: Their consciousness was not formed in the environment of the Chicano Movement. A complete assessment of this complex problem, however, must take into account many other factors. For example, the ebb and change of character that the Chicano Movement has undergone in recent years and the ineptitude of the local “Movement leaders” in dealing with these artists, thus failing to incorporate them into the struggle around social and political issues.

It is important to notice that even the newcomers, with few exceptions, have had a difficult time achieving acceptance into the sacred inner circle of mainstream art in the Northwest. Thus, even they complain about the limitations they confront due to the lack of space, materials and other resources. In addition, most of these artists express anguish and dissatisfaction because they feel pressed to mold their works according to the “fashions” and criteria imposed by galleries and the general conditions of the art market. Otherwise, they face the alternative to either remain anonymous and poor, or else to betray their vocation and do a different type of work in order to survive. These predicaments, needless to say, are not exclusive to the Chicano or the Latino artist. Nonetheless, the traditional patterns making up the social fabric of this country, the disregard and at times contempt for Chicano and other minority artistic endeavors, compound the problem in this case.
Yet, not everything is absolutely negative. Artistic energy, talent and quality abound in the Northwest, and once in a while a ray of hope shines through. The long process of Chicano, Mexican and other Hispanic artistic activity in the Pacific Northwest moves forward with events such as the *Chicano and Latino Artists* exhibition and the recent commission of Arturo Artorez (whose work is also represented in this exhibit) to paint perhaps the largest mural ever in the history of Seattle. Almost two hundred years after the visit of his countryman Anastasio Echeverría y Godoy, Artorez (also an alumnus of the San Carlos Academy) continues to contribute to the development and quality of the Latino artistic heritage in the Pacific Northwest.

The cultural richness of the Northwest has grown tremendously during the last decade with the influx and participation of Central and South American artists, many of whom have been forced to leave their native lands due to precarious circumstances. These artists are endowing the Latino culture of the region with new experiences and perspectives which will eventually crystallize in a true internationalist expression.

From the few examples mentioned above, one could infer that historically Mexico has been the main source of artists and artistic material nurturing the activity of Latinos in the Northwest. This has been true to a major degree. The rich tradition of Mexico, from pre-Columbian times to 20th century muralism and other revolutionary art, has been continuously carried to this region. This has been done directly, by artists who come to reside permanently or temporarily in the Northwest, as well as indirectly, by the many immigrants coming from Texas, California, and other parts of the Southwest. As pointed out earlier, the images and motifs utilized in the “public” artworks of the 1970’s illustrate this fact quite well. Yet, it must be emphasized, this process does not constitute a mechanical “importation” of art or artistic themes. The new environment, as a new source of inspiration, naturally affects the sensibility of the artists. Thus, elements become conjugated into what properly could be termed Latino art of the Northwest.


Arturo Artorez, study for a mural project being funded by the City of Seattle and The Edwards on Fifth Partnership, with the sponsorship of the Downtown Seattle Association, 1984.
People of Mexican and Latin American ancestry are no strangers in the Pacific Northwest. As Lauro Flores has already pointed out, their history begins when the first ships departed from Mexico to explore the territory north of Alta-California as early as 1774. Then, during the 19th century, distance and political boundaries notwithstanding, Mexicans, Chileans, and other Latin Americans, continued to arrive as miners, cattlemen, laborers, and others on board merchant ships.

Following the apogee of the early phase of Mexican immigration during the 1920’s, enough people resided in Washington State so that it ranked 29th in 1930 in the number of Mexican residents. After the Great Depression, the Second World War saw thousands of Mexican nationals and Mexican-American migratory farm workers reach the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. During these years, the foundations for the present Chicano communities were set. Now, two hundred and ten years after the first voyages from Mexico, the 1980 census has noted that the Chicano-Latino population is the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority group in the region. Yet, the following is often raised by many persons: “Are there really that many Chicanos or Latinos in the region?”

According to the last census count, 222,434 “Hispanics” live in the three Northwestern states. Washington has the largest number, 119,986, placing the state 14th in the nation in the number of Hispanic inhabitants; Oregon follows with approximately 65,833 and Idaho with 36,615 (see Table 11). The census indicates that persons of Mexican ancestry make up approximately 70 percent of all Latinos, but several demographic studies indicate that 86 percent or higher is more accurate, the remainder being other Latin Americans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>Percentage of Hispanic Population By State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total of Spanish Origin</td>
<td>Origin: Mexican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Percentage Increase of Hispanics 1970-1980 by State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>18,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>34,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>70,734</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is the case in other parts of the United States, the composite group is expanding at a phenomenal rate. Nationally, the Spanish-speaking population grew by 61 percent between 1970 and 1980. Idaho and Oregon, however, nearly doubled their population during the same period. Washington grew at a slower rate, but nonetheless, it also exceeded the national rate (see Table 11).
The large percentage increases noted above invite discussion because alarmists have raised the spectre of a possible “latinization” of the United States, and an “uncontrollable tide” of “Latin Americans that are taking over.” This public outcry by the mass media has turned the presence of Latinos in the United States into a highly political issue that has worked to distort the different groups’ histories. This is especially true in places like the Northwest where the English, Scandinavian and Canadian heritages are well known but not the heritage of Spanish-speaking residents. Here, too many people are led to believe that Chicanos and Latinos are ahistorical and that immigration is the sole cause for the high population increases.

In reality, this is hardly the case. Nearly 90 percent of all Latinos permanently residing in the Pacific Northwest are native-born citizens of the United States and only 10 percent are foreign born residents. Of the citizenry, approximately 50 percent were born in the Northwest and the other half have migrated from out-of-state. This suggests that the Latinos have been in the Northwest for some time or recently arrived from other states—but they are not necessarily legal or illegal immigrants. Most of the recent population growth has been due to natural increases, out-of-area migration, and a better count in 1980 as compared to earlier federal census polls. Political and social factors in Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and other South American countries, Cuba, Central America, have also contributed to some of the growth of the Latino population in the Pacific Northwest.

The fact that Mexican-Americans are long-time residents and numerous, in fact a majority population in some communities of the Pacific Northwest, is a perfect example. In the rural community of Granger during the post World War II period, some 800 migratory Mexican-Americans resided in one farm labor camp alone, while the entire town barely had 700 people.

This pattern of concentration in the rural areas has not changed appreciably; most of the population still lives where it settled in the 1950’s, although a rural to urban demographic shift has been underway since the early 1970’s (see map, page 10).

This highly visible Latino population is an inviting target for businessmen and politicians, but the majority occupy a disadvantaged socio-economic position. In Washington, one out of three families earns less than $10,000 per year, just slightly above the federal government’s established poverty level of $7,412 for a family of four. The same can be said of the population in the other two Northwestern states.

The recent political advances made by Latino voters in other parts of the United States have not been duplicated in the Northwest. Even in areas where they are near or actually constitute the majority, Latinos have not been able to achieve commensurate recognition through political appointees or true representation by electing members of their community to important political offices. The reason for the political vacuum is that, although Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group, they still make up less than 3 percent of the total state population in Oregon and Washington, and 3.9 percent in Idaho (see Table 1). Moreover, most of the population is of low socio-economic status and is located in the rural areas away from the centers of political power.
The culture of Latinos in the Pacific Northwest is of special interest because, until recently, it was perceived as synonymous with Chicanos. This is still true today but only in the rural areas of eastern Oregon and Washington, and southern Idaho where the majority of Chicanos reside. The recent influx of South Americans into urban areas, small as it is, has added a new mix of food, idioms and traditions to an otherwise predominantly Mexican rooted culture.

Today, it is not too difficult to find mangos, fresh nopales, menudo, chile pequin, alongside religious icons and the latest foto-novelas from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Most towns have one or more panaderias tortillerias, and Spanish liturgy and hymns are heard from Caldwell, Idaho, to Seattle, Washington. Throughout most of the region, radio stations broadcast in Spanish the latest public commentary and news, as well as ethnic music. Visual artists, poets, and musicians, who are becoming recognized at a regional and national level, together with the community as a whole, are doing much to foment the popular culture of Latinos in the Pacific Northwest.

In sum, although the Latino communities in the Northwest lack the cultural ambiance of Los Angeles, El Paso or Chicago, their presence has added much to the cultural plurality and the mosaic of peoples of the Pacific Northwest.

Concentration of Chicanos in Selected Northwestern Localities – 1980

Today, it is not too difficult to find mangos, fresh nopales, menudo, chile pequin, alongside religious icons and the latest foto-novelas from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Most towns have one or more panaderias tortillerias, and Spanish liturgy and hymns are heard from Caldwell, Idaho, to Seattle, Washington. Throughout most of the region, radio stations broadcast in Spanish the latest public commentary and news, as well as ethnic music. Visual artists, poets, and musicians, who are becoming recognized at a regional and national level, together with the community as a whole, are doing much to foment the popular culture of Latinos in the Pacific Northwest.

In sum, although the Latino communities in the Northwest lack the cultural ambiance of Los Angeles, El Paso or Chicago, their presence has added much to the cultural plurality and the mosaic of peoples of the Pacific Northwest.
“We heard the tale of Washington—that there was lots of money, that they paid real well, and we thought about coming to Washington. We didn’t have a car to travel in and this man, Eduardo Salinas, used to contract people and we came with him. We didn’t have much money, we paid him $25.00 for us and $15.00 for each of the children. This was the first time we had traveled. This man said that he had housing and everything for the people, but it wasn’t true. We left the 13th of March of 1946 and arrived in Toppenish the 18th. On the road the truck broke down—who knows how many times. In Utah we had to stay overnight because the road was snowed in and we couldn’t travel—we all slept sitting up with the little ones in our arms because we had no money to rent a motel. We were about twenty-five people in the truck, plus the suitcases and blankets and a mattress spread out inside, and some tires—we looked like sardines. Then a heavy wind came and the tarp on the truck tore in half. They tied it as best they could—and the snow falling. We finally got out of the snow and then the driver lost his way—we almost turned over. But God is powerful and he watched over us—we got finally to Toppenish. He didn’t have housing—nothing—all lies that he told us. He finally found some old shacks, all full of knotholes, in Brownstown—about twenty miles outside of Toppenish—and in tents he placed all the people. It was bitterly cold—with wood stoves and wet wood.”

1936 photograph of Sra. Irene Castañeda taken in Crystal City, Texas, ten years before she came with her husband and children to work as agricultural laborers in Washington State. The harsh experiences faced by Sra. Castañeda and her children are described in a letter she wrote to her daughter, Antonia, in the late 1960’s. Sra. Castañeda retrospectively recalled the adverse conditions faced by Mexican workers in the region during the decade of the 1940’s. Her epistle evoked the collective experience of thousands of Mexican families who came to the Northwest seeking employment and ultimately settled here to form the nucleus of today’s Chicano presence.

Photograph courtesy of the Castañeda family.
Chicano Culture

Everyday Life in the Pacific Northwest

Tomás Ybarra-Frausto

As a bond of culture, the historical experience of migratory labor is an essential thread in the fabric of Mexican cultural customs and traditions persisting to this day in isolated rural areas of central Washington, the Willamette Valley in Oregon and southern Idaho.

Traditionally, Chicanos maintained themselves in family kinship groups. It was la familia that established a core base of security and identity for individuals. Beyond the nuclear family, workers were linked as a united parentela (extended family) sharing a common language and systems of belief, attitudes and values.

In the farm labor camps and rural agricultural towns, diverse aspects of folk knowledge and tradition were practiced and sustained. Customarily, there was a curandero(a) (folk healer) adept in the venerable art of sobar (massage) and wise in the ancient rites for healing susto (fright), empacho (surfeit), mal de ojo (evil-eye) and a host of other serious maladies that everyone affirmed could be neither diagnosed nor treated by conventional medical practitioners.

The unrelieved monotony and back-breaking work in the fields was broken now and then by simple pleasures. In summer, the making of raspa (snow cones) produced by hand shaving blocks of ice and tinting the crushed ice with homemade syrups of various flavors such as pineapple, mint or strawberry was a feast for the eye and the palate.

Periodically, open air dances would be held. Usually an empty patch of ground would be watered down to pack the dirt, a phonograph would be brought out, and soon the liltting strains of a polka or the stately rhythm of a bolero would waft through the air inviting all the workers to an impromptu dance.

Invariably, someone in the group would be singled out as a favored platicador (conversationalist), one who could improvise a tale, recount a myth, re-tell a movie or simply recall como eran las cosas más antes (how things were back when). Through oral presentation, traditional lore and native traditions were maintained.

Aside from the family, la iglesia (the Roman Catholic Church) has been a vital source of cultural sustenance. Though not all Chicanos are Catholic or like-minded believers, the Church, nevertheless, conserves many rituals and celebrations of the community. In infancy and early childhood, rites include bautismo (baptism), confirmación (confirmation) and primera comunión (first holy communion). Each calls for a family celebration and the preparation of festive traditional foods. The religious rites serve also to extend the family unit through compadrazgo (ritual co-parenthood).

The Catholic Church also serves prominently as a purveyor of artistic traditions. Its ceremonial liturgy, elaborate altars and visual representations of holy personages have all shaped a Chicano aesthetic sensibility. Catholic religious iconography is readily available in inexpensive color lithographed prints (estampas) and statuary of various materials. Functioning as visual narratives, estampas recount the life and legends of a great number of saints. Each household selects from the holy pantheon those saints which it deems particularly efficacious for display and devotion.
There is always someone in the community who can interpret the pictorial story of the estampas and point out the meaning of these saints particular attributes; i.e. those objects or incidents closely associated with them by conventional usage. Through their constant presence as common objects of veneration, the holy images represented in the humble estampas have become intimate and habitual members of many Chicano households.

Although isolated in farms and small towns, by the 1950’s, workers had access to crossroad tienditas (general mercantile stores) that served as communal gathering places. Such emporiums, initially Anglo owned and operated, stocked Mexican food products, religious goods, Spanish language books, periodicals and records, as well as medicinal herbs and specific cultural items like guitars and sarapes. While selling essential articles of material culture, the tienditas also functioned as significant centers for ethnic contact and communication.

In the remote backwoods environment of the Pacific Northwest, rather static manifestations of popular Mexican culture survived. Mexican patriotic holidays were marked with commemorative events. Oral tradition was upheld in the singing and composition of corridos, (ballads), the trinity of corn, beans and chili were food staples and there was strong sentiment against agabachamiento (assimilation into the dominant culture). New arrivals from Mexico and the Southwest reinforced the speaking of Spanish and emphasized collectivist and communitarian traditions. While functional cultural practices become bases for socialization and were sources of group comfort, they could not, however, ameliorate dismal social conditions and bleak economic realities.

Following World War II, the process of urbanization became a watershed experience for Northwest Chicanos. The demographic shift, however, had minor effect on low economic and social status. As former migratory workers “settled out” in metropolitan centers, their numbers were insufficient for the establishment of traditional barrios (neighborhoods). While most ethnic groups in the Northwest live in identifiable concentrated areas, Chicanos had not formed residential enclaves, but were dispersed throughout cities. Chicanos in the decade of the 1950’s depended on the church, social clubs and occasional collective celebrations to bring them together.

*El Niño de Atocha, color offset, n.d., 10 x 8 in.*
Courtesy of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto

This representation of the Holy Child dates back to the Moorish invasion of the town of Atocha, Spain. Legend tells how the Moors had routed the Spaniards in battle condemning all the survivors to prison.

One day, a child dressed as a pilgrim appeared at the prison. He wore a pilgrim’s cloak, and plumed hat and carried a basket, a staff and a gourd of water. He was admitted to the prison, and even after he had served all the prisoners, the basket and gourd were still full. Through this miracle, the Spaniards were able to regain their strength and later overthrow the Moors.

The Child of Atocha is a patron for freeing prisoners. He performs miraculous deeds for people in danger, especially travelers. He is especially venerated by those who travel to unknown regions. As a symbol of pilgrimage, the wandering of the Niño de Atocha parallel the migratory experience of Northwest Chicanos.
In Seattle, fiestas familiares (house parties) were an early indication of group cohesion. Invitations to such gatherings were by word-of-mouth and extended to old friends and recent acquaintances. Held in private homes, the fiestas familiares offered a chance for socializing, dancing and the savoring of Mexican antojitos (festive foods). Through these communal receptions, the isolation of the city was broken, a positive cultural identity was nurtured, and newcomers were integrated into the more established local mejicano community. Such unstructured social events set the stage for later organizational efforts.

Spanish language radio has been a crucial conduit of cultural sustenance since the mid-1950’s. Programming in Spanish has been available on an intermittent basis, perhaps an hour in the early morning or for several hours once a week. Typically, programs had names like La Hora Mexicana, La Voz del Pueblo or Alma Chicana. Formats have varied, but broadcasts generally included musical and news segments together with information about local raza (Spanish-speaking community) events. Calling in to dedicate a song to friends or relatives to honor their birthday or their día de santo (saint’s day) is a characteristic feature. Special broadcasts observing traditional holidays like Mother’s Day or Las Fiestas Patrias (Mexican Independence Day) played decisive roles in the retention of ethnic pride, cultural awareness and communal solace. As of 1975 Radio Cadena (KDNA) located in Granger, Washington, has had 24 hours of Spanish language broadcasting.

Social clubs like El Club Latino founded in Seattle in 1958 became principal catalysts for consolidating the geographically scattered urban Spanish-speaking population. Through sponsorship of dinners, “get togethers” and especially bailes (dances), El Club Latino was vital in unifying the Puget Sound’s mejicano community at a time when no other voluntary associations existed. Although strictly a social organization, El Club Latino coalesced and gave cultural nourishment to many recent arrivals to the city. It served as a precursor of future group mobilizations. Shifting from a social and recreational thrust, later organizations would stress cultural awareness and become incipient arenas for political action.

Across time, the signifying system of cultural practices, through which communal social codes are communicated, reproduced and experienced, continue to revolve around the institutions of la familia and la iglesia. Familial and religious rites are fused in such traditions as la quinceañera (commemoration of a young woman’s fifteenth birthday). This important rite of passage is generally marked by a mass of thanksgiving for the honoree and her court of fifteen attendants, followed by an elaborate family feast and a communal dance.

Within the home, culturally expressive craftwork has varied yet persistent manifestations. Although there is no significant quilting tradition among Chicana women, embroidery, crocheting and tatting are long standing. Almost every piece of material from kitchen drying cloths to towels and pillowcases is embellished with piquitos y bordados (crocheted points and embroidery). There is a meticulous concern to personalize and beautify the most mundane objects of daily use. Varied forms of needlework were perpetuated by costureras (seamstresses) who not only created clothes to special order but were especially skilled at designing, cutting and sewing wedding gowns and the outfits for bridesmaids, communion and quinceañera celebrations. The highly specialized art of making ramos (bouquets) and coronas de azahar (waxed orange blossom headpieces) has been conserved by a few costureras in the region.
A significant vernacular art tradition deriving from church practice is the creation of home altars. In the Northwest, altares are not as common as in the Southwest. Nonetheless, they are not unusual components in Mexican-American homes. Altares serve as private shrines for personal meditation. They can be arranged on a table top, on top of the radio or television set or on a wall shelf generally in the bedroom. Combining traditional Christian elements like votive candies and icons of saints with more personal accumulations of objects such as family photographs, souvenirs and momentos, altares are the focus of interaction between the terrestrial family and its celestial counterpart. They are the sacred space where the prayers and supplications of the household are interceded by the appropriate saints. Usually the altar is dedicated to a saint particularly venerated by the individual who creates it. Altares encompass both a religious and esthetic function. Uniting traditional and innovative aspects, they embody the true essence of vernacular expression.

Doña Juanita Barrón and her granddaughter Juanita are posed next to the traditional bedroom altar maintained by Sra. Barrón in her Seattle residence.
Although detached from major centers of Chicano artistic production such as California and Texas, the visual artists, craftsmen and authors of the Northwest established in the 1960’s informal networks of communication with the national Chicano art movement. Delegations of teatristas (theatre workers) visited and attended workshops given by the Teatro Campesino in California, while the RCAF (Rebel Chicano Art Front) in Sacramento sent caravans of trained muralists to nurture and sustain a growing public art movement in Idaho, Washington and Oregon. Concurrently, local authors traveled to the various Flor y Canto (Chicano literary-artistic festivals) held throughout the country.

Local artists were able to integrate into their thinking and artistic production prevalent ideas arising within the national Chicano art movement on the role and social functions of art. Key assumptions included the idea of the artist as a cultural worker concerned and responsive to the social needs of his or her community as well as being responsible to the technical demands of the craft. Artistic hierarchies were seen as artificial and classbound, and the artist was encouraged to integrate such categories as “popular” and “elite” art. Public art forms like posters, murals and political graphics as well as more subjective personal expressions were both seen as transcendent. A common premise was that the bicultural reality of Chicano life would provide human universal themes. While the imagination was by doctrine anchored to the lived historical reality, artists could still freely explore and express personal visions.

Within such guidelines, numerous cultural organizations were formed to mine the vibrant cultural heritage of Northwest Chicanos; a group that was heterogeneous in the process of urbanization, and within which traditional patterns of language, food and family were in the process of modification. Validating diverse cultural options, the art groups united to underscore cultural resistance and the safeguard of identity.

Beyond the birth of performing groups like folklórico dance troupes and musical ensembles, the late 1960’s saw the development of cultural centers. Unlike regions of the Southwest where centros culturales were often catalysts for the production of art, in the Northwest, centros functioned primarily as community social service agencies.

El Centro Chicano Cultural established in the fertile agricultural region of the Willamette Valley between Woodburn and Gervais, Oregon, in 1969 is characteristic. Incorporated as “a non-profit intercultural communications center,” it sought to preserve and create an awareness of Chicano heritage among Chicanos themselves, and to promote relationships between them and the general Oregon community. Although self-help activities and community mobilizations around social issues occurred, the dominant thrust was to use culture as a rallying point for ethnic cohesion and solidarity. The goal of cultural pluralism becomes an operative aim of many centros.

Apart from the centros, informal gatherings of visual and literary artists unite and motivate them to mount art exhibits, sponsor dances and musical performances, give poetry recitals and create outlets to publish and disseminate their work. Periodicals like La Voz Chicana (Idaho), Metamorfosis (Seattle), and Nostros (Oregon), serve to articulate the social and artistic goals of local raza artists.
A Northwest sensibility is discernible in the literary expression of writers like Rubén Rangel, Mercedes Fernández, Jesús Maldonado, Yvonne Yarbro Bejarano, Leo Cervantes, Raúl Salinas and Arnaldo García. Poetry is especially infused with elements rooted in the regional landscape. The fog, enveloping rain and the grandeur of the mountains, forests and waterways generate persistent themes and imagery. An acute sense of isolation and dislocation is tempered with a striving to generate new horizons and new mythologies with an aim to reflect through literature diverse aspects of Chicano life in the region.

The making of flores enceradas (waxed paper flowers) is a traditional handcraft maintained by Sra. Eva Castellanoz of Nyssa, Oregon. Her beautiful and fragile creations are related to communal observances for El Día del los Difuntos (All Souls Day) and Quinceañeras (Fifteenth Birthday Celebrations).

Coronas (arrangement of paper flowers dipped in wax) are made to be placed on graves during All Souls Day on November 2 or at other times of the year. Crosses and open centered circles are habitual shapes for coronas. The wax floral arrangements can be further embellished with ribbons or appropriate sentiments spelled out in gold leaf letters.

Coronas de Quinceañera are small exquisite arrangements of waxed flowers to be worn as headpieces during the celebration of a young woman’s fifteenth birthday. For this special occasion the celebrant always wears a long white gown and a corona made of white flowers both symbolizing the purity and innocence of the quinceañera. Courtesy of Idaho Commission on the Art, Folk Arts of Idaho.

El Teatro del Piojo (The Lice Theatre), a performing ensemble, was formed by students at the University of Washington in the spring of 1970. It became a traveling dramatic troupe that performed socially relevant bi-lingual drama. In its collective creations, El Teatro del Plojo reflected the language, myths, social realities and political perspective of the rural and agrarian public in the region. A typical program consisted of several actos (short skits examining social issues and pointing toward a solution), interspersed with topical songs and poetry recitations.

The fulfillment of a people’s artistic and aesthetic sensibility is linked to their access to political and economic power as well as to education and social justice. For Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest, such minimal conditions for artistic production have been largely absent. In spite of a hostile environment, resilient and rooted manifestations of working class culture have survived in the everyday practices of the group. The family, recreational patterns, belief systems, customs and traditions all exemplify broad and diverse options of a bicultural lifestyle. Although much has been lost or attenuated, Chicano culture in the Northwest survives as a coherent and dynamic signifying system of feelings, attitudes, assumptions and expressive forms through which a large segment of the population experiences a unified way of life.
Recent Developments

Chicano and Latino Artists in the Pacific Northwest in the 1970’s and 1980’s

Sid White and Pat Matheny-White

Introduction

There have been two overlapping phases in the development of art by Chicano and Latino artists who have worked in the region during the 1970’s and 1980’s. The first phase occurred in the 1970’s, and saw Chicano artists from within and outside of the Northwest producing public, political art addressed to the struggles of the regional Chicano community. The second phase of artistic development has become increasingly visible in the 1980’s and is focused on personal forms of expression. Some of the art of the second phase presents Mexican and Latino cultural content, either explicitly or in abstract form; some does not, and is closely associated with mainstream artistic tendencies.

The public community-based art of the 1970’s was predominantly Chicano, and was closely tied to the Chicano Movement (el Movimiento) art that was being produced in other parts of the United States. The personal art of the 1980’s is both Chicano and Latino, Much of this art reflects the presence of Mexican and Latin American born artists who have made major contributions to the art of this region during the 1970’s and 1980’s. It should be noted that these personalistic tendencies were already manifest in the 1970’s, just as some significant public art has also been produced in the 1980’s. Thus, in reality there is, and always has been, an overlap of these two directions.

The works of artists associated with the regional Movimiento, and artists currently living in this region should be acknowledged on their own terms and be seen as significant contributions to the art and culture of the Pacific Northwest.

Movimiento Artists in the 1970’s

The art of the Movimiento has yet to become a recognized and visible part of Pacific Northwest art history. Addressed to the needs of a struggling minority community, rather than to the mainstream art world, Northwest Chicano art was shaped by goals and approaches that transcended regional boundaries. Ideas and stimulation came, directly or indirectly, from many sources: preColumbian art; vernacular art forms; the revolutionary art of Mexico, Cuba, and Latin America; the Third World art of the 1960’s; the socially concerned art of Posada, Goya, Kollwitz, Shahn, and others.

Powerful and inspiring models for community based art—posters, murals, logos, and other forms of graphic design—were found in the works of Chicano artists from other parts of the country, especially California and Texas. Some of these artists came to the Northwest in the 1960’s and 70’s as students, one as a teacher, staying for extended periods of time and contributing to the development of regional Chicano art. Others came to the region only briefly to produce significant public work.
“In the United States especially, the prevailing conception of art is almost exclusively personalistic and ignores the public or communally shared vision that is often expressed in works of art. Public art is often confused with corporate art produced by internationally famous artists (Picasso, Moore, Miro, Oldenburg for example) which is placed in downtown sites in the nation’s urban centers. . . . Public forms of expression are those which address the shared values, history and aspirations of the community. . . .”

The dialogue resulting from this migration of artists introduced a rich vocabulary of culturally, socially, and politically expressive symbols and images that had been developed in other parts of the country during earlier phases of the Movimiento.

The artists of the Movimiento saw themselves as cultural workers and partisans in the struggles of la raza. The central issue underlying the struggle in the Northwest was forcefully and succinctly stated in the slogan of a poster that was produced in Seattle in 1972: Chicano Self-Determination. This struggle focused on efforts to establish Chicano administered social service and educational programs responsive to the needs of the community. As participants in the struggles of la raza, the region’s Chicano artists produced public, community-based works which were addressed to immediate events or served as statements affirming the solidarity, cultural heritage, and shared aspirations of the community.

Student demonstrators, one carrying an image of General Francisco Villa, march in support of Chicano faculty who resigned in protest against university hiring practices. University students were committed participants in the Movimiento.

“¡Adelante!” the slogan presented in the poster means “Forward!” The popular image of General Villa in the poster is based on a well-known photograph from the Mexican Revolution. Images of cultural heroes of the Mexican Revolution—most often Zapata—were usually copied from publications of the Chicano Movement and those produced by the Taller de Gráfica Popular, an artists’ collective based in Mexico City in the 1930’s and 1940’s, and still active today.
A visual dictionary of Chicano art, this mural presents a survey of Movimiento iconography through the inclusion of Chicano racial, political and cultural symbols. Produced with local high school students assisting the artist, it is an important public work rich in cultural content. Three major Movimiento symbols presented in Hinojosa’s mural are the huelga emblem of the United Farm Workers, a symbol of unity in the struggles of la raza; the three-faced mestizo image symbolizing the fusion of the Spaniard, the Indian, into the central figure of the Chicano; the Virgen de Guadalupe, a central, religious-nationalist symbol, is an evocative cultural icon.

The largest proportion of Chicano murals in the Northwest are located in social service agencies which include Northwest Rural Opportunities, El Centro de la Raza and educational institutions. Major mural and poster production centers were El Centro de la Raza, and the University of Washington, in Seattle, and Colegio Cesar Chavez, Mt. Angel, Oregon. All Chicano murals in the Pacific Northwest except three are indoors.
Three Movimiento Artists

Three leading artists of the Pacific Northwest Movimiento, each in close contact with Chicano art in other regions, were Daniel Desiga, Emilio Aguayo, and Pedro Rodríguez. While their work represents the diversity of style that characterized Northwest Chicano art, these artists shared a deep commitment to community-based art and exerted influence over other artists, either through the example of their own work or through teaching.

Daniel Desiga

Daniel Desiga was closely associated with Movimiento artists in Washington, Oregon, and California. An honorary member of the Rebel Chicano Art Front (RCAF) from Sacramento, California, Desiga collaborated with RCAF artist Esteban Villa in the creation of a portable mural that was originally displayed inside El Gato Loco, a tavern that was a popular gathering place for Seattle Chicanos. Desiga is the only Chicano artist of this period who was native to the region, and from a farmworker background. This personal history is reflected in his paintings which present accurate and positive images of male and female farm workers with the implements of their work.

Desiga's painting of a farmworker portrays the reality of a stoop laborer using a cortito (short-handled hoe) in the fields of Eastern Washington.

Daniel DeSiga, Campesino, oil, n.d. Courtesy of Joe García
Daniel Desiga's first mural was painted in 1972 in the main corridor inside El Centro de la Raza, when the artist was a student at the University of Washington. Titled "Explosion of Chicano Creativity," this large fifty-foot work was the first in a large number of murals, posters, and graphic works that he produced in Washington and Oregon. During the mid-1970's, Daniel Desiga served as chairman of the art department at the Colegio César Chávez in Mt. Angel, Oregon. The effectiveness of his teaching can be seen in the many vital student-executed mural studies which extend throughout the Colegio building. After his return to Washington in the late 1970's, Desiga worked on a number of commissions to produce murals, posters, and graphic materials. He left the region in 1982 to work as a graphic designer in California.

Desiga uses religious symbolism in his portrayal of the anguish and struggle of farmworkers. His mural was the first and largest of the over twenty murals located at El Centro de la Raza. El Centro’s murals are diverse in content ranging from Chicano to Native American, to Third World images.

Emilio Aguayo

Emilio Aguayo came to the Pacific Northwest in 1961 from Denver, Colorado. He has studied at the Colorado Institute of Art in Denver, the University of Washington and Oregon State University. In 1971, while a student at the University of Washington, he painted Aztlán, the first Chicano mural in the region. This large work and a series of wall graphics of his design are prominently displayed in the University’s Ethnic Cultural Center.

During the 1970’s, Aguayo painted four additional murals in the Northwest, three in Seattle, and one at the Colegio César Chávez. He also painted a mural in Albuquerque, New Mexico, during this time. A trained graphic designer, Aguayo has produced a number of posters and logos, many of them for Chicano performing arts organizations. It was also during this decade, and the preceding one, that he had contact with Chicano artists in the Southwest and with members of the RCAF. Aguayo’s response to the stimulation of the Chicano Movement resulted in his writing a paper in 1972 exploring his ideas concerning the social role of art. This unpublished paper was titled “Chicano Art: A New Art Style of the Future.”

Si Se Puede! (It Can Be Done!) is derived from the famous rallying slogans of the farmworkers led by Cesar Chavez in the 1960's. The hand-printed poster, rich in color, presents the educational philosophy of the Colegio Cesar Chavez, an independent experimental Chicano college in Mt. Angel, Oregon. This is one of many silkscreen posters produced by Desiga and his students (later called the Tortuga Art Collective) produced at the Colegio in the 1970’s.

Daniel Desiga, Explosion of Chicano Creativity (detail), mural, acrylic, Main hallway, El Centro de la Raza, Seattle, Wa., 1972, 15 ft. x 50 ft.

Daniel Desiga, Educate Sí Se Puede, silkscreen poster, Colegio César Chávez, Mt. Angel, Oregon, 1976, 12 x 18 in. Courtesy of The Evergreen State College Library.
Emilio Aguayo developed a unique, conceptualist style which appears in all of his work, both public and personal, and is based on serial drawings of geometric forms inspired by natural forms and machine technology. These forms can be seen as personal hieroglyphics. A high point in his career as an exhibiting artist was the 1975 two-person exhibit with prominent Mexican artist José Luís Cuevas. Aguayo continues to draw and to produce sculpture, masks and paintings. To date he has exhibited only once in the 1980’s in a group show at Western Washington University, and like other Chicano artists in the region, has not yet produced public art in the 1980’s.

Aguayo presented a full description of the symbols appearing in his mural at the May 10, 1977 unveiling. This description is paraphrased as follows:

The theme of war represented by the red warrior and horse is dedicated to Chicano soldiers who have fought in the nation’s wars, and to the activists in the Chicano community who have fought a war of social strife. The white warrior and horse is dedicated to the members of the community who have died or suffered from the unnecessary illnesses arising from poverty and other adverse social conditions. The black warrior and horse symbolizes death caused by many modes of hunger—the hunger for freedom, the hunger of wanting to know one’s bilingual/bicultural-ness. The brown warrior and horse symbolizes psychological warfare (racism and discrimination) so commonly experienced by the Chicano community. It is also a symbol of the spiritual death and illness of the society in which we live. The green horse is a symbol of mortality, of decay and of forces that have decimated the people.
Pedro Rodríguez

Texas-born Pedro Rodríguez, came to the Pacific Northwest from New Mexico in 1973. He remained in the region for eight years, teaching in the art department and directing the Chicano studies program at Washington State University. He left Pullman in 1981, returning to Texas where he currently directs the Guadalupe Community Center in San Antonio. An influential teacher, Rodríguez was successful in attracting a number of exceptional young Southwestern Chicano artists into the MFA program. Rodríguez participated in the Artists of Aztlan exhibit held at the and/or Gallery in Seattle in 1975. joining him as participants in this major and unprecedented group show were Washington State University graduate students, Rudy Fernandez and Carmen Lomas Garza, both of whom became nationally recognized artists.

Pedro Rodríguez’s major contribution to the public art of the region was a large mural, commissioned by the Washington State Arts Commission and the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, located in a small farming community in the Yakima Valley. Much of Rodríguez’s personal work portrays the struggles and strengths of Chicano people. Beginning in 1964, Rodríguez has exhibited widely in Texas, New Mexico, California, Oregon and Washington. A frequent lecturer, he has also written on Chicano art in the 1980/81 issue of Metamorfosis: Northwest Chicano Magazine of Literature and Culture.

The theme of Rodríguez’s mural, El Saber Es La Libertad (Knowledge is Freedom), is expressed through the juxtaposition of the movimiento, miento symbol of identity and the representation of young people.

Pedro Rodríguez, El Saber Es La Libertad, (detail), mural, lobby, Northwest Rural Opportunities, Granger, Wa., 1976, 8 x 11 ft.

Pedro Rodríguez, Migra II, acrylic on canvas, 1980, 36 x 32 in. Rodríguez depicts the arrests of two migrants.
**Rebel Chicano Art Front (RCAF)**

The Rebel Chicano Art Front (RCAF), a Sacramento-based artists’ collective, served as a major link between Movimiento art in California and the Pacific Northwest. Members from this group of seasoned artists served as mentors for young Northwest Chicano art students while also producing three Pacific Northwest murals, among them the only Chicano public work in the state of Idaho.


*Shown here is a detail of one panel of a large mural produced by RCAF artists Esteban Villa and Juan Ishi Orosco. This mural is the only Chicano mural located in Idaho. The Virgen de Guadalupe appears again as an important symbol of the Chicano community.*

Villa’s mural is very representative of Chicano community-based murals, which contain symbols known only to the members of the community. The predominant symbol in the mural is la calavera, a popular Mexican image associated with the celebration of El Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead).


**Shown here** is a detail of a large mural produced by RCAF artists Esteban Villa and Juan Ishi Orosco. This mural is the only Chicano mural located in Idaho. The Virgen de Guadalupe appears again as an important symbol of the Chicano community.
There have been significant changes in the design and production of posters. The trend in the 1980’s has been to produce posters that are reproductions of works of art. These posters are produced in large quantity through full color photo offset, and marketed as part of fundraising, as exemplified by the production of Fiestas Patrias posters in Seattle in the past four years.

Alfredo Arreguin’s primary artistic activity is the production and exhibition of his art in major museums and galleries. He also has contributed to the regional Spanish-speaking community through the production and marketing of posters bearing images of his work. Arreguin has made important artistic and cultural contributions to both the Spanish-speaking and mainstream communities through his posters as well as his personal work.

Significant public art continues to be produced in the 1980’s. There are, however, important differences in the characteristics and circumstances of production of murals and posters in the present decade, differences which are in contrast to public art in the 1970’s. There are proportionately fewer Chicanos producing public art in the 1980’s with the largest number being Mexican-born or visitors from Central and South America. No murals have been produced by university students or public school children working under the guidance of artists.

There have been significant changes in the design and production of posters. The trend in the 1980’s has been to produce posters that are reproductions of works of art. These posters are produced in large quantity through full color photo offset, and marketed as part of fundraising, as exemplified by the production of Fiestas Patrias posters in Seattle in the past four years.

Alfredo Arreguin’s primary artistic activity is the production and exhibition of his art in major museums and galleries. He also has contributed to the regional Spanish-speaking community through the production and marketing of posters bearing images of his work. Arreguin has made important artistic and cultural contributions to both the Spanish-speaking and mainstream communities through his posters as well as his personal work.

Significant public art continues to be produced in the 1980’s. There are, however, important differences in the characteristics and circumstances of production of murals and posters in the present decade, differences which are in contrast to public art in the 1970’s. There are proportionately fewer Chicanos producing public art in the 1980’s with the largest number being Mexican-born or visitors from Central and South America. No murals have been produced by university students or public school children working under the guidance of artists.
Mario Acevedo Torero, Details, “One World, One People, One Creator,” Journey to Aztlan, banner on cloth, color, 1980.

Torero’s banner encompasses startling contrasts between forms that are traditional and innovative (artist-invented). He uses a traditional Mexican cultural symbol, the Virgen de Guadalupe, and the Movimiento symbol of the mestizo. However, a new universal twist is added to the mestizo; it now embraces Third World struggles on a global male. Born in Peru, Torero lives in San Diego, California.

The Concilio for the Spanish Speaking has provided visibility for regional Chicano and Latino artists by featuring their work in poster, magazine cover formats, and in magazine articles. Often, works appearing as posters are also seen on the magazine covers. The magazine-reproduced public art makes the art even more “public,” reaching a broader audience. Aldemaro Barrios was the designer for La Voz in 1984 before returning to his native country of Venezuela. Cynthia Martinez is currently the designer for La Voz.

Five covers of La Voz: the News Magazine of the Concilio For the Spanish Speaking, published monthly featuring regional Chicano and Latino Artists. Courtesy of The Evergreen State College Library.
Regional Chicano and Latino Artists in the 1980’s.

There are a number of changes that distinguish and set in contrast the goals and attitudes of artists of the 1980’s from/to those of the 1970's: Artists of the 1980’s place less emphasis on public art and more on personal expression. Movimiento artists felt hostility or were ambivalent toward the art establishment as part of their resistance against being co-opted into the system. In contrast, most Chicano and Latino artists now living in the region seek to participate in and make contributions to mainstream art. Finally, contemporary Chicano and Latino artists in the region do not, with few exceptions, make political or culturally nationalistic statements addressed directly to the Chicano community.

When viewed from the perspective of the present, the productions and contributions of Pacific Northwest Chicano and Latino artists are diverse and vital. They have had, since the early 1970's, varying degrees and kinds of impact on both the Spanish-speaking and mainstream communities.

Pancho Letelier is the son of the former Chilean Ambassador to the United States, Orlando Letelier. The younger Letelier is one of the Brigada Orlando Letelier muralists who has produced works throughout the United States including one at El Centro de la Raza, Seattle. Alejandro Canales is a Nicaraguan-born artist who also produced a mural which features women’s roles for the Eugene Council for Human Rights in Latin America.
Nine Contemporary Artists
Cecilia Alvarez, Alfredo Arreguín, Arturo Artorez, Paul Berger, Eduardo Calderón, José E. Orantes, José Reynoso, José Luís Rodríguez, and Rubén Trejo
Portraits of Artists by Eduardo Calderón

Introduction

This is the first region-wide group exhibition of work by Chicano and Latino artists living in the Pacific Northwest. The Chicano and Latino Artists exhibit will tour throughout the region and to other parts of the country during the next two years. Seen as a whole, the work, resumes and statements by these nine contemporary artists present a wide diversity in style, personal and artistic background and attitude. This makes easy generalizations difficult, if not impossible, with differences among artists and their works outweighing similarities.

Differences in artistic and cultural identity are also apparent in the statements by each of the exhibiting artists. Some insist that their art be judged on its own terms; others affirm cultural sources or motivations. Some, like Rubén Trejo, acknowledge roots that are multiple, that are simultaneously American/European/Mexican/Chicano.

The artists’ resumes suggest yet another dimension of diversity within this exhibit. Each of the artists shows to different publics within the region; some are better known in other parts of the nation or the world than they are in the region where they live and work.

This diversity poses challenges for exhibit viewers. It also challenges stereotypes they may have regarding so-called “minority” or “ethnic” art.

The Chicano and Latino Artists exhibit reminds us that contemporary art is an American and international phenomenon that continues to be revitalized through the sharing and exchange of differing cultural perspectives—perspectives that have been channeled through the personal sensibilities and work of individual artists.

Sid White
Curator

Eduardo Calderón was commissioned to photograph the exhibiting artists with funds provided by the King County Arts Commission, the Idaho Commission for the Arts and the Spokane Arts Commission.
Las Quatas,
1979, oil, 20” x 24”
Photograph of artist by Eduardo Calderón
Photograph of work by Bob Haft
Cecilia Alvarez

My experiences as a Chicanal/Cubana, and as a woman, are factors affecting my experience and perceptions. I choose to translate these into artistic expression, into my own vision of beauty and strength. In my opinion, people, art and society have an obligation to advance humanity and find solutions to problems threatening human coexistence and survival. Technological advancement is merely an illusion to progress; it obscures our lack of growth as human beings. It is these concerns that motivate me to produce my art.

Born: National City, California, 1950, of Mexican and Cuban ancestry

Residence: Arrived in Washington, 1975

Education: B.A., Sociology, San Diego State University, 1972

Selected Exhibitions:
1984 Viking Union Gallery, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA
1982 *Women's Cultural Center, YWCA, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
1982 International Women's Day Celebration, Spokane, WA
1981 Gallery of Art, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA
1979 Cheney Cowles Museum, Spokane, WA
1973 *Kaiser Foundation, San Diego, CA
1969 *Galeria Marsol, Ensenada, B.C., Mexico

Publications:
1984 A Struggle For Mujeres," La Voz (April, 1984) p. 21

*one-person exhibition
Sarapes,
1983, oil, 58” x 46”
Photograph of artist and work by Eduardo Calderón
Alfredo Arreguín

I have selectively maintained and transformed visual elements from my Mexican heritage as well as the American experience, resulting in the kaleidoscopic vision of shifting layers of pattern. My diversity of brilliant colors, the repetition of motifs, and the use of line have helped me develop a personal calligraphy I use in my art.

Born:
Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico, 1935

Residence:
Arrived in Washington, 1957

Education:

Selected Exhibitions:
1984
*Foster/White Gallery, Seattle, WA
1984
“Mira! The Canadian Club Hispanic Art Tour,” a national touring exhibit (catalog)
1983
*Diane Gilson Gallery, Seattle, WA
1983
*The Mexican Museum, San Francisco, CA
1983
Harcourts Gallery, San Francisco, CA (also 1977)
1982
*The Boise Gallery of Art with John James Audubon, Boise, ID
1981
*Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue, WA (catalog)
1981
“Colorful Romances: A Spectrum,” Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA

Collections:
Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue, WA
The Mexican Museum, San Francisco, CA
Pacific Northwest Bell, Seattle, WA
Cralin & Co., New York
Wyndham Hotel, Dallas, TX
Arent, Fox, Kintner, Plotkin & Kahn, Washington, D.C.

Honors and Awards:
1980-
Seattle Arts Commissioner (through 1982)
1980
National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship
1979
People's Choice, 11th International Festival of Painting, Garibaldi Castle, Cagnes-Sur-Mer, France

Alfredo Arreguín is represented by Foster/White Gallery, Seattle

*one-person exhibition
Controlled by Concepts,
1984, acrylic, 12 ½” x 16 ½”
Photograph of artist and work by Eduardo Calderón
Arturo Artorez

Stimulation for my work has come from many sources, including residences in Mexico City, Paris, and Seattle. My work, which is basically figurative, stems from two opposite points of view: one is external and expressionist in form; the other is internal and surrealist. I combine both the exterior and the interior in my visual language in an effort to transform reality into magic and magic into reality.

Born: Mexico City, 1940

Residence: Arrived in Washington, 1976

Education:
B.A., National University of Mexico, Mexico City, 1962
San Carlos School of Fine Arts, Mexico City, D.F., 1964-1966

Selected Exhibitions:
1984 *Hundredwaters Gallery, Seattle, WA
1983 Jackson Street Gallery, Seattle, WA (also 1981)
1982 *Art Attack Gallery, Boise, ID
1980 *Elena Perez Vogel Fine Arts Gallery, Seattle, WA
1979 Four Latino Artists, Arts Resource Center, Seattle, WA
1973 *House of Culture, Nucleo del Azuay, Cuenca, Ecuador
1971 Biannual International, Barcelona, Spain
1968 Lynn Kottler Galleries, New York, NY
1968 International festival of the Arts, XIX Olympic Games, Mexico City, D.F.
1968 *International Painting," Carmel Art Gallery, Mexico City, D.F.
1966 *Confrontation ’66,” Museum of the Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City, D.F.
1966 Biannual Festival of Young Artists, Paris, France
1964 *Chapultepec Gallery, National Institute of Fine Arts, Mexico City, D.F.
1960 *Faculty of Literature and Philosophy, National University of Mexico, Mexico City, D.F.

Collections:
General Motors Mexican Art Collection
King County Arts Commission
Seattle Arts Commission

Honors and Awards:
1982 First Place, Urban League Exhibit, Seattle, WA
1966 Honorable Mention, Biannual Festival of Young Artists, Paris, France

*one-person exhibition

Collections:
General Motors Mexican Art Collection
King County Arts Commission
Seattle Arts Commission
Untitled,
1984, silverprint, 14” x 20”
Photograph of artist by
Eduardo Calderón
Paul Berger

My cultural heritage is a fusion of opposites: from my mother, Mexican; from my father, Pennsylvania Dutch. No doubt this combination of Northern European and Latin has affected me in broad and profound ways. However, although my artwork might reflect that combination, it has never been directly about it. My work involves photography together with television and computer-generated imagery in structured context. I am not so much interested in the single, isolated photographic image as I am in the way that various photographic and electronic images group themselves together in ways that provide us with a context and a meaning. Consequently, I am interested in commenting on and responding to such common image groupings as the printed page, the television screen, the computer printout.

Born:
The Dalles, Oregon, 1948, of Mexican and Pennsylvania Dutch heritage.

Residence:
Seattle, 1978-

Education:

Selected Exhibitions:
1984
*California Museum of Photography, University of California, Riverside
1984
“The Magazine Stand,” Washington Project for the Arts (WPA), Washington, D.C.
1983
“Outside New York: Seattle,” The New Museum, New York City (catalog) and Seattle Art Museum
1982
*Light Gallery, New York, N.Y. (also 1977)
1982
“20 x 24,” National Gallery of Fine Arts, Washington D.C.
1982
“Photographs in Sequence,” The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX (catalog)
1980
*Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, OR
1979
*Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
1979
“American Photography in the 70’s,” The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
1975
“The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
1969
“Roots,” Focus Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Collections:
International Museum of Photography/George Eastman House, Rochester, NY; The Art Institute of Chicago; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tuscon, AZ

Honors and Awards:
1979
National Endowment for the Arts, Photographer’s Fellowship
1975
Young Photographer’s Award, 6th International Meeting of Photography, Festival D’Arles, Arles, France

*one-person exhibition
Quarry,
1981, silverprint, 16” x 20”

Eduardo Calderón
Eduardo Calderón

My direction has been to photograph wherever I go scenes of situations and environments. These places are either urban areas or remote stark open spaces. Urban areas present an unlimited supply of ordinary situations when, if one is observant, there is often something unusual happening. In my landscapes the imagery is stark and the focus is on deserts, rocks or ruins so as to portray the environmental qualities of the place, the desolation, eeriness. I am a Peruvian artist but I do not consciously feel the cultural influences in my work. If I can be described as an observer, my work is not to observe ethnological behavior but peculiar human situations. I divide my work locations between Peru and the U. S., so it is reasonable to expect my photographs to reflect aspects of both cultures, but I like to think of my work as one that transcends cultural borders.

Born:
Peru, 1949

Residence:
Arrived in Washington, 1968

Education:
B.A., Anthropology, University of Washington, 1972

Selected Exhibitions:
1984
"Aquí" (Here), Latin American Artists Working and Living in the U.S., Fisher Gallery, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
1984
*Donally/Hayes, Seattle WA (also 1980, 1981)
1984
Western Front Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.
1983
Governor's Invitational, State Capitol Museum, Olympia, WA
1982
*Thomas Burke Memorial Museum, Seattle, WA
1982
*Makah Museum, Neah Bay, WA
1982
*Suquamish Tribal Center, Suquamish, WA
1982
*Yakima Nation Cultural Center, Yakima, WA

1981
*Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, WA
1980
Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA (also 1977)
1980
Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, WA (also 1977-1979)
1978
*Fotogalería Secuencia, Lima, Peru

Collections:
Pacific Northwest Bell, Seattle, WA
Alfred E. Corbett Collection, Bend, OR
Fotogalería Secuencia, Lima, Peru

Honors and Awards:
National Endowment for the Arts, Folk Arts Grant

*one-person exhibition

Seattle Arts Commission
King County Arts Commission
Washington State Arts Commission
Salida,
1981, acrylic, 35” x 24 ½”
Photograph of artist and work by Eduardo Calderón

José E. Orantes
José E. Orantes

Art represents my continuing evolution. The move from Guatemala to Seattle has given me a whole new environment to explore. Perhaps I’m seeing this part of the earth with “ojos de extranjero”—a stranger’s eyes. Vivid colors in strong shapes concentrate the elements I see to express my wonder. The union of my roots in the Mayan culture, vibrant with color and my new life here, is expressed in my work. Recently, I am exploring the universality of the native spirit—the Mayan and the Northwest Coast Indian.

Born:
El Salvador, 1953

Residence:
Guatemala most of his youth and young adult life; arrived in Washington, 1978

Education

Selected Exhibitions:
1984
Viking Union Gallery, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA

1983
Urban League Exhibit, Seattle, WA

1983
Fiestas Patrias Art Exhibit, Seattle Center (also 1982, 1979)

1981
Jackson Street Gallery, Seattle, WA

1981
*Luman Art Gallery, Tacoma, WA

1979
Cinco de Mayo Art Exhibit, Seattle Central Community College

1977
Galerías Treinta Tres, Mexico City, D.F.

1975
Galerías Atlas, El Salvador

1975
Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Guatemala (also 1977)

Collections:
Seattle City Light

Honors and Awards:
1977
Second Prize, Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Guatemala

1976
First Prize, Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Guatemala

*one-person exhibition
Primavera,
1983, oil, 32” x 40”
Photograph of artist and work by
Eduardo Calderón

José Reynoso
José Reynoso

I feel that my work speaks for itself. Expressing myself in painting and drawing is what excites me, and I have always tried to do this with simplicity and in a free and loose manner. I was originally influenced by the art of José Clemente Orozco; I now feel that my work has its own expressionist elements.

Born:
Texas, 1948, of Mexican ancestry

Residence:
Arrived in Idaho, 1962

Education:
B.F.A., Boise State University, 1979

Selected Exhibitions:
1985
*Rosenthal Gallery, Caldwell, ID

1984
Vietnam Veterans Exhibitions, Seattle Arts Center, Seattle, WA

1983
Northwest Juried Competition, Cheney Cowles Museum, Spokane, WA

1982
Urban League Exhibit, Seattle, WA

1981
Allied Arts Council Gallery, Boise, ID

1979
Blue Lotus Gallery and Bookstore, Boise, ID

1978
Boise Museum of Art, Boise State University, Boise, ID (also 1979)

1977
Boise Gallery of Art, Boise, ID

Honors and Awards
1984 Best of Show, Treasure Valley Community College, Ontario, OR

*one-person exhibition
Obispo,
1982, watercolor, ink, charcoal,
35” x 45 ½”

Photograph of artist and work by
Eduardo Calderón

José Luís Rodríguez
José Luís Rodríguez

My work is a process of self discovery focusing on universal psychological and social problems. I use human and animal forms to explore these ideas. Sometimes I have been asked: “Are you an American or Mexican artist?” I resist being categorized as either; I am both, and draw upon the best that each tradition can offer. I am a contemporary artist and do not wish to be bound by cultural boundaries.

Born:
Sabinas, Coahuila, Mexico, 1953

Residence:
Arrived in Oregon, then to Idaho, 1969

Education:
B.A., Commercial Hispano Americano, Frontera, Coahuila, Mexico, 1968; A.A., Treasure Valley Community College, Ontario, Oregon, 1972; Boise State University, 1974–.

Selected Exhibitions:
1984
*Boise Gallery of Art, Boise, ID

1982
*Art Attack Gallery, Boise, ID

1981
Transition Gallery, Idaho State University, Pocatello, ID

1980
Boise Museum of Art, Boise State University, Boise, ID

1980
Idaho Commission on the Arts, Boise, ID

1978–80
Seven group exhibitions of the Boise Art Group, Boise, ID

1977

1976
Boise Gallery of Art, Boise, ID

*one-person exhibition
Peppers,
1981, wood and paint sculpture
Photograph of artist and work by
Eduardo Calderón
Rubén Trejo

The sources for my work stem from the American experience and Mexican heritage. In some works, one can find the aspect of American Academia along with the Mexican element of humor. My goal is not to follow the trends of the day, but to find my expression in the roots of my Mexican heritage, and to use the current industrial technology to achieve this end. Although the works are energized by this experience, it is my hope that they transcend their origins. The final drawing or sculpture should be more important than the “personal experience.”

Born:
St. Paul, Minnesota, 1937, of Mexican ancestry.

Residence:
Arrived in Washington, 1973

Education:
A.A., B.A., M.F.A., University of Minnesota, 1969

Selected Exhibitions:
1983
*Duane Thompson University Center, Nelson, British Columbia

1983
*Cinco de Mayo Exhibit, Seattle Central Community College, Seattle, WA

1982
*Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA (also 1976)

1982
Mexican Museum, San Francisco, CA

1981
Galería de la Raza, San Francisco, CA

1979
“Woodworks,” Cheney Cowles Museum, Spokane, WA

1977
*Gallery I, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

1974
*University of Idaho, Moscow, ID

1972
*Georgia Southern College, Statesboro, GA

1970
Wichita State University, Wichita, KS

1966
Biennial Competition, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN

Collections:
Dongguk University, Seoul, Korea
Spokane City Hall, Spokane, WA
Georgia Southern College, Statesboro, GA
College of St. Teresa, Winona, MN

Honors and Awards:
1976 Award Winner, 28th Spokane Annual Competition

*one-person exhibition
Credits and Bibliography

Bibliographic Footnotes
1. Humboldt’s *Ensayo Político* is the original source of this note (pp. 81,212). The quotation, as it appears here, is taken from the “Introduction” to *Noticias de Nutka, An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792*, by José Mariano Mozinho, translated and edited by Iris H. Wilson (University of Washington Press, 1970), p. xlix.


Illustration Sources

p. 2. Ibid., illus. 40.


Photo Credits
Glenn Gibbons: page 28
Bob Haft: pages 7, 15, 20, 22, 23 (bottom), 24, 25, 27 (top)
Woody Hirzel: page 23
Pat Matheny-White: page 28
Kelley Powell: page 17 (left)
Steve Siporin: page 17 (right)
University of Washington Photography Department: page 6, 7 (top).

Bibliography
A. A Two Hundred Year Presence by Lauro Flores.

B. A Social Portrait by Erasmo Gamboa


C. Chicano Culture and Everyday Life in the Pacific North-west by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto.


D. Chicano and Latino Artists in the Pacific Northwest in the 1970’s and 80’s by Sid White and Pat Matheny-White.


Published by The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington, 1984.
Chicano and Latino Artists in the Pacific Northwest is being circulated around the region and beyond by Exhibit Touring Services of Washington State. Initial exhibits have been scheduled at the following locations with additional scheduling planned for Idaho, Oregon, California, Texas and Illinois.

Seattle  Museum of History and Industry  Nov. 2-Dec. 27, 1984


Vancouver  Index Gallery, Clark College  Jan. 30-Jan. 24, 1985

Yakima  Larson Gallery, Yakima Community College  April 1-May 5, 1985

Spokane  Spokane Falls Community College  May 10-June 20, 1985