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Thesis Statement
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We have reached a point where to name things is to denounce them: but, to whom and for whom?...*We are what we do, especially what we do to change what we are*: our identity resides in action and struggle. Therefore, the revelation of what we are implies the denunciation to those who stop us from being what we can become. In defining ourselves our point of departure is challenge, and struggle against obstacles.

— Eduardo Galeano

I Am Not Who You Think I Am

I am not who you think I am but at the same time I don't think I know who I am. I chose not to be defined by labels, categories or race. I am a nomadic artist who journeys through the Americas, creating *rascuache* art and high art, speaking Español, Spanglish, English and Ingleñol. Occasionally, I feel I have a static sense of identity and sometimes I have an inventory of multiple identities. I fit in here and there but *No soy ni de aquí ni de allá*. I am one, in two worlds. The content of my work is a fusion of myth, history, religion, politics, and popular culture and is driven by my life experiences. As an artist I feel I have the responsibility to address the issues that affect my community and to create awareness and propose actions through my art.

What is America?

America is not a country but a landmass in the western hemisphere that consists of the continents of North and South America joined by the Isthmus of Panama. Alfredo Jaar's animated *A logo for America* (1987) effectively illustrates what America is not and redefines for the miseducated what America is. This six-part, 45-second computer animation was displayed in the heart of Times Square on an L.E.D. box mounted above the wraparound international news feed on the One Times Square building. The animation starts with the

shape of the United States; the next frame is the country's outline, filled with text reading, "THIS IS NOT AMERICA." Then, an image of the U.S. flag appears, red, white and blue, followed by an outline of the flag with text on top that reads, "THIS IS NOT AMERICA'S FLAG." The fifth slide is the word "AMERICA," and from the letter "R" emerges the shape of the Americas: North America, Central America, and South America.

Just as a Spaniard, an Italian and a Frenchman are all Europeans; I have always been an American. However, I grew up knowing of the Americas as the new world that was discovered by Europeans between 1492 and 1500, even though fully developed civilizations occupied these lands long before their "discovery."

The United States claims to be the home of the free and brave even though this country has been built upon slavery and the exploitation of this land and its people. It is often the inclination of humans to deny reality, to depict history in an appealing and justifiable manner. I approach my work as a revisionist of history, reinterpreting the traditional memories of the past. As an artist, I seek to challenge established views by gaining a more thorough and balanced understanding of the past. I reflect my newfound knowledge and share my reactions through art.

Poor México! So far away from God and so close to the United States!

There is a popular phrase in Spanish. The source is unknown but some people credit it to Porfirio Díaz, Mexican soldier and politician, who served seven terms as president/dictator of México. "*¡Pobre México! ¡Tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de los Estados Unidos!*" This phrase refers to the curse of México for its geographic location, being neighbors with the United States, the most influential country in the world. The United States and the media have created the perception that anything south of the U.S. border is substandard, or what some people refer to as "America's backyard," especially referring to traditional areas of dominance in Latin America. These notions have inflicted generational traumas upon Latinos,

and we often end up believing these impressions, feeling inferior to U.S. citizens.

Unfortunately, many U.S. citizens or “Americans” also believe that they are superior to Latinos and other minority groups. As a new immigrant, I experienced the feelings of second-class citizenship and accepted a position of inferiority. It was through education and art that I realized that these are socially constructed impressions, which I have overcome.

These experiences have encouraged me to research and understand the connection between the two worlds that I live in Mexico and U.S.A. There is a daily internal battle—the constant tension of feeling that I am neither from here nor there; I am from there, living here. Am I from both worlds and carry them wherever I go? Or Do I switch back and forth depending on my disposition?

México and the United States have shared a complicated relationship throughout history. U.S. immigration laws have both welcomed Mexican immigrants and slammed the door shut on them. One example in which the United States needed México was during World War II. The United States’ labor force was short in all sectors due to conscripting much of its work force into the armed services. During this time the U.S.’s *Bracero* Program (1940-42) allowed thousands of temporary contract laborers from México to work in the railroad and agriculture industries. The *Bracero* Program helped both the United States, which needed the labor, and the *Bracero* workers, who were able to obtain temporary employment, earn money and return to their families in México. Through this program, my father first entered the United States. After picking crops in the fields of California he settled in Chicago where he found a better job. Soon after, he married my mom and they started their life in Chicago. My three oldest siblings were born in Chicago before my father decided to move back to México and start farming in the 80s. In the middle of that decade, my youngest brother and I were born.

At the other end of the immigration spectrum, Operation Wetback (1954) was a mass deportation campaign targeting “Mexican-looking” citizens. In some cases, “illegal

immigrants” were deported along with their American-born children, who were, by law, U.S. citizens. “Wetback” is a term that originated with undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. by swimming across the Rio Grande. This derogatory term is now used more broadly to describe any Mexican-looking person who is suspected of illegally entering the United States. According to PBS show, *The Border*, “the object of intense border enforcement were illegal aliens, but common practice of Operation Wetback focused on Mexicans in general. The police swarmed through Mexican American barrios throughout the southeastern states. Some Mexicans, fearful of the potential violence of this militarization, fled back south across the border. In 1954, the agents discovered over 1 million illegal immigrants” (PBS).

Hundreds of people die every year trying to cross the México-U.S. border, all with one aspiration: a job and a better life. The portrait *Dust to Dust* (figs. 0) pays homage to people that died tragically in their attempt to migrate to the U.S. each year. I chose to leave this sculpture unfired—making it more fragile and unsolved. This is a reflection of our broken immigration system, a common theme in my artwork. As an artist I want to document and create awareness about these individual experiences of migration and speak for those who cannot come out of the shadows. Immigration is such a controversial issue today that we often overlook the human stories behind the statistics. In my work I want to remind the viewer of the humanness of the immigrant.

Currently, Mexican immigrants reside in communities across the United States, sometimes battling hostile circumstances to survive. Mexican immigrants and their descendants have rapidly become a significant component of the United States population, consequently becoming influential in the culture and politics of the United States. Mexican Americans and Latinos will likely continue to shape society in language, culture, gastronomy, politics, art and lifestyle.

American Me | Ame-jicano, Ame-xican, Mexi-merican, Mexi-ricano

I was born and raised in a rural town in México and migrated to the United States at age 15. I hold dual citizenship so I am expected to be bilingual and bicultural. I have learned to adapt and live in these two worlds but adapting involves expanding and losing part of who I am, so I often find myself in the middle of these two territories. I will never be fully “American” and I am not entirely Mexican anymore. I am too *pocho* to my *paisanos*; like a foreigner, I do not have a motherland. The move from a rural town in México to Chicago, a major metropolis in the United States, has had a tremendous impact in my life. At first, art was merely a way of coping with the transition. My search for identity was frustrated by the fact that I could not communicate effectively, due to my limited English, so art became my tool for self-expression.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s question echoes in my head, “How to understand the perils and advantages of living in a country that speaks at least ninety different languages and, unwillingly, hosts people from practically every nation, race, and religious creed on earth?” (Gómez-Peña, I). I have always been inclined to do art that reflects upon my curiosities, passions and struggles. Consequently, since I migrated to the United States my research and practice have been an investigation of the hybrid “American” culture, my understanding of the United States as a country, the influence the U.S. has played in Latin America and in the world, and the role I play as an artist in the Americas. Our hybridity can be revolutionary and seamless or it can be the result of a painful culture clash.

Lifetime: Childhood, Imagination & the Creation Process

Growing up in rural México was paradise for me. I belong to a generation before video games and high-tech toys. As kids, my siblings and I had a lot of time at our disposal. A day spent on our back patio or on the streets with friends was perfect for *travesuras*. I recall as a kid, days felt too long and I would often get bored. My imagination roamed free and I would

create my own toys out of whatever was available—cardboard, mud, broken wood, straws, and bobby pins. A seemingly magical process of creation and transformation, I could make a toy out of any material and occupy myself during those long days. These memories are still with me; the ingenious imagination from my childhood hasn't left.

José Antonio Burciaga writes, "Like art imitating life, children imitate life through a fresh and innocent but sincere perspective. Art is a reflection and expression of life" (Burciaga, 73). If art is a reflection and expression of life, then it follows that, as an interdisciplinary artist, my process is also a reflection of my multilayered life. As I stated earlier, sometimes I feel I have myriad identities, depending on my mood and place. My art-making process is no different; I use a variety of media to best fit my ideas. I am a multifaceted artist who is interested in creating with whatever is available.

Leo Tolstoy, author of *War and Peace*, writes, "Art is not, as the metaphysicians say, the manifestation of some mysterious idea of beauty or God; it is not, as the aesthetical physiologists say, a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy; it is not the expression of man's emotions by external signs; it is not the production of pleasing objects; and, above all, it is not pleasure; but it is a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress toward well-being of individuals and of humanity." I believe the purpose of art is to engage, connect and transmit. According to Tolstoy's theory, good art is an artist's feelings clearly expressed through his/her sincerity. Artists can touch others with their art and make the audience think, question or respond. Art is the synergy in humans toward the joy and mystery of life.

As an artist I want to capture what others overlook by choice or by ignorance. I believe that education and art can be agents in the struggle for equality and justice. Paulo Freire writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "The insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection—true reflection—leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for

action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection” (Freire, 66). He adds, “In this sense, the praxis is the new *raison d’être* of the oppressed; and the revolution, which inaugurates the historical moment of this *raison d’être*, is not viable apart from their concomitant conscious involvement. Otherwise, action is pure activism” (Freire, 66).

In my practice, I do not make art for art’s sake; rather, I make art that leads to true reflection and action. I raise awareness about issues that affect my community and reflect upon my own inner struggles. Reflection and action can be seen in my work in three distinct ways.

First, my creation process is a combination of head, heart and hands. Everything I do—what I like and dislike, the books I chose to read, the music I listen to, the memories I keep, the historical events that shape me, my surroundings and my relationships—is integrated into who I am. I meditate on these influences, which generates a visceral emotion, leading to action, in this case the creation of artwork. Secondly, I want my audience to reflect on the work and let it prompt them to act on what is in front of them. Third, I like to go back and look at earlier works I have created and reflect upon them. I ask myself what has changed since I made the work. What would I do differently? Is it an impactful and powerful piece? How can I make it better? And so on. This leads to the action of making more work.

Art influences: Looking Back and Forth and Flying Through Borders

Dialogue and contradiction are essential to my work because they describe the complexity of our crossbreed society. I am particularly interested in events that have shaped history in the Americas. The study of these formative events helps me to understand the present and gives me a glimpse of our society’s direction.

Mexican folk art and crafts are visual forms that I have lived with and they are a big part of my aesthetics and inspiration. They are the reason I am drawn to the icons, artifacts and themes of popular culture such as masks, religious icons, mythology and festivities.

I have always been fascinated by Pre-Columbian artwork. I am amazed by the sophistication of the craft and storytelling through imagery. I am intrigued by the Pre-Columbian peoples' way of life, beliefs, myths and intense connection to the earth. Their clay and stone sculptures inspired me to start working with clay in order to give physical form to my personal experiences.

Later, after the conquest of the Aztec empire in México, Mexican became a complex fusion of native perspectives and the traditions of Europe, mainly the art of the Baroque period. During the Colonial Era, art was used to proselytize the indigenous people; one of the main tasks of missionaries was to build churches and create religious imagery, many times blending indigenous and Christian symbols to encourage conversion. Growing up Catholic in Mexico, I am intrigued by figures of saints, virgins and angels that bear much more European resemblance than indigenous. Of course, we do have *La Virgen Morena* whose skin tone is darker than the European Madonna.

In my self-portrait titled *Juan Diego frightened to death after the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe*, I pose as the Virgin of Guadalupe, reflecting the reality that no matter their creed, all Mexicans have a deep connection to the image of "Our Lady of the Americas," as she is known throughout Latin America. I attempt to expose the tactic of using art to evangelize indigenous people, creating a portrait that focuses more on traditionally indigenous features.

Another big influence in my career is the three Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. These men inspired me to deliver a message for social change through art in the public square. They are pioneers of this tradition, which continues to this day in México and abroad. It inspired the Chicano Mural Movement, and

while I was living in Chicago it motivated me to create public works that reflected the struggles of the people in my community and to use art as a form of empowering the people of that community. Equally, prolific Mexican printmaker Jose Guadalupe Posada is a constant reminder to me to use graphic design to bring awareness to different issues in our society. My formal training is in graphic design and I always try to blend design and art.

We live in a postmodern era characterized by the conscious use of historical periods and conventions, a mixing of different artistic styles and media, and challenging orthodox theories. This allows me to combine all these influences and turn them into an art form.

Semiotics: Mexicanidad

Mexicanidad is something more than a country; it is something very profound that few people understand. It is to have a sense of identity; it is to be rooted, and to know where you come from and where you want to be. In the book *Borderlands/Fronteras*, Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “We say *nosotros los mexicanos* (by *mexicanos* we do not mean citizens of México; we do not mean a national identity, but a racial one). We distinguish between *mexicanos de este lado*....Being Mexican is a state of soul—not one of mind, not one of citizenship. Neither eagle nor serpent, but both.” (qtd in Lippard, 30). As a *mexicano*, the symbols I use in my work play a significant role in my visual vocabulary. I have developed a language with these motifs that, like words, can be rearranged and combined to express different messages.

Cactus

Cacti are native to arid regions of the Americas and are cultivated elsewhere. The cactus has been part of the mythology, gastronomy and symbolic identity of the Mexican people since the beginning of time. The cactus has been a major food source for the diet of Mexican people for many generations. It can also be found on the National Mexican Emblem. I

created a self-portrait based on a popular phrase *Cara de Nopal ó El Nopal en la Frente* (Fig. 0), an expression that refers to someone (especially someone whose facial features have a traditionally indigenous appearance) whose parents are Mexican but who lives outside of México and denies his/her roots. The cactus defines Mexican identity—or the rejection of it. I am proud of my heritage and have never denied my Mexican identity but sometimes I get the sense that I have to prove my Mexican-ness to the larger society. For that reason, in *Cara de Nopal ó El Nopal en la Frente*, the cactus on the forehead is gold. This is a cry for acceptance—even though I left México years ago, I am still rooted in that culture and its traditions.

Heart

The human heart represents courage, love, fortitude, spirit, compassion, and resolution. In addition, the heart is the vital center and source of one's being, emotions, and sensibilities. In the Latino art, the heart appears everywhere—in Catholic imagery, in Aztec illustrations of ultimate sacrifice to the gods, in popular culture narratives, and as the symbol of love and heartbreak. Initially, when I started to play with clay, I made abstract forms with my hands. After of the initial exploration of this new medium, I squeezed my hands on a ball of clay and pressed my fingers inwards, resulting in a hollow heart shape. To my surprise, after observing the shape from different angles, I realized that it also looks like an abstract human form: the back, shoulders and ribs are impressions of my hands.

In my work titled *Scars of the Americas* (Fig. 0), I created multiple hearts using my hands as a mold. Every heart is unique in form and has distinctive palm impressions. After making more than a hundred individual pieces I decided to start uniting them in different compositions. After being attached in small groups they started to look more like human figures embracing. I am still unfolding the mystery of these forms and exploring new ways of molding, connecting and displaying them. Just as indigenous people are deeply connected to the land and have a spiritual relationship with the earth, so these hearts are made of earth

and finished to be reminiscent of the land. I envision these pieces as a social commentary on the pain of Native tribes of the Americas, still hurting and scarred from the past, and suffering the same or even worse injustices today. These wrongs are scars that have deeply penetrated the hearts and souls of indigenous people.

Skull

The use of skulls and skeletons in Mexican art dates to before the Conquest. However, during colonization, the Spaniards suppressed skull art because it was too *Indito* or pagan for their refined European tastes. It was after the independence from Spain in 1821 that people embraced skull art as a symbol of *Mexicanidad*. In the late 19th Century José Guadalupe Posada found a way to connect to and awaken the oppressed Mexican people by using skulls and skeletons in his graphic art. Skull art was recognized among poor, indigenous people from their celebrations of the Day of the Dead. Through skulls and skeletons Posada made a connection with the indigenous and poor, and he used skull art to communicate political messages to the illiterate. In my skull artwork I embrace Posada's ideas and acknowledge the traditions and myths of my ancestors. In my work I use skulls as a symbol of equality, highlighting that we are the same under the skin.

Masks

Most masks are made to cover the face; in particular, to protect, as in sport, or to entertain, disguise, amuse or terrify. Mexican fighters use their masks as part of their wrestling persona. In his book *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico*, Octavio Paz writes about this disguise, "Hence the Mexican must face reality in the same way as everyone else: alone. But in his nakedness he will discover his true universality, which previously was a mere adaptation of European thought. His philosophy will be Mexican only

in its accent or emphasis or style, not in its content. Mexicanism will become a mask which, when taken off, reveals at last the genuine human being it disguised” (Paz, 171).

My series of self-portraits *I am not who you think I am* is a multiplication of the various personalities I embrace and reject. I wanted to create an experience for the audience by surrounding the viewer with busts that gaze at each other and into the room. Viewers can participate in this piece by wearing a mask, an element that adds another layer to the work as the viewer peers through my eyes. The audio component that echoes in the gallery where the masks are displayed, “What are you? Who are you?”, challenges the audience to question their own identity. This body of work has allowed me to mask myself with stereotypes, perceptions and expectations assigned to me merely because I am a member of a minority group immersed in the dominant culture. By confronting these various assigned personas, I can then slowly remove the baggage that I have accumulated and carried for years. I am digging deep into myself through this process—hoping to find universality and humanness in my work that transcends adaptation and blurs the division of dominant and minority.

Spirituality

Spirituality has always been present in my life. Growing up religious in México is unavoidable, and I am intimately familiar with the Mexican Catholic culture: praying to the Virgin, asking for miracles, attending mass and celebrating saints’ days, which means *Fiestas Patronales* every other month. Ironically, in a Mexican household, there is often little money for food and household necessities, but there is always enough within the community to organize these festivals. Years after I left México I started to read more about the indigenous spiritual traditions and the influence of Christian European culture in México. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the most venerated religious icon in México. There are so many traditions and customs attached to Catholicism, that even Mexican atheists are culturally Catholic.

The self-portrait titled *Enchapotado en teologías* (Fig. 0) is a representation of my struggles to identify with an institutionalized religion. This is an area I'm continuously questioning and thus far, a statement made from former Mexican President, Benito Juárez, is the only answer that makes sense to me. He writes, "Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace."

Targets & Halos

Through a lifelong exposure to Catholic imagery, I have been surrounded by portrayals of people with gold disks or circles above their heads or light radiating from the contour of holy figures. The halos or luminous backgrounds depicted with saints, martyrs, and holy people are associated with an aura of glory or veneration. As a child, I was encouraged to follow their way of life and become a good Catholic. The image of a target was not common in Mexican art when I was growing up; I became aware of it after migrating to the United States. I have since realized that a target can be more than a point composed of concentric circles at which someone aims and shoots. A target also represents a person or a group of people to whom criticism and abuse is directed. In my work titled *Targeted* (Fig. 0), I depict a self-portrait with concentric circles that start at the center of the face and grow outwards, turning into a halo shape. Symbolically, I play the martyr and speak for the millions of people who share the same sentiment of being targeted for their distinct physical appearance. This is a constant and uncomfortable feeling that I carry.

Open Wounds

A wound is an injury to a living tissue caused by an incision or laceration. Eventually, wounds heal and form a scar. When I include a wound in my artwork I conceptualize this image so it means more than just a cut on the skin. Growing up Catholic, I find it hard not to reference the five holy wounds of Christ in the crucifixion, which I beheld as reminders of His

ultimate sacrifice every Sunday during mass. I frequently use a wound motif to represent the lesions of history that slowly turn into scars. In the work titled *La Conquista* (Fig. 0), I use the cactus as a symbol that represents México; the laceration from the sword of a Spaniard. This work represents the rape and exploitation of the indigenous people and all the impositions that were placed on them as part of colonization. The penetration by Europeans into the Americas created an amalgamation of cultures and beliefs called *Mestizaje*—the mixture of the customs, languages and foods of the Spaniards with the indigenous, Africans and mestizos.

Portrait, Self-portrait

A portrait is more than a physical depiction of an individual; it can also reveal character. When creating a portrait, the artist makes formal and conceptual decisions, which provide the viewers with information to interpret the representation of the individual in front of them. In the book *The Portrait Now*, Sandy Nairne writes, “The portrait should allow something of someone’s personal interior life to be made available in public, and this purpose—to bring out hidden information—should be important to both artist and the eventual viewing public” (Nairne, 7). As an artist, when I am making a portrait of someone else, I am limited by my knowledge of my subject. On the other hand, when I make self-portraits, I approach them with honesty toward my feelings and that helps me to know myself better. I try not to overanalyze the content I include. I let my intuition use the information in my unconscious to bring out previously hidden material. In the body of works *I am not who you think I am*, I reflect on this information, revealing different parts of my multi-layered identity. Duality is important to me and to millions of migrants who have been raised in a blended culture or syncretism.

Nairne writes, “The portrait remains central to artistic practice as an essential way of exploring the world through representations of the people in it” (Nairne, 15). Portraiture

creates an instant human connection; it focuses on the most essential characteristic that defines a person—the face. Through my self-portraits, I investigate my inner conflicts and ideas, which reflect the larger conflicts and ideas in our multi-layered society. All artwork is a reflection of our time and its people.

Identity: Double Consciousness

The struggle in the search for identity in the United States is complicated when it is approached from the perspective of an ethnic minority. Instead of focusing on the similarities of all humans, this society focuses on differences. Before my arrival to the United States, I never had to worry so much about my identity. I was living in a rural town in México where the main differences were individuals' economic statuses. In the book *Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980*, Claire Pajaczkowska writes, "Individuals are continually engaged in a process of exchange and adaptation as groups intermingle. The forces that influence the construction of identity are not stable, and thus identity is always in flux. Identity is fluid and transformable as the context changes" (McDaniel, 59).

After crossing the U.S.-México border, I became an immigrant: Mexican-American, Legal Permanent Alien, Hispanic. I also started to be influenced by this foreign land learning a new language and adapting to a new society opened up my eyes and mind to a world of different worlds.

The series of self-portraits I created produce a visceral sensation in me. The fact that I get to see my own face in these works, has offered me a unique opportunity to look at myself from a new perspective and a window into how others perceive me. W.E.B. Du Bois created a term that speaks to this feeling; he calls it "double consciousness." Du Bois describes it as, "a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls,

two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois, 5). Similarly, as an American and as a Mexican I live in this double consciousness and the feeling of being torn apart. I think in two languages, I exist in two cultures and I'm expected to move between these two worlds seamlessly and effortlessly. In my piece titled *Double Consciousness, One Body* (Fig. 0) I explore the concept of two-ness by having two identical self-portraits gazing at each other inside the same torso. This visual expresses my feelings of double-consciousness. Each of these portraits is aware of the other, creating inhibition. The sensation of two-ness can become an obstacle that limits us to develop to our full potential. Consequently, the history of non-dominant groups is the history of this conflict: I want to become a self-conscious man who merges his double self into a truer single self, both a Mexican and an American.

Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst whose writing greatly influenced postmodernism and subsequent art theory, identified "the gaze" as "a psychological state where we become aware of ourselves as objects by recognizing the gaze of another." In my self-portraits, I intentionally directed the way they look at each other to create in the viewer a sense that the pieces are aware of one another and are observing each other's personas without the viewer's participation. As a group, the figures are looking in all directions, interacting with each other and with the audience by gazing to the sides, up, down or straight, and some just have closed eyes.

Stereotypes & Slurs

A stereotype is an oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person that diminishes a group of people or makes them feel inferior. Unfortunately, our society has a vast number of stereotypes for all races and cultures. These often-erroneous assumptions are based on the unusual way one person in a group looks or acts, and their unusual actions are

then attributed to every member of the group, and labeled “abnormal”. This construction of “the other” prevents people from learning from each other’s differences.

On the other hand, perhaps this mythic “other” is actually the genesis of the stereotype. Perhaps the innate human urge to be “normal” drives us to locate and name the “other”. We all strive to find what is odd or strange about other people and call that out (and often call it a bad name) in order to preserve our own sense of being “normal”. Since I migrated to the U.S. I constantly have to prove that I am capable of doing more than manual work. In my artwork I address some stereotypes to remark the ignorance and misconception of our society towards Latinos.

Conclusion: So, Who Am I?

I am not who you think I am but at the same time, I don’t think I know who I am. I choose not to be defined by labels, categories or race because like Eduardo Galeano states, we might be limiting ourselves in who we can become in our search for identity. Identity is an ongoing process of self-discovery and transformation that is complex, contradictory and challenging. Naturally, one’s identity evolves as the context changes. I don’t want to be stigmatized and put in a category. I want to continue exploring who I am, but in an environment that goes beyond flags, languages, cultures and society’s ideals.

Glossary

American: Someone from the Americas, i.e. North or South America. Colloquially, and I would argue, problematically, it refers to people from the United States only.

Bracero: The Bracero Program, named for the Spanish term “bracero”, meaning “manual laborer” (lit. “one who works using his arms”), was a series of laws and diplomatic agreements, initiated by an August 1942 exchange of diplomatic notes between the United States and Mexico, for the importation of temporary contract laborers from Mexico to the United States. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bracero_program

Chicano: A Chicano is a Mexican-American involved in socio-political struggle to create a relevant, contemporary and revolutionary consciousness as a mean of accelerating social change and actualizing an autonomous cultural reality among other Americans of Mexican descent. To call oneself a Chicano is an overt political act. —Santo Martinez, Jr., in Raices Antiguas Visiones Nuevas (p. 4) (qtd in Lippard, 34).

El Norte: In México, this term refers to the United States, the country north of México.

Fiestas patronales: Annual celebrations held in countries that were former Spanish colonies (“patronage festivals” in English). A fiesta patronal is usually dedicated to a saint or virgin, who is the patron of whichever city holds the fiesta. Usually, town members adorn the town streets with colorful decorations and other things. In some larger cities, there may be several fiestas, one fiesta for each neighborhood, usually about the patron saint for the local parish. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiesta_patronal

Gringo(a): Refers to white U.S. citizens. This is not considered by Mexicans to be a derogatory term mostly because the term “American” does not make sense to the the people of Latin America, and the word “Estadounidense” (United Statean) is too long. Folklore says

gringo came into popular use when the U.S. invaded México, wearing green uniforms, and the people shouted at them "Green Go Home". With time it lost all derogatory status and was turned into the most common word to refer to any white U.S. citizen.

<http://www.urbandictionary.com>

Ingleñol: Spanglish.

La Virgen Morena: Dark-skinned Madonna.

No soy ni de aquí ni de allá: I am neither from here nor there.

Paisano(a): "Countryman" or "brother" in Spanish.

Permanent Resident Alien: A foreign citizen admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident. Permanent residents are also commonly referred to as immigrants; however, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) broadly defines an immigrant as any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigrant categories (INA section 101(a)(15)). An alien who entered the United States without inspection, for example, would be strictly defined as an immigrant under the INA but is considered "illegal", not a permanent resident alien. <http://www.uscis.gov/tools/glossary/permanent-resident-alien>

Pocho(a): An Americanized Mexican, or a Mexican who has lost their culture. The loss of culture largely references losing the ability to speak Spanish fluently. It is a derogatory term and can refer to someone who's trying to "act white". Poncho(a) has been largely embraced by Chicanos with a sense of defeatist humor, so that it's actually becoming more playful than bitter. <http://www.urbandictionary.com>

Rascuache: A visual and verbal style associated with Chicano and Mexican working classes.

Rasquachismo is a defiant, ironic and excessive aesthetic that affirms Mexican identity and resists assimilation into the dominant culture of the United States (McDaniel, 00).

Raison d'être: The thing that is most important to someone or something: the reason for which a person or organization exists. [http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/raison d'être](http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/raison%20d'etre)

Travesuras: Foolish, outrageous, or amusing behavior.

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1915
Desmadre revoltoso



Embarrasado
en thillogia



1915
Luz



1915
Luz



1915
Luz



Picante
pero sakroso



1915
Un desmadre revoltoso



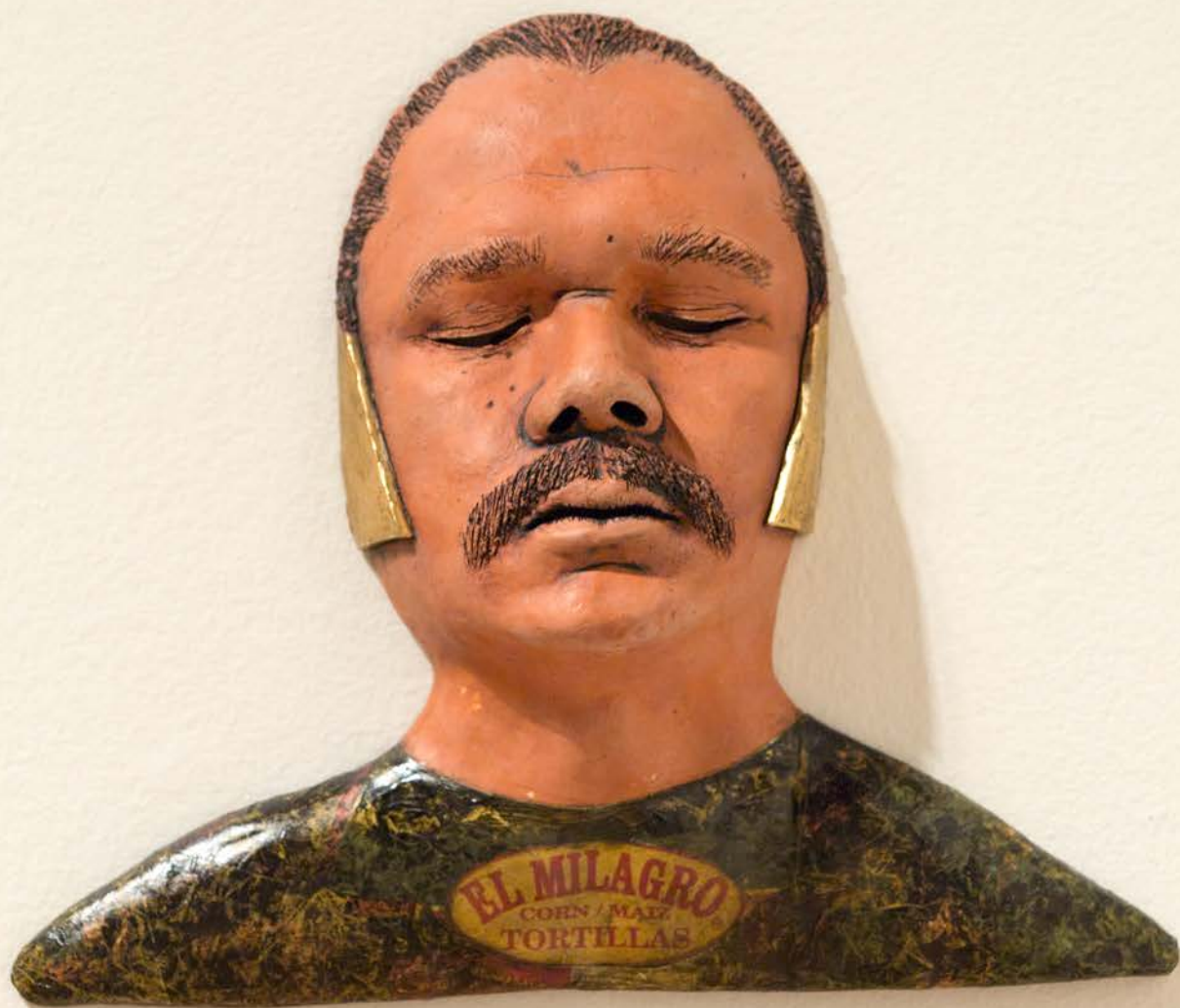
Enchapado
en theologies



Hay sí,
el muy europeo



Libertad, justicia
amor y fe...
blindness



We all consume
we all shit



Picante
pero sabroso



Double
consciousness



Lapata
desfigurado



El
marciano



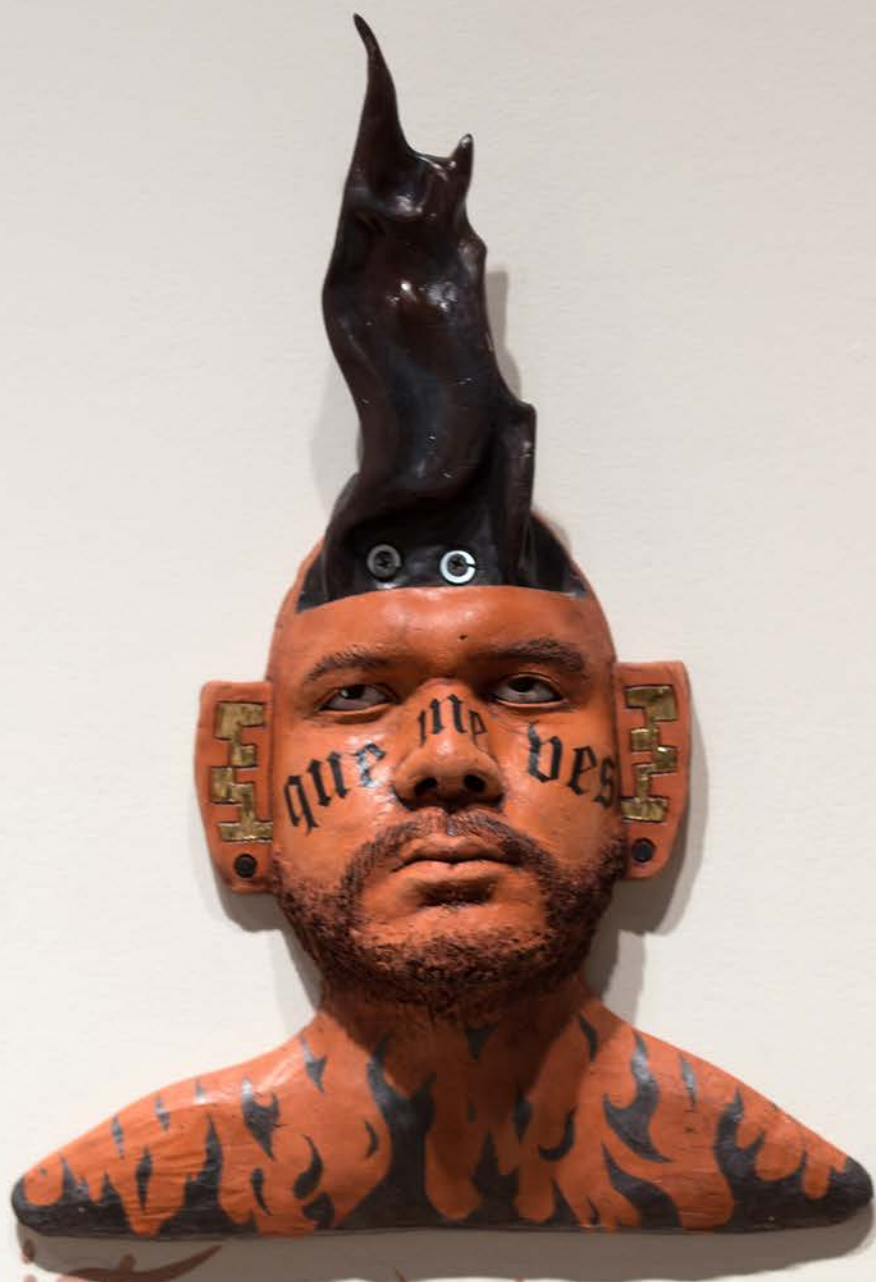
Orgullo,
maldición y
bendición



Handwritten signature or text in orange ink at the bottom of the image.

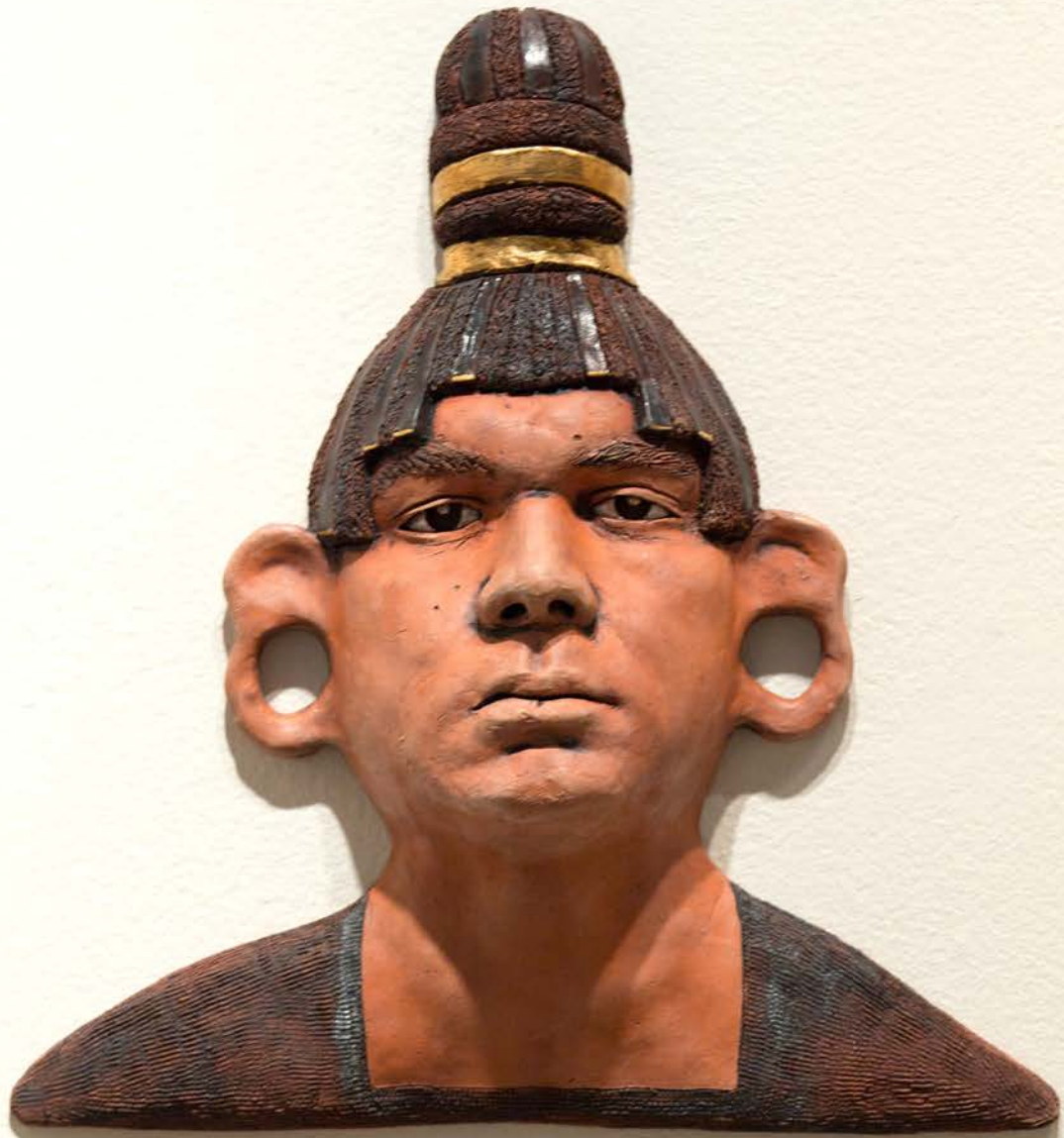


Trapped



¿Tengo cambios
en la cara
o qué?





*La Maria
pata rajada*



*¡Qué pinche susto!
la aparición de la
Virgen Morena*



THE DEVIL'S HIGHWAY LUIS ALBERTO URREA

Homi K. Bhabha The Location of Culture

W. E. B. DU BOIS THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK
EDITED BY DAVID LEVING LEE

THE NEW WORLD BORDER GUILLERMO O'DONNELL
USED

FREIRE pedagogy of the oppressed

DRINK CULTURA CHICANISMO José Antonio Burciaga
JOSHUA COLE EDITIONS/SANTA BARBARA

LUCY R. LIPPARD MIXED BLESSINGS PANTHEON

Decorative border with a repeating pattern of stylized, calligraphic characters in a reddish-brown color.



Small text on a wall panel, possibly a label or title, partially visible on the right side of the image.





Manilla
for a
white head
with Michigan

1877

ERIN
DONOR





*Liberated justice
smoky fl.
blindness*

*We all come
we'll die*

*Blacks
four billion*

*Two
American*

*Latino
defiance*

*Black
Marxism*

*Capital
industrial
industrial*

Capital

*Black
with
= 99%*

*Unsettling
the
White
with
Michigan*

Dust to dust





Dust to dust