

Chicano Art and the Politics of Place
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the historical context around the United Farm Workers in California and the Raza Unida Party in Texas that gave way, during the 1960s and 70s, to the emergence of a vital Chicano art movement in the Southwest. By means of labor and community organizing, Mexican Americans and their allies challenged social inequities based on racial, ethnic, and cultural prejudice. A history of Chicano art after 1968 focuses not only on the creative impulse of individual makers and their artworks; it looks also at the struggle of artists to create publics while achieving recognition through mainstream institutions. Addressing issues of artistic form, historic change, and political purpose, the course looks closely at narratives of display and the making of art history in the following museum exhibitions: *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation* (UCLA, 1991); *Just Another Poster? Chicano Graphic Arts in California* (2000, Blanton); *Chicano Visions* (SAMA, 2001), *Road to Aztlán* (LACMA, 2001), and *Phantom Sightings* (LACMA, 2008). Along this itinerary, discussions will examine the problem of representation in a variety of forms, media and genre; the struggle for human rights and cultural selfhood; as well as the politics of place, ethnicity, sexuality, and other mediated-mediating identities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Lectures, quizzes, short assignments, and exams will be directed toward achieving several broad goals (known to university administrators as “learning outcomes”). By the end of the course, students should:

- Know the major artistic developments of Chicano art and culture during the 1960s and 70s and understand their intersection with contemporaneous historical and cultural developments.
- Recognize and analyze individual works of art, media, and architecture in terms of their form, function, meaning, and reception within Chicano culture and wider contexts.
- Examine and analyze the function of museum exhibitions in the shaping of institutional art.
- Know and correctly apply terminology basic to the field.
- Effectively apply visual analysis as a component of a scholarly argument.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Gaspar de Alba, Alicia. 1998. *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Benavidez, Max. 2007. *Gronk*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

González, Rita, and Howard Fox, and Chon A. Noriega, eds. 2008. *Phantom Sightings: Art after the Chicano Movement*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Griswold del Castillo, Richard, Teresa McKenna, *et al*, eds. 1991. *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*. Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, University of California Los Angeles.

Marin, Cheech, Max Benavidez, Constance Cortez, and Terezita Romo. 2002. *Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge*. Boston: Little Brown.

Noriega, Chon A. Terezita Romo and Pilar Tompkins Rivas, eds. 2011. *L.A. Xicano*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Frequency of classes: Class is held two times a week: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Attendance at all sessions is required. Unexcused absences and repeated tardiness will be noted and will have an effect on your final grade.

Class Preparation: Students should thoroughly prepare for class by reading all material listed in the syllabus for that week. Class participation includes three 250-word postings on Blackboard. We will review various aspects of image analysis at various points throughout the semester, and study guides will be provided on Blackboard. Please bring the assigned readings and your notes to class. Helpful method: Create a binder with all the PDF printouts.

Blackboard: In this class we'll be using Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access: <http://courses.smu.edu>—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit reading assignments, and to provide study guides. You can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; please plan accordingly.

Postings: On **3** different occasions during the 15-week course [weeks 4, 8, and 13] students will upload to Blackboard a posting that consists of 2-3 paragraphs (250 words) with a critical viewpoint. This writing should function as a review and comparison of at least two readings assigned in the weeks prior to the posting due date. There is no set format with regard to Blackboard postings; but the writing should both report and

analyze; each entry depends on a well-argued response to the material and will be assessed on the level of engagement. While there is no grade assigned to these postings, they are a requirement and can make or break a borderline grade.

Midterm Exam: The midterm will consist of 15 PowerPoint image identifications in which examples of important artworks discussed in class are projected during the exam period; images are to be identified by the maker, work's title, year made. In addition you will be asked to define 5 keywords, to identify 5 of the readings, and to write a slide comparison in brief essay form. Bring a bluebook.

Final Exam: The final will be cumulative and will consist of 30 PowerPoint image identifications in which examples of important artworks discussed in class are projected during the exam period; images are to be identified by the maker, work's title, year made. In addition you will be asked to define 10 keywords, to identify 5 of the readings, and to write 2 slide comparisons in brief essay form. Bring a bluebook.

Short Research and Writing Assignment (x 2): Artwork Analysis + Exhibition Review: 4 pages (1000 words): Two short papers that look critically at specific artworks within their exhibition context. Your research and writing assignments will involve visits to museums, galleries, and other art spaces here in Dallas, such as the Dallas Latino Cultural Center or Oak Cliff Cultural Center. The due dates for assignments are listed in the week-by-week schedule. Only students' original work will be accepted. (Refer to the appropriate honor code and to guidelines for proper citation of sources.) No writing assignment will be accepted after the due date.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements.

Writing Assignments: [#1: due 2-14-12; #2 due 4-24-12]

Two different assignments will focus on the aesthetic and formal qualities of one artwork to explain its formal, aesthetic qualities and meaning in terms of Chicano-US Latino visual culture and its history. The initial description should identify the artist, life dates and place of origin (or culture group), the title of the object, date of production, materials and dimensions. Then in two pages discuss the work's visual interest as an aesthetic object. What materials and process did the artist employ? What style was she working in? What formal elements are typical of this artist, movement, or group's style? How does it appear to the eye and what impression does it convey? Your task is to rehearse in writing the aesthetic quality, craftsmanship, or visual interest of this object. Do not overwhelm

with biographical information. Keep your focus on the object itself. The last two pages should place the artwork within the larger context of the exhibition. How is the work consistent with or different from other works on display? How does its meaning change in relation to the exhibition as a whole, and in relation to the artistic, social, or political concern it addresses? [Length of each writing assignment: 4 pages | 1000 words]

Summary: Your final grade will be based on in-class participation and Blackboard postings (**20%**); 1 midterm + 1 final exam (**40%**); and 2 research-writing assignments @ 4-page (1000 words x 2), each paper being a critical analysis of a specific artwork and exhibition context (**40%**).

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Unit 1. History and Context

Week 1:

Tuesday, January 17

—Introduction | Syllabus Review

Thursday, January 19

Screening:

— National Latino Communications Center. 1996. *Chicano! History of the Mexican Civil Rights Movement*. Los Angeles. DVD video.

Useful resource for writing assignments:

—Brown, Elspeth H. 2005. “Reading the Visual Record.” In *Looking for America: An Historical Introduction to the Visual in American Studies*, ed. Ardis Cameron, 362-370. Oxford: Blackwell.

Week 2:

Tuesday, January 24

—Takaki, Ronald. 1993. “El Norte: The Borderland of Chicano America,” 311-339. In *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. New York: Little, Brown.

—Rendon, Armendo B. 1995. “Chicano Manifesto” and “El Plan de Aztlán,” 177-184. In *Takin’ It To the Streets: A Sixties Reader*, eds. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—“First National Chicana Conference,” 184-186. In *Takin’ It To the Streets: A Sixties Reader*, eds. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

— Valdez, Luis. “The Tale of La Raza,” 187-189. In *Takin’ It To the Streets: A Sixties Reader*. ed. A. Bloom and W. Breines. Oxford, Oxford University Press,

Thursday, January 26

Screening, scenes from:

— Valdez, Luis. 1981. *Zoot Suit*. Universal City, CA: Universal.

—Pizzato, Mark. 1998. “Brechtian and Aztec Violence in Valdez’s *Zoot Suit*.” In *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 26:2, 52-61.

Unit II. Chicano Visions

Week 3: [Posting 1 due date]***

Tuesday, January 31

—Ybarra-Frausto, Tomás. 1991. “Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility,” 155-162. In *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*. Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, University of California Los Angeles.

—Benavides, Max. 2002. “Chicano Art: Culture, Myth, and Sensibility,” 11-21. In *Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge*. Boston: Little Brown.

Thursday, February 2

—Romo, Terezita. 2002. “Mestiza Aesthetics and Chicana Painterly Visions,” 23-31. In *Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge*. Boston, Little Brown.

—Cortez, Constance. 2002. “Aztlán in Tejas: Chicano~a Art from the Third Coast,” 33-42. In *Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge*. Boston: Little Brown,

Unit III. CARA: Chicano Art, Resistance and Affirmation

Week 4:

Tuesday, February 7

—Gaspar de Alba, Alicia. 1998. “A Theoretical Introduction: Alter-Native Ethnography, *a lo rasquache*,” 1-30. In *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Thursday, February 9

—Gaspar de Alba, Alicia. 1998. “Mi casa [no] es su casa,” 31-88. In *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

—Goldman, Shifra, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. 1991. “The Political Contexts of Chicano Art,” 83-95. In *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*. Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, University of California Los Angeles.

Week 5:

Due date: Exhibition artwork review and analysis (4 pages: 1000 words). From:

—Griswold del Castillo, Richard, Teresa McKenna, *et al*, eds. 1991. *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*. Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, University of California Los Angeles.

Tuesday, February 14

—Gaspar de Alba, Alicia. 1998. “Through Serpent and Eagle Eyes: Intercultural Collaboration,” 91-118. In *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Thursday, February 16

—Gaspar de Alba, Alicia. 1998. “Out of the House, the Halo, and the Whore’s Mask: The Mirror of Malinchismo,” 119-160. In *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Week 6:**Tuesday, February 21**

—Gaspar de Alba, Alicia. 1998. “Between the Ghetto and the Melting Pot,” 161-198. In *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Thursday, February 23:

---- **Midterm Exam (Bluebooks required)**

Unit IV. Roads to Aztlán**Week 7: [Posting 2 due date]*******Tuesday, February 28**

—Mesa-Bains, Amalia. 2001. “Spiritual Geographies,” 332-341. In *The Road to Aztlán: Art from a Mythic Homeland*, eds. Virginia M. Fields and Victor Zamudio-Taylor. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Screening:

—Velez, Edin and Chon A Noriega 1993. *Revelaciones / Revelations: Hispanic Art of Evanescence*. Ithaca: Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University. Videocassette.

Thursday, March 1

—Zamudio-Taylor, Victor. 2001. “Inventing Tradition, Negotiating Modernism,” 342-357. In *The Road to Aztlán: Art from a Mythic Homeland*, eds. Virginia M. Fields and Victor Zamudio-Taylor. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Unit V. Just Another Poster?**Week 8:****Tuesday, March 6**

—Noriega, Chon. 2001. “Postermodernism,” 19-23. In *Just Another Poster? Chicano Graphic Arts in California*, eds. Chon Noriega and Holly Barnet-Sánchez. Santa Barbara, CA: University Art Museum, University of California Santa Barbara.

Thursday, March 8

—Goldman, Shifra M. 1984. “A Public Voice: Fifteen Years of Chicano Posters.” *Art Journal* 44:1, 50-57.

Week 9: Spring Break**Unit VI. Avant-Garde Art | Chicano Art | US Latino Art****Week 10:****Tuesday, March 20**

—Gamboa, Jr., Harry. 1991. “In the City of Angels, Chameleons, and Phantoms: Asco, a Case Study of Chicano Art in Urban Tones (or Asco was a Four-Member Word),” 121-130. In *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*, eds. Richard Griswold del Castillo, Teresa McKenna, et al. Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, University of California Los Angeles.

Thursday, March 22

—Noriega, Chon. 2008. “The Orphans of Modernism,” 17-41. In *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement*, eds. Rita González, Howard Fox and Chon Noriega. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Week 11:**Tuesday, March 27**

—Fox, Howard. 2008. “Theater of the Inauthentic,” 75-98. . In *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement*, eds. Rita González, Howard Fox and Chon Noriega. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Thursday, March 29

—Gonzalez, Rita. 2008. “Phantom Sites: The Official, the Unofficial, and the Orifical,” 47-73. In *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement*, eds. Rita González, Howard Fox and Chon Noriega. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Week 12:**Tuesday, April 3**

—Fox, Claire F. 1999. “Establishing Shots of the Border: The Fence and the River,” 41-67. In *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Thursday, April 5

—Benavidez, Max. 2007. “Introduction,” “Library Boy: Transit in the Inscribed City,” “Painting History: The Post Chicano Murals of Aztlán,” “Asco’s No Manifesto: The Avant-Garde in East Los Angeles,” and “Dreva/Gronk: Art Gangsters,” 1-60. In *Gronk*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Friday, April 6: University Holiday**Week 13: [Posting 3 due date]*******Tuesday, April 10**

—Benavidez, Max. 2007. “La Tormenta: The Eternal Enigma,” “Hotel Senator: Portal to the Underworld,” and “Urban Narrative: A World of Secret Affinities,” 61-96. . In *Gronk*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Thursday, April 12

—Carrillo, Sean. 1999. “East to Eden,” 38-42. In *Forming: The Early Days of L.A. Punk*. Santa Monica, CA: Smart Art Press.

—McKenna, Kristine. 1999. “Remembrance of Things Fast,” 26-37. In *Forming: The Early Days of L.A. Punk*. Santa Monica, CA: Smart Art Press.

Week 14:**Tuesday, April 17**

—Pérez, Laura E. 1998. “Spirit Glyphs: Reimagining Art and Artist in the Work of Chicana Tlamatinime,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 44.1, 36-76.

Thursday, April 19**Screening:**

—Lerner, Jesse, and Rubén Ortiz-Torres. 2005. *Fronterilandia/Frontierland (1995)*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Week 15:

Due date: Exhibition artwork review and analysis (4 pages: 1000 words). From:

Noriega, Chon A. Terezita Romo and Pilar Tompkins Rivas, eds. 2011. *L.A. Xicano*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press.

Tuesday, April 24

—Hernandez, Robb. 2006. “Performing the Archival Body in the Robert “Cyclona” Legorreta Fire of Life/El Fuego de la Vida Collection.” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 31:2, 113-125.

—Gómez-Peña, Guillermo. 1996. “The Artist as Criminal.” *The Drama Review* 40:1, 112-118.

Thursday, April 26:

—Visit to relevant museum or gallery exhibition.

Week 16:

Tuesday, May 1: In-Class Final Exam (Bluebooks required)

Guidelines for Writing Assignments

All writing must be double-spaced with standard margins in a 12-point font (do not justify the right-hand margin). Any material or insights gleaned from another source should be cited in either a parenthetical citation with a Works Cited page or a footnote with a full citation. If you are confused about how to cite properly please consult a style manual (preferably Chicago Manual of Style or MLA). Please consult the University honor code.

Writing Center: You are strongly encouraged to use the university’s Writing Center.

Additional Reading and Resources

- Cockcroft, Eva Sperling, and Holly Barnet-Sánchez, eds. 1993. *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Davalos, Karen Mary. 2001. *Exhibiting Mestizaje: Mexican (American) Museums in the Diaspora*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Davis, Mike. 2000. *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the US City*. New York: Verso.
- Fields, Virginia M. and Victor Zamudio-Taylor. 2001. *The Road to Aztlan: Art from a Mythic Homeland*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- Gómez-Peña, Guillermo. 1993. *Warrior for Gringostroika: Essays, Performance Texts, and Poetry*. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.
- Griswold del Castillo, Richard, Teresa McKenna, and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano. 1991. *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*. Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery; University of California Los Angeles.
- Martinez, Daniel J., and David Levi Strauss. 1996. *The Things You See When You Don't Have a Grenade!* Beverly Hills, Calif.: Smart Art Press.
- Mesa-Bains, Amalia. 1993. *Ceremony of Spirit: Nature and Memory in Contemporary Latino Art*. San Francisco: Mexican Museum.
- Pérez, Laura E. 2007. *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- University of Colorado Art Galleries (1992). *Chicano/Latino Art: Images in the Age of Aids*. Colorado Council on the Arts & Humanities.
- Ziff, Trisha, Lucy Lippard, et al. (1995). *Distant Relations = Cercanías distantes = Clann i gCéin : Chicano, Irish, Mexican Art and Critical Writing*. Santa Monica, CA: Smart Art Press.

Web Resource:

— *Aztlán* (Journal). Los Angeles, Chicano Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles. [Available online from Metapress UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press; available from 1970 volume: 1 issue: 1.]