"VOCERO ULTRATUMBA DE MICTLÁN HACIA AZTLÁN HASTA EL ANAHUAC... Y QUE?"

LA CALAVERA POCHA

Saturday, November 2, EL MERO DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS DEL AÑO 2013 — *Edicion panteonera traducido al espanglesis*

SELF HELP GRAPHICS & ART

40TH ANNIVERSARY DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS CELEBRATION

Top Right: Calavera by Sergio Sánchez Santamaría Left: Día de los Dead Bottom: Conversation with Mictlantecuhtli by Daniel González ©2012

RAÍZ *y* RAMA: *AT THE CROSSROADS TO MICTLÁN*

a curatorial statement by Daniel González

In 1973, a group of artists from Self Help Graphics and Art, Inc., celebrated their first Día de los Muertos. By bringing this spiritual practice to Los Angeles, Chicanos and Mexicanos took a centuries-old tradition, and re-contextualized it. Day of the Dead was not only a way to commemorate the dead and commune with ancestors. It became a way of establishing identity, a vehicle for protest, and a way to publicly mourn and process the harsh experience of loss at a time when veterans were returning from Vietnam. Día de los Muertos at Self Help Graphics and Art, through art workshops and the participation of the community and artists, created a sense of family and a colorful spectacle. The visibility of this event stood in sharp contrast to the outsider's gaze that viewed the Eastside only as a blighted community, historically marginalized and wracked by gang violence.

Today, Self-Help Graphics and Art celebrates its 40th anniversary and continues the tradition of Día de Muertos, the largest celebration East of the Los Angeles River. The holiday is now entering the mainstream in the United States and has been appropriated by corporations seeking to gain access to "Hispanic" markets, companies creating mass-produced products and by those who use it simply as an aesthetic to decorate their parties. This acceptance into the mainstream sheds the meaningful and sacred aspect of the tradition and is not a reflection of the origins of Día de los Muertos as a millennial, spiritual practice that is rooted in the tradition of our pre-Columbian ancestors. It is a ritual celebration that has inspired scholars, poets and writers who have added depth and meaning to its festivities and the artwork that surrounds it.

Raíz y Rama: On the Crossroads to Mictlán is a celebration of art that exhibits the complex understanding that artists now possess about Día de los Muertos as a result of many years of scholarly work, knowledge gathering and community participation. Their art is rooted in traditions that span thousands of years back, yet will prove relevant and meaningful to present and future generations. The Mexica ideal of the Toltécatl, the artist, as a sincere "dialogue with one's heart, one who meets things with their mind" is present in all these artworks, literary pieces, and scholarly works, placing before us a visual ofrenda of their visions of Day of the Dead.

RAÍZ *y* RAMA:

En la encruciajada hacia Mictlán

una declaración curatorial por Daniel González

En 1973, un grupo de artistas de la organizacion Self Help Graphics and Art, celebró el primer Día de los Muertos en Los Angeles. Al llevar esta práctica espiritual a Los Angeles, chicanos y mexicanos re-contextulizaron una tradición de siglos antes. Día de los Muertos no era solo una manera de conmemorar a los muertos y estar en comunión con los antepasados, sino que se convirtió en una forma de establecer la identidad, un vehículo para la protesta, y una manera de llorar públicamente y procesar la dura experiencia de la pérdida y la muerte a través de la celebración de la vida de una persona. Día de los Muertos en Self Help Graphics and Art, a través de talleres artesanales con la participación de la comunidad y de varios artistas, crearon un sentido de familia y un colorido espectáculo que estaba en marcado contraste con la mirada del forastero que ve la comunidad sólo como un barrio arruinada que ha sido históricamente marginado y plagado por la violencia pandillera.

Hoy, Self Help Graphics and Art celebra su 40 aniversario y continúa la tradición de celebrar el Día de Muertos, la celebración más grande este del río de Los Angeles. Ahora, la celebración se está incorporando a la cultura Estadounidense y es apropiada por corporaciones que buscan tener acceso a los mercados hispanos, empresas que crean productos fabricados en grandes cantidades y por personas que lo utilizan como una estética para decorar sus fiestas. Esta incorparacíon arroja el aspecto sagrado y significativo de esta tradición y no es un reflejo de lo que Día de los Muertos es: una práctica spiritual, milenial que tiene sus raíces en la tradición de nuestros antepasados indígenas. Se trata de una celebración y tradición ritual que también ha producido académicos, poetas y escritores que han añadido profundidad y significado al arte que ha sido inspirada por y a partir de estas obras.

Raíz y Rama: En la encrucijada hacia Mictlán*, es una celebración de arte que exhibe la complejidad, profundidad y entendimiento que los artistas ahora tienen sobre el Día de los muertos a resultado de muchos años de trabajo académico, acumulación de conocimientos y la participación de la comunidad. Arte que tiene sus raíces en las tradiciones que abarcan miles de años atrás y se extienden hacia adelante hoy como obras relevantes y llenas de sentido. Incorporada en estas obras estan presentes los ideales Mexica's de lo que es ser un Toltécatl, un artista, un sincero, "diálogo con el corazón, uno que se acerca a las cosas con su mente" y a los visitants les presenta un ofrenda visual de lo que ellos ven en la práctica de Día de los Muertos.*

CONTRIBUTORS

MICHAEL A. AMESCUA was born in Morenci, Arizona and currently lives in East LA. Amescua obtained a degree in Anthropology from Occidental College, specializing in Pre-Columbian myth and ritual, and was a long time artist in residence at Self-Help Graphics in East Los Angeles. Working in steel as a primary medium, he reinterprets traditional art forms and his pieces can be found in collections at UCLA, the Rincon Indian Reservation, and the Wilfredo Lam Museum in Havana, Cuba.

GLORIA ENEDINA ALVAREZ is a Chicana poet/intermedia artist, playwright, librettist, literary translator and curator, presently teaches creative writing and works as a consultant in public schools, universities, libraries, museums, and art centers. Her literary/artistic efforts have been recognized by the CAC, National Endowment for the Arts, Cultural Affairs Department, City of L.A., COLA Award, Poets & Writers, Inc., among others. She has published and read widely in the U.S., Latin America and Europe. Her plays and librettos for opera, Los Biombos, Cuento de un Soldado/ Story of a Soldier, El Niño, have been produced internationally. Her books of poetry in English and Spanish include La Excusa/The Excuse and Emerging en un Mar De Olanes. Her poetry has been published in various anthologies and numerous periodicals.

TOMAS BENITEZ has been an advocate of Chicano/ Latino arts and culture for nearly 40 years, and has served as a consultant to the Smithsonian Institute, the President's Council for the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts, the University of Notre Dame, USC, UCLA, the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, and the California Arts Council. He has lectured on Chicano art and culture in Berlin, Mexico City, London, Glasgow, Tel Aviv, and Pretoria South Africa, as well as numerous cultural centers, major institutions and universities throughout the United States. Tomas is the former Executive Director of Self Help Graphics & Art in East Los Angeles. He is a Commissioner for the County of Los Angeles Arts Commission (1st District, Supervisor Gloria Molina), and is a founding member, of LAN (The Latino Arts Network of California), currently Chairman of the Board of Directors. Tomas is also a founding member of the Latino Baseball History Project of the Baseball Reliquary.

ENDY is an intermedia and performance community artist. Her work is rooted in the tradition of Danza Azteca and branches out through training in Butoh, and meditation. She has performed solo work throughout Southern California and Mexico, as well as in France, and Japan. Collaborations as a founding member of The Border Corps (a performance art collective), Letras del Maguey (A writing group based in Belvedere, East L.A.) Colibrí Boutique and Tonalli Studio (in Old Town Maravilla, East L.A.) have been very important in her work.

CARRIBEAN FRAGOZA is a writer and artist from South El Monte, CA. She has published fiction and poetry in publications such as Palabra Literary Magazine and Emohippus as well as arts/culture reviews and essays on online national and international magazines such as Letras Libres, Culture Strike, and Tropics of Meta. She is a graduate of UCLA and CalArts' MFA Writing Program. She is also founder and co-director of the South El Monte Art Posse, a multi-disciplinary arts collective.

COLIN GUNCKEL is an assistant professor in American Culture, Screen Arts and Cultures and Latina/o Studies at the University of Michigan.

DR. CARLOS MANUEL HARO was raised in the Boyle Heights area of East Los Angeles and graduated from Roosevelt High School. He then attended UCLA and received three degrees, including a doctorate from the UCLA Graduate School of Education. He joined the staff of UCLA in 1975 and remained with the university his entire professional career, where he served as the Assistant Dean of UCLA's International Studies and Overseas Programs for eighteen years, as Program Director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) from 1975-1983, and then as Assistant Director of the Center from 2002-2008. Dr. Haro now serves as Assistant Director Emeritus and as Postdoctoral Scholar in Residence at the UCLA CSRC. Upon his retirement from UCLA, the CSRC established The Carlos M. Haro Scholarship Fund to support UCLA graduate students conducting research in the area of Chicano education. He is the author and editor of many publications and also has a long track record of community and public service.

REGINA MARCHI is a former journalist in Central America and an Associate Professor in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rutgers University. More details about the genesis of Día de los Muertos in California are found in her book, Day of the Dead in the USA: The Migration and Transformation of a Cultural Phenomenon (2009: Rutgers University Press), winner of an International Latino Book Award and the James Carey Award for Media Research.

ELLA MARIA DÍAZ is an assistant professor of English and Latino/a Studies at Cornell University. She was a lecturer at the San Francisco Art Institute from 2006 until 2012. Ella has published through U.C. Santa Barbara's Imaginarte e-publication, Aztlán: The Journal of Chicano Studies, and in Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social.

LARA MEDINA is a professor in Chicana/o Studies at California State University, Northridge. Her research and teaching areas are Chicana/o spiritualities and Chicana/o history. Her most recent work is on "nepantla spirituality," an inclusive worldview emerging from the center space or the cultural crossroads that Chicanas/os are born into. Her essay, "Nepantla Spirituality: An Emancipative Vision for Inclusion" in Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation, Harold Recinos, ed. (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), explains more. Lara is also a reiki practitioner and ritual facilitator.

LUIS ALBERTO URREA, 2005 Pulitzer Prize finalist for nonfiction and member of the Latino Literature Hall of Fame, is a prolific and acclaimed writer who uses his dual-culture life experiences to explore greater themes of love, loss and triumph.

Born in Tijuana, Mexico to a Mexican father and an American mother, Urrea has published extensively in all the major genres. The critically acclaimed and best-selling author of 13 books, Urrea has won numerous awards for his poetry, fiction and essays. The Devil's Highway, his 2004 non-fiction account of a group of Mexican immigrants lost in the Arizona desert, won the Lannan Literary Award and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the Pacific Rim Kiriyama Prize. An historical novel, The Hummingbird's Daughter tells the story of Teresa Urrea, sometimes known as the Saint of Cabora and the Mexican Joan of Arc. The book, which involved 20 years of research and writing, won the Kiriyama Prize in fiction and, along with The Devil's Highway, was named a best book of the year by many publications. It has been optioned by acclaimed Mexican director Luis Mandoki for a film to star Antonio Banderas.

SYBIL VENEGAS is an art historian, writer, educator, and independent curator. She is a renowned scholar in the field of Chicana/o art history and is recognized as a seminal scholar in Chicana feminist art history and the cultural politics of Día de los Muertos ceremonials in Chicano/Latino communities. Her articles and curatorial essays have been published in numerous catalogs and also appear in her website: www.chicanoart.org.

LINDA VALLEJO Linda Vallejo consolidates multiple, international influences gained from a life of study and travel throughout Europe, the United States and Mexico to create paintings, sculptures, and installations that investigate contemporary cultural, political, spiritual and environmental issues. She has exhibited across the U.S. and in Mexico and her work is in multiple permanent collections. Vallejo is currently represented by the George Lawson Gallery in San Francisco, California.

Image by Daniel González ©2012

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

PAVEL ACEVEDO was born in Oaxaca, Mexico in 1984. His art education started at the Rufino Tamayo workshop in Oaxaca city taking drawing classes, painting and lithography while also taking classical drawing, silkscreen, scientific illustration. He is part of the first graduating class of Escuela de Bellas Artes Oaxaca (School fo the Fine Arts Oaxaca) where he studied painting. Pavel's work begins through personal experiences, questioning his identity and the recognition of himself and others through his figurative work. He currently resides in Riverside where he continues to exhibit locally and internationally.

BÉATRICE CORON tells stories informed by life. Her own life colors her work: after briefly studying art at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Lyon, and Mandarin Chinese at the Université of Lyon III, Coron experienced life with a series of odd jobs. She has been, among others, a shepherdess, truck driver, factory worker, cleaning lady and New York City tour guide. She has lived in France (her native country) , Egypt and Mexico for one year each, and China for two years. She moved to New York in 1985, where she reinvented herself as an artist.

Coron's oeuvre includes illustration, book arts, fine art and public art. She cuts her characteristic silhouette designs in paper and Tyvek. She also creates works in stone, glass, metal, rubber, stained glass and digital media. Her work has been purchased by major museum collections, such as the Metropolitan Museum, the Walker Art Center and The Getty. Her public art can be seen in subways, airport and sports facilities among others.

CHICOMECOATL are a danza Mexica group headed by María Correa. They serve primarily the community of Boyle Heights and are committed to teaching Mexica dance and culture to youth so that it can endure and exist in future generations. Classes are free and they are held at Hollenbeck Park Thursday evenings.

RICARDO ESTRADA is a native Angelino. His work reflects the essence of his community. Estrada's work is a mixture of multiple philosophies that cross-generational gaps and portrays the complexity of the Mexican American identity. Before acquiring his B.A. in studio arts from CSULA he was fortunate to study under Jim Uyekawa at East Los Angeles College. It was at ELAC where he had the opportunity to work closely with Raul Anguiano (Mexican muralist). Estrada's fascination with the syncretism that exists in the Mexican American culture continues to be evident in his work. Estrada continues to paint murals with various artists whom share his beliefs in beautifying and educating communities.

OFELIA ESPARZA is an artist and educator who was born March 12, 1932 in East Los Angeles where she still resides. She was graduated from ELA College and Cal-State University Los Angeles, and is a retired teacher form Los Angeles Unified School District. She recounts that art and her cultural heritage have long been a driving force in her lifestyle, in her teaching and in all her art. She is widely known for her Day of the Dead altar installations at Self Help Graphics & Art. In addition, she has also created a large body of work in printmaking there. Her prints and painting are in several private and institutional collections. Ofelia's work has been exhibited throughout Southern California and has been shown at several prominent national and international museums and galleries. Ofelia continues to accept commissions, teach art, conduct workshops and lecture in schools, colleges and community venues. Her art has been documented in several publications, archives and on television.

JENNIFER GUTIERREZ MORGAN is a native Angeleno . She earned her BA in Chicano/Latino Studies from California State University Long Beach. As a visual artist, she utilizes her practice of photography, printmaking and mixed media installation to reflect her curiosity and personal processes navigating the human condition. She has exhibited nationally at many galleris and museums . Currently, she is founder of Sustainable Arts Los Angeles (SALA), a multigenerational, independnt arts education program providing intentional and ultra imaginative curriculum for Angelinos of all communities. She currently lives in Los Angeles and works as an Art Educator.

INSTITUTO GRÁFICO DE CHICAGO is committed to promoting the art of printmaking; by creating opportunities for artists to participate in print exchange portfolio projects & exhibitions, provide free arts education programing and expose community members to printmaking and local artists through educational programs and events.

OMAR N. LÓPEZ is a Los Angeles based Designer and Media Artist born in Mexicali, B.C. Mexico and raised in the Coachella Valley. He recently graduated from the Design | Media Arts Department at the University of California, Los Angeles. Mixing contemporary media technologies and traditional mediums, Omar creates work spanning video, installation, sculpture, illustration and graphic design. His current practice incorporates repurposing objects to tell the personal stories of his Mexican origins, past memories and to revisit ideas imagined during his youth. He is currently Design Director for non-profit organization Peace Over Violence and Lead Designer for CÓL.

REBECA MÉNDEZ was born in Mexico City and received her MFA from Art Center College of Design. She is currently a professor in the department of Design | Media Arts at UCLA.

Méndez has created award winning public artworks, has lectured and exhbited internationally. She has received extensive international recognition, including the 2012 National Design Award, Communication Design, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution; artist residencies at the Gunnar Gunnarson Institute in Iceland, at The Arctic Circle, and at HIAP at the world heritage site of the historical fortress island of Suomenlinna, Helsinki, Finland. Méndez is recipient of a 2010 California Community Foundation Mid Career Fellowship for Visual Artist and was selected for the Artist Pension Trust, México City.

Méndez's interest in the nature of matter—in cycles and systems, specifically the forces and cross-rhythmic tensions that make natural phenomena emerge—stem from her growing up in two seemingly entropic environments, Mexico City and the Mexican jungle, where she would follow her father in pursuit of Mayan archaeology. Common to both environments is hypercomplexity, multiplicity, and constant change. Méndez's move to Los Angeles and her expeditions to geologically young Iceland and the severe high arctic have furthered this impetus.

Rebeca Méndez currently lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Adam Eeuwens, and their two cats.

STEPHANIE MERCADO Stephanie Mercado is a Mexican - American Los Angeles artist born and raised in Boyle Heights. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting and drawing from California State University Long Beach in 2007. She has exhibited nationally and internationally since 2006. Her work merges historical imagery with contemporary issues concerning identity construction and the pursuit of the American Dream.

REYES RODRÍGUEZ is a Los Angeles Artist, Curator and Global Music collector. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Drawing and Painting from Cal State University Long Beach. He is the founder-director of Trópico de Nopal Gallery-Art Space in Los Angeles where he has been the curator of a number of significant exhibitions. He is also the originator of the Calavera Fashion Show and Walking Altars celebration at the same gallery. In 2007 he was featured as part on the annual LA Weekly, "People 2007" issue that highlighted 100 of the most interesting and influential Angelinos. One of his latest projects is hosting a web based radio program entitled, Art & Grooves on Radio Sombra

ARTURO ERNESTO ROMO-SANTILLANO was born in Los Angeles, California. His artwork, mostly mixed media and installation work, has been exhibited internationally. His subject matter is influenced by conspiracy theory and doubling agents, junkyards, sprawling urban and inner entheogenics, hilaritas and fatigue. His art-making is inspired by explorations on the streets of East Los Angeles, which feed into an ongoing series of fake radio shows called The Recent Rupture Radio Hour, created with writer Sesshu Foster.

VICTOR SOLIS has been building Day of the Dead altars annually for more than 20 years. He looks forward to this time of the year with excitement and great anticipation. Little did Victor know that at one time he would be building one for his mother and then his father the following year. This year Victor dedicates his altar to Chocho, his East L.A. Blue Chihuahua. All of these altars are very dificult for Victor to create loaded with tremendous pain and tristeza. Somehow, he hopes that his deceased loved ones aer looking over him and blessing his path until he reunites with them again. Victor thanks and keeps the memory of his father, mother and Chochito this Day of the Dead.

XOLO COLLECTIVE is a printmaking group based out of Self Help Graphics and is comprised of William Acedo, Alvaro D. Marquez , Victor Rosas, and John Tallacksen.

In commemoration of the 100th José Guadalupe Posada'a death, we present a series of relief/linocut prints that expore the mediums abillity to visually narrate contemporary social issues. While not always political in nature, Posada's legacy is one which has shaped the aesthetic and practices which inform our efforts. He offers images with the hope that these will both delight the eyes and trigger questions about the world in which we live.

Image by José Guadalupe Posada

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Self Help Graphics & Art celebrates 4 decades of Chicano and Latino art and culture with its 40th Anniversary Día de los Muertos celebration, Raiz y Rama: On the Crossroads to Mictlán. In many ways, Self Help Graphics has journeyed the road to Mictlán and back throughout its history, and we celebrate our reunion with our comunidad both living and dead on November 2.

Self Help Graphics & Art's 40th Anniversary Día de los Muertos' visual artist and exhibition curator is Daniel Gonzalez, who conceptualized and created this year's theme. We are thrilled to have Daniel's vision and incredible respect for both historical interpretations of this beloved holiday, as well as for the avant garde translations of this celebration's universal values and themes. Daniel has invited exhibition artists to explore work that is informed by this holiday's seemingly paradoxical nature: past and present, old and new, alive and dead. Daniel's comfort and knowledge of the ambiguous place between these seemingly opposite states, tells of his own ease in navigating dualities having grown up in El Teúl, Zacatecas, Mexico and now in the urban terrain of Los Angeles.

Daniel's trajectory as a printmaker and artist goes back to his apprenticeships with artists such as George Yepes and Artemio Rodriquez of La Mano Press (located at Self Help Graphics' former location on Cesar E. Chavez and Gage Avenues.) With his studies in graphic arts at the California College of Arts and Crafts, Daniel's limited edition fine art serigraph print, produced especially for this year's Día de los Muertos, represents the perfect symbiosis between relief and silkscreen printmaking processes.

As with the past four decades, our month-long series of arts and craft workshops, related to Día de los Muertos, takes place every Saturday in October, inviting our local and regional community to share in conocimiento through various creative processes. Special to this year, Self Help Graphics will host its annual Noche de Ofrenda at Grand Park in Downtown Los Angeles. With majestic views extending from Los Angeles' Music Center to City Hall, this year's event will feature 40 altars for 40 years of Self Help Graphics' history.

Self Help Graphics & Art's Día de los Muertos celebration was initiated by community and artists in 1973, creating a link to the popular celebration in Mexico. As in the different Mexican regions, Self Help Graphics' celebration is distinct to the Latino community in Los Angeles. On our yearly day of remembering that life is a dream from which one day we will awaken, we gather for music and community to celebrate our beloved who are no longer with us. We paint our faces in duality – half calaca and half ourselves, revealing the ancient duality of life.

Self Help Graphics & Art celebra 4 décadas de arte y cultura chicana y latina, con la celebración de su 40 Aniversario del Día de los Muertos con el tema, Raíz y Rama: En la encrucijada hacia Mictlán. En muchos sentidos, Self Help Graphics ha viajado el camino hacia Mictlán y a regresado a lo largo de su historia, y hoy celebramos nuestra reunion con nuestra comunidad, presente y difunta el 2 de noviembre.

Self Help Graphics & Art en este 40 Aniversario de la celebración de Día de los Muertos a seleccionado al artista Daniel González como comisario de exposiciones y director del tema de este año. Estamos encantados de tener la visión de Daniel y su increíble respeto por ambas interpretaciones tradicionales e históricas de este día de fiesta, igual como a las de traducciones de la vanguardia artistica, quien tambien preservan los valores y temas universales de esta celebración. Daniel ha invitado a varios artistas quienes su obra está informada por el origen paradójico de esta fiesta: pasado y presente, viejo y nuevo, vivo y muerto. El conocimiento y la facilidad con que Daniel navega entre estos espacios ambiguos y aparentemente opuestos, entre estas dualidades, se debe a su niñez campesina en El Teúl, Zacatecas, México y ahora su vida en el paisaje urbano de Los Angeles.

La trayectoria artistica de Daniel como impresor y artista plastico inicia con sus aprendizajes con artistas como George Yepes y Artemio Rodríguez de La Mano Press (que se encontraba en la antigua ubicación de Self Help Graphics an la calle Cesar E. Chávez y Gage.) Con sus estudios de artes gráficas en el Califronia College of Arts & Crafts, las ediciónes de Daniel y la serigrafía producida especialmente para el Día de los Muertos este año, representa una simbiosis perfecta entre los procesos del grabado y serigrafía.

Como en las últimas cuatro décadas, nuestra serie de talleres de artesanías en relación con el Día de los Muertos se lleva a cabo todos los sábados de octubre, invitando a la comunidad local y regional para compartir en este conocimiento a través de diversos procesos creativos. Este año, Self Help Graphics celebrará su anual Noche de Ofrenda en el Grand Park en el centro de Los Angeles. Con majestuosas vistas que se extienden desde Los Angeles Music Center hacia City Hall, el evento de este año contará con 40 altares que significan los 40 años de historia de Self Help Graphics.

La celebración de Día de los Muertos en Self Help Graphics & Art fue iniciada en 1973 por la comunidad y los artistas, creando un enlace a la celebración popular en México. Igual a las diferentes regiones de México, la celebración de Self Help Graphics es distinta y refleja la comunidad latina en Los Ángeles. En este día anualmente recordamos que la vida es un sueño del que un día nos despertaremos, nos reunimos para escuchar música y para estar unidos en comunidad para celebrar nuestros queridos que ya no están con nosotros. Pintamos nuestras caras en dualidad - mitad calavera y mitad nuestro rostro, revelando la antigua dualidad de la vida.

Evonne Gallardo

Executive Director, Self Help Graphics & Art
Directora Ejecutiva, Self Help Graphics & Arttt

Last Stand at La Mesa by Daniel González ©2012

El Día de los Muertos: *A Universal Celebration*

By Michael A. Amescua

Ritual and ceremony is as old as man. It is a reflection of our Universe both visible and invisible. It is an expression of man's inner self, his unity with the creation around him and his experiences within this unity. Our celebrations are varied and each person who participates in celebration brings with them his or her own reasons fro celebrating his or her own understanding of what the celebration symbolizes to them.

Among the most common celebrations are those of birth, marriage and death. The traditional Mexican celebration of El Día de los Muertos or "The Day of the Dead" is a national holiday celebrated on November 2. This autumn celebration commemorates the dead and reaffirms the joy of life. While giving the expression of reverence to those who have died, the Day of the Dead gives expression to an even greater celebration; that of a deeper understanding for and a greater sense of the joy of living.

In Mexico, an intimate acceptance of death as part of the cycle of life extends back into pre-historic times. In the Aztec culture, which preceded the coming of the Europeans, death shows itself again and again as a familiar image. These ancient themes were joined over the centuries with the Spanish celebration of All Souls Day. Together, they form today's universal festival of many facets, El Día de los Muertos.

The Mexican people begin preparations for this celebration of October 31st. An altar is set up on a freshly woven mat in the home with samples of food on new plates, special breads fashioned to resemble animals are part of the feast, gaily decorated small candles in clay holders provide light and various flowers lay among the other offerings. The head of the house calls upon "angelitos" (little angels who have died) to come and savor the meal. This he/she does by setting off sky rockets to attract the dead ones' attention. The deceased adults receive a similar offering, but in greater quantity during the next day. On November 1, friends and neighbors visit, pray and partake of the family repast. On the following day, November 2, Mass is attended and then all proceed to the cemetery. There families repaint crosses, strew the graves with flowers, and sprinkle them with holy water. Praying, they burn incense and light dozens of tapers to help the souls on their journeys. In some areas an all night vigil is held at the grave.

The market place is filled with the beautiful and the bizarre – marigolds, (symbols of death in Mexico) and other flowers, candles, fruit, special foods, and skeletons or calaveras are all part of the colorful scene. The calaveras, one of the most memorable aspects of the festival, can be seen everywhere, in giant puppet-like figures, as well as, in small sugar skulls, a delicacy that all enjoy. Printed calaveras remind those celebrating that death is a part of the reality of existence; something not to be feared.

It is believed that on this day of the dead, no tears should drop because t would make the road slippery and dangerous for the souls on their journey. What is needed on this day is to provide food, flowers, light and happiness; the things the dead ones need most.

Since the humble beginnings in 1973 by Self Help Graphics, El Día de los Muertos celebration in Los Angeles, has brought contemporary expression and a new life to a centuries old indigenous tradition. The Day of the Dead celebration has renewed interest in cultural and art events throughout California's Latin American population. Statewide Chicano art groups have developed exhibitions, publications, community celebrations, and altars in the Day of the Dead tradition. With the help of meDía coverage which has included major network television and radio coverage, as well as, articles appearing in nationally and internationally published magazines and newspapers, people of various cultures have become aware of this colorful Mexican tradition and have responded with enthusiasm. El Día de los Muertos is now a part of California's annual festival calendar.

Image by Victor Rosas ©2013

My First Memories of El Día de Los Muertos Celebration at Self Help

Linda Vallejo

My first memories of El Día de Los Muertos begin in 1976 with a request to the National Endowment of the Humanities written by Sister Karen Boccalero and Virginia Torres (aka René Acosta). Karen and Virginia were working frantically to develop this new idea and writing it up to meet the deadline. When you got Virginia and Karen in a room together the ideas would fly!

The studio was abuzz with the possibility of studying El Día de Los Muertos, particularly its meaning and importance to the Chicano community we served. Sister Karen wanted Día de Los Muertos to become "part of Chicano culture" with families visiting the gravesites of loved ones; altars dedicated to loved ones and ancestors in community and home celebrations; and a curriculum that the artists of the Barrio Mobile Art Studio (BMAS) could use in teaching children about the history and values of this "celebration of life." The NEH grant would allow us to find and research materials in order to create a curriculum for our students and the community through an event and art workshops.

Image by Álvaro Daniel Márquez ©2013

The grant was awarded and we began searching for information. It appeared that El Día de Los Muertos didn't exist anywhere in the US and that very few books, articles or publications about the celebration could be found. The Internet didn't exist back in 1976, so the only way to research was to call and visit libraries. We searched nationwide and I remember that we were saddened by the dearth of materials. We consulted with historians and professors specializing in the history of Mexico and found a lot of material about Mictlantecuhtli, the Aztec god of death and the underworld, as well as the traditional celebration in Puebla, Mexico.

The celebration in Puebla begins the night before with an all-night vigil (velación) at gravesites cleaned and decorated with gold and yellow marigolds (cempasúchiles) and candles to light the way of the ancestors. This would be followed by a daylong celebration with carpets of marigolds and papel picado covering the roadways and fireworks to help guide the spirits of the children to join their families once again.

During this time my husband Ron and I traveled a great deal to Mexico and we started collecting books and catalogs on El Día de Los Muertos. Many of these books were used as study guides for the BMAS curriculum and classes, as well as student and community art workshops. I remember Sister Karen requiring BMAS teachers to develop lesson plans. Boy! Did she have to nail us down to get that job done! Our studies in the Día de Los Muertos tradition informed our classes bringing its history and values to the children we taught. We taught them to honor their ancestors and to give thanks for and enjoy life.

From these studies and research also came the first Día de Los Muertos celebration at Self Help Graphics and Art, Inc. I remember it well. Sister Karen, Sister Beth, Sister Pius, Michael Amescua, Cecilia Castaneda Quintero, and I decorated what was to become Galeria Otra Vez with traditional altars, banana leaves we gathered from the neighborhood, papel picado, photographs of our own family members, and plates of homemade enchiladas, molé, rice and beans.

On the evening of November 2, 1977 we gathered in a circle around an incense burner (pebetero) filled with burning sage and Sister Karen lead us in a prayer to remember our ancestors and give thanks for life. She said, "This burning incense is like my burning heart." This intimate circle of friends and colleagues then shared a meal of food that we had made ourselves. My memory of the room is of the light blue paper used to make the papel picado and the pebetero sitting on the floor as we gathered in prayer and thanksgiving.

During these early years when Self Help was still located at 2111 Brooklyn Ave., the Teatro Campesino joined us. Behind the building was a small parking lot that Sister Karen would rent for the outside celebration. Teatro Campesino really got the community going! They came with their street theater in full Día de Los Muertos regalia and raised the roof! One year we built a stage in the parking lot for their performance, while the altars and workshops were offered upstairs. The next year they presented an entire play at Roosevelt High School for an auditorium packed crowd.

These first celebrations also included a parade (desfile) led by maestro Florencio Yescas' Azteca dance troupe all the way down Brooklyn Ave. to Evergreen Cemetery. I remember Sister Karen having a really hard time each year convincing the city to close down the street for the parade. But somehow she always got it done. You can imagine the parade! Danzantes with drums, chachayotes, and rattles leading the way! My danza maestra, Josefina Gallardo, has told me that many of our community's Azteca danzantes found their way into danza by participating in Self Help's Día de Los Muertos in those early days. One year, Leo Limón created a big splash for the parade by decorating a car with a giant image of the Virgen de Guadalupe.

The desfile of danzantes, artists, children and families dressed up as calaveras and calacas would march to Evergreen Cemetery for an indigenous prayer led by Joey Rivera followed by a mass with Father Gino. Joey would dress in a white loincloth and a headdress (penacho) of blue macaw feathers and solemnly dedicate the celebration to the ancestor gods. Father Gino offered a full mass with altar, Eucharist and wine.

The community came alive with the celebration! BMAS set the stage by teaching classes and inviting the community to participate in the celebration and free family art workshops before the event helped to fully engage the community. Together we silkscreened posters and made placards with Posada's "La Catrina" for the children to color and painted faces "a la calaca." I personally believe that El Día de Los Muertos is in our Chicano/Latino DNA and that's why the celebration has spread like wildfire.

My memories are very important to me and I think of Sister Karen and those early days very often. A photograph of Sister Karen sits on my desk and I find myself sharing the challenges of my art career with her and her spirit…remembering our teachers and ancestors has become a part of my daily life.

THE DAY OF THE DEAD IN AZTLAN:
Chicano Variations on the Theme of Life, Death and Self Preservation

by Sybil Venegas

During the 1970's, the Chicano community experienced a cultural renaissance of unique proportions. Primarily through the spirit and vision of its artists, this community began to develop an important iconography of self-definition. Among the more profound expressions of this new iconography was the appearance of Day of the Dead celebrations.

Much has been written on the Mexican festival known as El Día de los Muertos, from ancient pre-conquest practices to the syncretic meshing of pre-conquest and European/Spanish influences, and to an extent, its manifestations north of the border in the United States. While El Día de los Muertos is clearly a sacred, annual ceremony that involves making spiritual connection with loved ones who have departed, it has a decidely political nature in the United States. How this celebration has evolved in the United States can only be discussed within the context of Chicano history. An analysis of the literature reveals a decline and/or complete disappearance of Day of the Dead ceremony within large, urban, Mexican American communities in the United States by the mid-20th century. This is largely the result of increasing cultural assimilation among Mexican Americans. However, in 1972, the Day of the Dead as an ethnic ceremonial is revived, renewed and reinvented by Chicana/o artists in Los Angeles and San Francisco and later, in many communities across the Southwest. This cultural phenomenon occurs as one of many consequences of a social and political struggle, popularly known today as El Movimiento Chicano.

By the early 1970's, this political movement had given birth to a generation of artists committed to arts activism in service of their community. In the development and evolution of this art movement, Chicano artists explored, created and/or reinvented alternative art venues for the positive expression of a renewed cultural identity. These alternatives included notions of visual artists as cultural workers, emphasis upon both didactic and public art forms such as street murals, posters, billboard art, newsletters, art exhibitions and galleries in community accessible locations, arts organizations that focused on the development and dissemination of Chicano art and the creation of new forms of communal ceremonials.

In their 'cultural excavation' for a new and meaningful, yet self-defining iconography, Chicano artists strategically appropriated Mexico's indigenous past. "Functioning as visual archeologists, Chicano artists uncovered a hidden pictorial lexicon in Mexican sources and have selectively appropriated it to expand and enrich their own evolving visual vocabulary and symbolic system." Characteristic of these influences on the development of a Chicano iconography has been pageantry and spectacle, which, long a tradition in the Americas, can be seen in contemporary street processionals, indigenous Danzantes, and candlelight ceremonies. Another influence has been homenajes, or homages to historical figures, family members or community leaders which take form in altars, ofrendas, performances, exhibitions or community ceremonials. Box sculptures, or cajas, as well as altares are perhaps the primary media through which artists integrate ancient memory and recollection. Here, the assemblage of miniatures, religious icons, traditional healing methods, and calavera (human skull) imagery work together in this powerful iconographic appropriation of the past. The celebration of El Día de los Muertos by Chicano artists as a means to strengthen the cultural cohesiveness of the Chicano community is perhaps the best example of how the politics of the Chicano movement and the philosophy of Neo-Indigenism fused to develop a new and vital Chicano art form of communal ceremonial. The Day of the Dead in Aztlan, to use the Chicano term for the Southwest, has since become one of the most widely celebrated Mexican cultural traditions in the United States.

The East Los Angeles based community art workshop, Self Help Graphics and Art, Incorporated, was the primary impetus and model for other Chicano/Latino variations of the celebration. In 1970, three artists began an artistic collaboration in an East Los Angeles garage that would eventually lead to the incorporation of the arts organization known today as Self Help Graphics. These artists were painter Carlos Bueno and photographer Antonio Ibanez, both from Mexico, and graphic artist Sister Karen Boccalero, O.S.F. Sister Karen, a school teacher for twelve years, had recently returned to Los Angeles after receiving her M.F.A. in Printmaking from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia. By 1972, these artists had obtained studio space in Boyle Heights and were joined by several local Chicano artists. In the spirit of the times, these artists wanted to initiate a culturally oriented, collective, public art project aimed at publicizing the positive aspects of the predominantly Chicano East Los Angeles community. Sister Karen credits Mexican artists Carlos Bueno and Antonio Ibanez with suggesting that El Día de los Muertos be celebrated as a collective, public art project aimed at cultural reclamation, self determination and definition. As Mexican artists, both Bueno and Ibanez were familiar with the collective, creative spirit of this event. However, as Sister Karen recalls, whereas she had become aware of El Día de los Muertos through a viewing of the Charles and Ray Eames film of the same title in art school, none of the Chicano artists were acquainted with this festival.

Despite a limited understanding of the festival, its tradition and its character, on that All Saints Day (November 1) a pilgrimage to nearby Evergreen cemetery was organized and carried out by a small group of Chicano artists from Self Help Graphics. This was a somewhat spontaneous occurrence with no publicity, no city permits and little activity taking place at the cemetery. While these artists were initially unfamiliar with day of the dead celebrations, they were undoubtedly attracted to its potential to generate cultural awareness, ethnic pride, and collective self-fulfillment for the East Los Angeles community.

Image by John Tallacken ©2013

Through the influence of Carlos Bueno and Antonio Ibanez and their early Day of the Dead artwork, the Self Help Graphics artists were introduced to the essential folk art aspect of this festival. Calavera imagery, as well as altar making and poster art, became the central elements in an emerging Day of the Dead iconography. By 1974, the celebration had attracted the artistic collaboration of a cross-section of the Los Angeles Chicano art community. Among those participating in the event by that year were the art collectives of ASCO, whose artists included Harry Gamboa, Gronk, Willie Herron and Patssi Valdez, and the Los Four artists, Carlos Almaraz and Frank Romero.

As the festival drew in the participation of a variety of artists, it also attracted a following of community members who anticipated their own involvement in what was by l976 an annual, communal and locally staged celebration. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities established an annual funding source; city permits for a large street parade had been acquired; and the cemetery activities, which included music and dance, as well as Catholic and Indigenous American rituals, drew several thousand people.

An analysis of the Self Help Graphics version of El Día de los Muertos throughout the 1970's reveals it to have been one of the most elaborate and well attended Day of the Dead celebrations in the United States. From 1974 to 1982, the event followed an established format, although, because of its nature as an inclusive, public event, it would vary from year to year depending upon artist and community participation. Generally, the celebration began in Evergreen cemetery, an old cemetery in the heart of East Los Angeles. Here, the community would gather. Many would be in Calavera attire, faces painted as skulls and wearing a variety of costumes. Because of Self Help Graphics' involvement as artist/instructors at the local elementary schools, many children would be in attendance, wearing or holding art projects made earlier in the year in anticipation of this event. Calavera masks, puppets, papel picado banners, paper mache crosses, costumes and sculptures of Mexican pre Hispanic icons such as Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent, or Mictlantecuhtli, the lord of the dead, were popular art objects made for this event by community participants, students, artists and student-artist collaborations. Cemetery activities would include Native American ritual followed by a Catholic mass administered by a local parish priest, with most people in attendance anxiously awaiting the start of the street parade back to the Self Help Graphics studio. The parade would often attract participants along the way and would include those costumed in festive attire and the display of the art objects produced for the event.

Once at the studio, the celebrants would conclude the march by placing art objects, photographs of loved ones, yellow marigolds and other offerings to the dead on altars constructed and decorated before the event. However, the altars would transform into spontaneous art assemblages as the community added offerings and personal objects. The remainder of the festival would involve musical and teatro performances, the display and sale of art objects, and traditional comidas, atole and pan de muerto. The final event of the evening would involve a candlelit procession to a nearby Catholic church.

As a result of the festival's growing popularity, El Día de los Muertos as an annual tradition had infiltrated mainstream institutions and had reached mainstream proportions. Attracting a huge public following, media coverage, and interest and investigation by scholars, Self Help Graphics acknowledged its contribution to North American culture and arts in the following statement: "Self Help Graphics' El Día de los Muertos celebration in Los Angeles, has brought contemporary expression and new life to a centuries old indigenous tradition. The Day of the Dead celebration has renewed interest in cultural and art events throughout California's Latin American population. Statewide Chicano art groups have developed exhibitions, publications, community celebrations, and altars in the Day of the Dead tradition. People of various cultures have become aware of this colorful Mexican tradition and have responded with enthusiasm. El Día de los Muertos is now a part of California's annual festive calendar."

Another component of the Day of the Dead celebration at Self Help Graphics was the organization of an annual art exhibition featuring the work of local Chicano artists, which was inspired by the theme of El Día de los Muertos. Self Help Graphics' annual Day of the Dead art exhibitions have evolved over the years, developing in response to and because of the needs of the Chicano art community in Los Angeles. The "Galeria Otra Vez" was founded in 1977 by an informal group of artists involved with Self Help Graphics at that time. The founding of Self Help Graphics' art gallery provided the organization with a greater structure by which to develop and present art exhibitions. However, the art exhibitions were not the major focus of the event, due to the fact that the community celebration, particularly the cemetery ceremonial, the parade and studio festivities took tremendous amounts of time and energy to produce. By the late 1970's and early 1980's, in- studio art presentations were largely confined to elaborate altares and ofrendas produced in collaboration with students and artists. Yet, by 1980 the making of Day of the Dead art had become an integral part of a growing and developing Chicano iconography, an iconography which would, during the following decade, come to influence a cross- section of artists and artistry throughout North America.

The history and process of the reinvention of El Día de los Muertos in the United States by Chicano/Latino artist communities and the attraction to this reinvention of tradition by the larger community of both Chicano and non-Chicano populations has been the subject of inquiry in this paper. The Day of the Dead and the overwhelming community response to it are a reflection of the postmodern condition of large scale demographic change, uncertainty and an absence of meaning, spirituality and spontaneous creativity in contemporary, established festivals. As this discussion has demonstrated, the answer to the above question can only be found within an analysis of Mexican/Chicano history, which too often is unfortunately misinterpreted if not dismissed by mainstream, North American institutions. This history is rooted in one of the most dramatic occurrences in the history of the world: the conquest of the Americas by Europeans. For it is only against this background of crisis, trauma, dramatic loss of life, programs of cultural genocide and economic exploitation that we encounter the tremendous human capacity for survival, adaptation and reinvention of tradition which can be identified as 'sacred acts of self preservation.'

It is against this historical background of cultural survival and self preservation that the cultural drama of the Chicano people has taken place. One of the key elements of Chicanismo, or the Chicano worldview, developed in the early days of El Movimiento Chicano in the late 1960's was the notion of self preservation through the reclamation of an indigenous past. It is in the return to the ceremonies, practices and ways of their ancestors and the revival of these practices in complex, oppositional contexts that give the Chicano people strength, healing, direction and empowerment. This can be seen as a central and key element in the evolution of Chicano political struggle and artistic development over the past twenty years. The Day of the Dead in Aztlan is but one of the many contemporary expressions of this sacred act of self preservation and empowerment.

Giving Birth to a Tradition:

The Early Years of Day of the Dead at Self Help Graphics

By Colin Gunckel

Given that Day of the Dead has become an annual, citywide event in Los Angeles (not to mention across the country), it's all too easy to forget its rather humble origins in the early 1970s at an emerging cultural center in East L.A.: Self Help Graphics & Art, Inc. Acknowledging this historical legacy amounts to more than a question of who was "first," or which celebration is more authentic. Instead, this 40th anniversary provides an occasion to examine exactly how one group of artists translated a Mexican celebration to an urban Chicano context. Although it has been practiced in some form for centuries, Day of the Dead observances were at one point almost unknown in the United States, even among many Chicanos. If Day of the Dead eventually became a potent, meaningful way to create and sustain community, the nature of Self Help Graphics as a cultural arts organization shaped the "re-invention" of this tradition in Los Angeles and beyond.

Curiously enough, Self Help's decision to initiate a Day of the Dead celebration was apparently a strategic one, or at least partially so. Sister Karen Boccalero, along with Mexican artists Carlos Bueno and Antonio Ibañez, noticed that early November offered somewhat of an open space in an otherwise cluttered calendar of events in the city. While Day of the Dead represented a chance to create a niche for Self Help Graphics (in the same year as its official incorporation as a non-profit), there was woefully little information about how it was practiced and how exactly it might differ from both Halloween and the related Catholic observance of All Souls and All Saints Days. At this point, there was nearly no English language source about the Mexican celebration; in its earliest years, Self Help relied upon scattered publications, the 1957 Charles and Ray Eames film Day of the Dead and photographs culled from various sources.

In the early 1970s, Self Help Graphics' flagship program was the Barrio Mobile Art Studio. Offering art and cultural education to area schools, the BMAS filled crucial voids in local public school curricula while offering young artists employment, workspace and materials. This arts education focus informed the organization's adaptation of Day of the Dead. First, the crafts, altar dressings and decoration associated with Day of the Dead were integrated into the BMAS as lessons in both artistic practice and cultural heritage. In fact, the very first Day of the Dead exhibition at Self Help consisted of children's artwork produced in the program. At the same time, the tight knit community that formed among the artists and staff during this period generated its own observance: a small, familial gathering around dinner and the decoration of an altar in remembrance of departed loved ones.

To remedy the general lack of information about Day of the Dead, Self Help in 1976 secured a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to collect materials, primarily from Mexico, related to the Day of the Dead. Because practically no resources existed in the U.S. at the time, Linda Vallejo and other individuals traveled to Mexico to track down and purchase any and all relevant resources; Self Help subsequently became a regional clearinghouse for information about Day of the Dead, shaping its observance throughout California and elsewhere. Even as late as 1978, however, the BMAS youth instructors described the tremendous research efforts required to find even basic information about building altars: scouring libraries, making personal contacts on both sides of the border, visiting Mexican bakeries and asking advice from area residents that had altars in their yards. Given their reliance upon this range of source material, Self Help artists and their work during these earliest years emulated Mexican examples quite closely, from altars to poster design and ceremony.

By the late 1970s, the artists of the BMAs like Peter Tovar, Leo Limón and Linda Vallejo, not to mention the children in the BMAS program, would also be producing silkscreened posters for an annual event that had quickly transformed into a community celebration. Within a matter of years, Day of the Dead at Self Help had grown from an exhibition of BMAS artwork to a multifaceted commemoration that included both an indigenous and Catholic ceremony, a procession from Evergreen Cemetery to Self Help, altar displays, live theater, musical performances and an art exhibition. What also happened over time was that artists transformed a Mexican celebration into a Chicano cultural event. Of course, Day of the Dead is in itself fundamentally syncretic, a combination of Catholic and indigenous observances. But Chicano artists by the late 1970s also began integrating into this a range of influences and forms from their own existence and environment, from lowriders and graffiti to performance and Pop art. By 1980, Self Help's Day of the Dead celebration had not only become a hallmark of the Los Angeles cultural calendar, but it had also become central component of Chicano art and cultural production across the country.

It goes without saying that Sister Karen and the early artists of Self Help played no small part in making Day of the Dead in the United States what it is today. If the nature of its celebration in Los Angeles was irrevocably shaped by their persistent efforts, it also developed as a multifaceted celebration that corresponded to the mission of the organization, and one might argue, to the broader mission of Chicano art during the period. The incredible success of the event and its strategic placement on the calendar lent Self Help an incredible amount of visibility (along with funding opportunities). Day of the Dead, from its inception, also became inextricable from BMAS' intertwined emphasis on art training and cultural education. The imagery of the holiday rapidly became a part of a central core of iconography with which Chicano artists would continue to experiment for decades to come. By introducing this celebration to the city, it also contributed important dimensions of spirituality and community building that included yet transcended the production of art. And Sister Karen cannily realized that by generating news coverage, the event could even alter a local media landscape that viewed Chicanos as gang members and East L.A. as nothing more than a site of violent crime. On all counts, Self Help pioneered an indispensable expression of art and community that continues to contribute to the cultural life of Los Angeles.

Image by Victor Rosas ©2012

COMMUNING WITH THE DEAD:

Spiritual and Cultural Healing in Chicana/o Communities

by Lara Medina

Remembering and honoring the dead during the Chicana/o tradition of Días de los Muertos is a cultural, spiritual and political practice responding to a complex historical process of colonization, including displacement from land, language, religion, and identity. The elaborate public rituals and ofrendas rooted in indigenous Mesoamerican beliefs in communing with the dead, have proliferated since the early 1970s due to the efforts of Chicana/o artists, cultural workers, teachers, students, and journalists. As ancient Mesoamerican populations cyclically asked the hearts of their dead to return from the sacred mountains so that new life and new harvest might continue, so too Chicanas/os experience renewed life and renewed identity as we invite our dead to return during Días de los Muertos. The reinvention of traditional ways to express contemporary concerns renews and recenters a people hungry for spiritual nourishment in our ongoing struggles for justice. In Spanish, curar (to heal) refers to a holistic sense of healing as the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a person must be attended to if he/she is to become fully well. The popular saying "la cultura cura" (culture heals) is often used to refer to the significance of Días de los Muertos for Chicanas/os, a tradition that holds the healing power and memories of the ancestors.

In ritual and artistic expressions of Chicana/o spirituality, the political cannot be separated from the spiritual. In light of the history of colonization and the ongoing marginalization of Chicano and Latino people, the public expression of honoring the dead contests Western dichotomies constructed between the living and the dead, between the spiritual and the material, between private and public, and between the spiritual and the political. For a historically subordinated population, publicly remembering their ancestors and

En Mictlan by Victoria Delgadillo

their heroes/heroines takes on political meaning as the genealogy being honored is indigenous and/or of mixed blood, a genealogy not intended to survive in the Western world. In a society that ignores the agency of Chicanos and Latinos, the mere act of remembering one's ancestors, as well as making visible through the ofrendas injustices that cause death, carries subversive elements. Claiming public space, including streets, parks, and artistic/cultural centers like Self Help Graphics, to honor these "others" is "an ultimate act of resistance against cultural domination" (Mesa-Baines 1988). And "others" themselves parading en masse refute daily efforts to dismiss their very presence in an increasingly segregated society. Días de los Muertos, as celebrated in Chicano communities, does not replicate Western patterns of exclusion. The tradition, with its color, humor, material culture, and friendly spirit, invites all people to approach death and the "other" without fear. The silence of death and the pain of exclusion are transcended in the festivity of this communal experience.

For a people who are consistently portrayed as "aliens" by the dominant Euro-American culture, continuity with ancestral ways enlarges and strengthens group identity and heals the wounds incurred by ongoing attempts to silence us. As we consciously claim an ancestry that was not meant to survive, we make a political decision as well as a spiritual decision. As government and corporate actions show, it is still not advantageous to be indigenous/Chicano/Mexicano/Latino. Legislation opposing Latino immigration, affirmative action and bilingual education; the privatization of education; mass detention and incarceration reflect mainstream sentiments toward brown people. A key to healing from the trauma of exclusion and to help us in our mobilizing for change is the claiming of ancestral indigenous epistemology that values interdependency and reciprocity between the living and the dead, between living communities and those who have gone before us. I conclude with poetic wisdom from Olga García:

Us, Mexicans,
We love our dead,
Love 'em like we do chile,
Corridos on drunken nights,
Like we do loud abuelas
Smoking on blue porches...

We love our dead
life fire
like memory
like the bouncing reflection of all of us here,
now,
con caras pintadas,
bocas sonriendo,
dancing in front of this smoking mirror,
waiting for it
to break.

This is an excerpt of a longer essay in Religion and Healing in America, Linda Barnes and Susan Sered, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Día de los Muertos: *A Chicano Tradition since the 1970s*

by Regina Marchi

FOLK CATHOLIC AND INDIGENOUS ROOTS

For generations, Mexican-Americans in South Texas and the Southwestern United States have visited local cemeteries on All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day (November 1 and 2) to clean and decorate family graves. Mexicans have lived in this region since before it became part of the US and have long lineages of relatives buried in local cemeteries. In contrast, most Mexican-Americans living in large US cities have historically been more recent migrants to the area and less likely to have ancestors buried in local cemeteries. This fact, combined with greater pressure in urban than rural areas to assimilate mainstream Anglo norms, meant that, by the 1970s, traditional Mexican grave decorating customs were not common in large US cities in California and elsewhere. Yet, like their rural counterparts, urban Mexican Americans often observed the period of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day by attending Catholic Mass and preparing a special family meal.

Prior to the 1970s, neither urban nor rural Mexican-American customs for remembering the dead included southern Mexican practices such as creating elaborate harvest-laden ancestral altars or burning copal incense. Nor were pan de muerto or sugar skulls typical among Mexican-Americans. The term "El Día de los Muertos" was not in common use among Mexican-Americans at that time, who instead referred to the period of November 1 and 2 with terms such as "Todos Santos" (All Saints) and "El Día de las Ánimas" (Day of the Souls), emphasizing the Catholic perspective of heavenly "saints" and "souls" over the Indigenous perspective of "the dead" - ancestral family members who were ever present among the living.

This began to change in the 1970s - a decisive period in US history - when historically marginalized and oppressed peoples were deeply engaged in struggles to gain civil rights and respect from mainstream Anglo-American society. The Chicano Movement blossomed as a political and cultural movement working on a broad array of issues affecting the Mexican-American community, including farm workers' rights, educational opportunities, voting and political rights, and the public validation of Mexican culture. Chicanos, a self-identifying term for Mexican-Americans engaged in radical political and cultural work, sought to counter historically racist laws, practices, and stereotypes affecting their communities via large-scale political organizing and the creation of literary, theatrical and visual art that celebrated Mexican-American histories and traditions.

At this time, many racial minorities in the US were inspired to reclaim their cultural roots - languages, clothing, art, music, rituals and other ancestral traditions that had been lost in processes of slavery, colonization, reservation systems, and forced assimilation. Historically, public approbation of Latino cultures had been rare among "establishment" US art institutions, educational canons, and the mass media. When Latino heritage was acknowledged at all, it was Spanish rather than Indigenous art, music and literature that was typically lauded. As a rejection of this Eurocentrism, Chicano/a artists and educators enthusiastically embraced Mexico's Indigenous cultures. Traveling to southern Mexico, home to the country's highest concentration of Indigenous peoples, many studied Indigenous languages, Mayan weaving, Aztec danza and other arts. There, they observed Indigenous Día de los Muertos celebrations, replete with elaborate harvest altars dedicated to family ancestors, copal incense, sugar skulls and pan de muerto. Deeply moved by the celebration's visual aesthetics, deep spirituality, and community-building power, Chicano/as decided to re-create these rituals in the barrios of the United States.

La calavera garbancera or La catrina created by José Guadalupe Posada in 1913

Since most Chicano/a activists (the majority of whom were born and/or raised in US cities) did not grow up celebrating Indigenous traditions of El Día de los Muertos, their interpretations of the commemoration were based on customs they had either observed in Mexico, read about, or seen in classic Mexican films. Many Chicano/a artists were inspired by Mexican engraver José Guadalupe Posada's (1852-1913) satirical calavera prints, popularized in 19th-century Mexican broadsheets. There were cultural exchanges between Mexico and California, in which Chicano/a artists traveled to Mexico and brought back Day of the Dead artifacts, crafts, and ideas to share with their communities, while Mexican artisans were invited to the US. For example, Arsasio Barregas Arroyo was invited from Mexico to California to show Chicano/a artists the original engraving plates and restrike prints of José Guadalupe Posada. Barregas Arroyo was the grandson of Mexican publisher Antonio Vanegas Arroyo, who had been Posada's employer. Artist David Avalos explains: "For Chicanos, it was very exciting to have a direct connection with the engravings of Posada. This was stuff we had only seen in Dover Edition publications, and we had the sheets and plates right in front of us!"

Memorial for Rubén by Daniel González ©2012

Influenced by Posada, some Chicano/a artists began to create stylistically similar skeleton caricatures that critically commented on California's politicians, urban youth, and other political topics. Others created traditional-looking altars modeled after those of Mexico's Indigenous peoples, while still others transformed the altar concept into ironic, unconventional and political expressions reflecting Chicano/a realities. Eclectic and experimental "altar installations" emerged in secular spaces (art galleries, community centers, museums, schools, parks and commercials venues) as a form of popular culture. This did not mean that Chicano/a Day of the Dead rituals were devoid of spiritual significance, but that they occurred in secular contexts as "art" and were not primarily undertaken as acts of religious devotion. Their principal goal was the public celebration of Chicano/a, Mexican, and Latino/a identities, rather than the fulfillment of religious obligations to the dead.

IN THE U.S. CONTEXT

Rather than focus exclusively on deceased individuals personally known to the altarmakers (as was historically the custom in Latin America), Chicano/as employed the altar format to publicly commemorate and teach about the collective ancestors of the US Latino community – iconic writers, artists, and political figures ranging from revolutionaries Pancho Villa (Mexican) and Che Guevara (Argentine) to artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo (Mexican), to musicians such as Celia Cruz (Cuban) and Tito Puente (Puerto Rican) or poets such as Rubén Darío (Nicaraguan) and others. "Altar installations" (the term used by Chicano/a artists to describe the ofrendas they make in public spaces) were comprised of mixed media such as sculpture, oil paints, silkscreen, mobiles, collage, computers, televisions, sound systems, video footage, and interactive websites. Chicano/a Día de los Muertos celebrations included public altar exhibitions, craft workshops, community altar-making ceremonies, street processions, documentary films about Day of the Dead; educational lectures on the holiday, performance art; and poetry slams.

The earliest documented Día de los Muertos exhibitions in the US occurred in 1972, organized separately by Self Help Graphics, in Los Angeles, and La Galería de la Raza, in San Francisco. Self-Help Graphics, a community-based visual arts center in East Los Angeles, hosted a Day of the Dead procession in which people dressed as skeletons and walked to a nearby cemetery. None of the Chicano/as who helped organize this event were personally familiar with Day of the Dead, but were greatly encouraged by the three founders of Self Help Graphics (Mexican artists Antonio Ibañez and Carlos Bueno, and Italian-American nun Sr. Karen Boccalero). Within a couple of years, the event attracted the participation of the larger Chicano artist community and a plethora of silkscreen prints, posters, paintings, performances and other Day of the Dead-inspired art soon appeared throughout greater Los Angeles. Over time, Self Help's annual Day of the Dead procession grew to include music, Aztec danza, giant calavera puppets, "low rider" cars, and decorated floats. Annual workshops were held at the gallery to teach the public how to make papel picado, sugar skulls, skeleton masks and altars, and for four decades, Self Help's Día de los Muertos events have inspired arts organizations across the city.

In the same year, La Galería de la Raza, in San Francisco's predominantly Latino Mission District, held the city's first Day of the Dead exhibit and educational workshops, which quickly evolved into an annual tradition. In 1981, La Galería organized a Day of the Dead street procession with a small group of people who walked around the block holding candles and photos of deceased loved ones. Within a few years, it burgeoned into an exuberant annual manifestation of thousands. The Mission's District's annual Day of the Dead procession now includes Aztec blessing rituals and danza groups, outdoor altars, sidewalk "chalk cemeteries," giant calavera puppets, skeletal stilt walkers, Cuban Santería practitioners, bagpipe players, a Jamaican steel drum band on wheels and much more, attracting an estimated 20,000 participants yearly. La Galería's Day of the Dead exhibitions have ranged from traditional altars or "ofrendas" (offerings for the dead) to high-tech video displays and websites, to cross-cultural installations done by students and artists from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. This had a profound influence on the future shape of Day of the Dead celebrations in the US, both in encouraging hybrid experimentation and in "mainstreaming" the altar format. Inspired by Self Help Graphics and La Galería, museums, schools, libraries, community centers, art galleries, folk art stores, public parks and commercial venues across California, the Southwest, and later the rest of the US, have developed annual Day of the Dead programming.

POLITICAL MEANINGS

Initiated as one of the most prominent manifestations of the Chicano Movement, US Day of the Dead exhibitions and events not only honored family and friends, but also communicated politically on a number of levels. In the spirit of social critique found in traditional Mexican calavera poetry and the satirical caricatures of José Guadalupe Posada, Chicano/a artists utilized the holiday's focus on remembrance to criticize political policies that caused death on a local, national, or global level. From their onset, a significant number of US Day of the Dead activities (altar exhibits, street processions, vigils, art work, and poetry) encouraged moral reflection about "life and death" issues. Since the 1970s, Day of the Dead altars displayed in museums, art galleries, community centers and other public spaces have commemorated California farm workers victimized by pesticide poisoning and exploitative labor practices. Such altars typically contain farming implements, California-grown produce such as lettuce, strawberries and grapes, pesticide cans, photos of deceased farm workers, news clips about ongoing labor struggles, and photos of Mexican-American labor leader, César Chávez (1927-1993), founder of the United Farm Workers' Union. Labor-related altars continue to appear at Day of the Dead exhibits today, critiquing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the mistreatment of migrant workers, and environmental contamination taking place in transnational maquiladoras along the US-Mexico border. US Day of the Dead altars also focus on immigration issues by commemorating the thousands of Latin American migrants who have died attempting to cross the border in search of jobs. Other political themes honored during US Day of the Dead events include altars in memory of AIDS victims (initially drawing attention to inadequate levels of AIDS education funding in Latino and African-American communities); youth killed by drug-related violence (drawing attention to public and private disinvestment in poor urban communities); The Women of Juarez; victims of domestic violence and gay bashing; victims of US-funded wars; the "death" of the environment, the "death" of organized labor, and the "death" of arts and education funding.

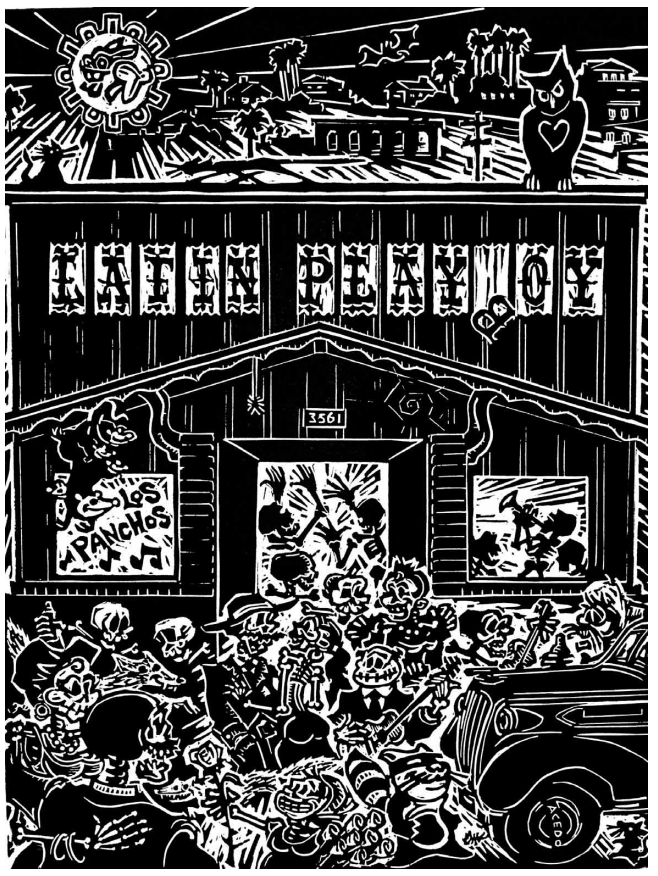
TRANSNATIONAL CELEBRATION

While Chicano/a Day of the Dead celebrations began in California, they expanded throughout the rest of the US during the late 20th century, as Latino/as migrated to areas of the country where they had not previous lived in large numbers. Today, Día de los Muertos celebrations are held throughout the Midwest, the East Coast, and even in Alaska and Hawaii. Latino/as with ancestry from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Argentina and elsewhere now participate in US Day of the Dead celebrations, along with non-Latinos of diverse races and ethnicities who are captivated by the tradition. And, as people of Mexican heritage have migrated to new areas of the world as a result of globalization, Chicano-style Day of the Dead celebrations have been held in Canada, New Zealand, England, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Spain, Japan, Australia, the Czech Republic and elsewhere, making it an increasingly transnational celebration.

Canto de los Días de los Muertos

By Gloriamalia Flores

FIRST PUBLISHED BY SELF HELP GRAPHICS & ART IN 1977



Latin Playboy by William Acedo ©2013

November 1st "All Saints Day in Mexico we celebrate,
November 2nd, "El Día de los Muertos" celebration just as great.

Mama and Papito both miss our dead ones very much
They work to save their centavitos to put a nice altar.

We have many loved ones, Mama, Papa, my hermanitos and I
But some of them have left us, for God's good reasons, everyone must die.

We love them all still and we know that they love us
For they all return in the autumn to spend their time with us.

The people make a great preparation, so many things to get done
To make the ofrendas ready for our loved ones, when they come.

In the Mercado, Mama buys brand new dishes
to place on the altar we make, full of offerings and good wishes.

The tapered wax candles, we will not forget
Without dozens of them, the altar is not set.

I look for the sugar skulls, "calaveras de azucar"
With silly grins on their faces, how funny they are.

The calaveras carry our names on their foreheads, lest we forget
That sooner or later, all that lives, will become dead.

Los panaderos del pueblo work especially hard for this feast
They make "Pan de muerto" for offerings and for us to eat.

I and my hermanitos do as much as we can
We make papel picado, a gay, happy altar is our plan.

At night Papa lights fire crackers one by one
The noise and the light will guide our small dead ones home.

The next morning our whole familia will go to Mass
Con la gente we meet to pray, and to remember the dead.

Afterwards together we will go visit the cementerio
We repaint the crosses, plant flowers and leave burning candles.

The adults that have died will visit today
The ofrendas on their altar are a different array.

This time it is spicy and the portions are more
Not only that but there is a flask with liquor.

Our friends and familiares will gather here at noon
They will gossip, talk and remember those days that were gone too soon.

The altar now, as well as the cementerio, is
Glorious with the light of the tapered wax candles.

Our friends will all leave and go back to their homes
But the light from the graves and altares will continue to shine on and on.

Flowers & Songs

From within the heavens they come,
the beautiful flowers,
the beautiful songs,
but our yearning spoils them,
our inventiveness makes them lose their fragrance,
although not those of the Chichimec prince Tecayehuatzin.
With his, rejoice!

Friendship is a shower of precious flowers
White tufts of heron feathers
are woven with precious red flowers,
among the branches of the trees
under which stroll and sip
the lords and nobles.

Your beautiful song
is a golden wood thrush
most beautiful, you raise it up.

You are in a field of flowers.
Among the flowery bushes you sing.
Are you perchance a precious bird of the Giver of Life?
Perchance you have spoken with God?
As soon as you saw the dawn,
you began to sing.
Would that I exert myself,
that my heart desire,
the flowers of the shield,
the flowers of the Giver of Life.

What can my heart do?
In vain we have come,
we have blossomed forth on earth.
Will I have to go alone
like the flowers that perish?
Will nothing remain of my name?
Nothing of my fame here on earth?

At least flowers, at least songs!
What can my heart do?
In vain we have come,
we have blossomed forth on earth.

Let us enjoy, O friends,
here we can embrace.
We stroll over the flowery earth.
No one here can do away
with the flowers and the songs,
they will endure in the house of the Giver of Life.

Earth is the region of the fleeting moment.
Is it also thus in the Place Where in Some Way One Lives?
Is one happy there?
Is there friendship?
Or is it only here on earth
we come to know our faces?

Las flores y los cantos

Del interior del cielo vienen
las bellas flores, los bellos cantos.
Los afea nuestro anhelo,
nuestra inventiva los echa a perder,
a no ser los del príncipe chichimeca Tecayehuatzin.
¡Con los de él, alegraos!

La amistad es lluvia de flores preciosas.
Blancas vedijas de plumas de garza,
se entrelazan con preciosas flores rojas:
en las ramas de los árboles, bajo ellas andan y liban
los señores y los nobles.

Vuestro hermoso canto:
un dorado pájaro cascabel,
lo eleváis muy hermoso.
Estáis en un cercado de flores.
Sobre las ramas floridas cantáis.
¿Eres tú, acaso, un ave preciosa del Dador de la Vida?
¿Acaso tú al dios has hablado?
Tan pronto como visteis la aurora,
os habéis puesto a cantar.
Esfuércese, quiera mi corazón,
las flores del escudo,
las flores del Dador de la Vida.

¿Qué podrá hacer mi corazón?
En vano hemos llegado,
hemos brotado en la tierra.
¿Sólo así he de irme,
como las flores que perecieron?
¿Nada quedará de mi nombre?
¿Nada de mi fama aquí en la tierra?
¡Al menos flores, al menos cantos!
¿Qué podrá hacer mi corazón?
En vano hemos llegado,
hemos brotado en la tierra.

Gocemos, oh amigos,
haya abrazos aquí.
Ahora andamos sobre la tierra florida.
Nadie hará terminar aquí
las flores y los cantos,
ellos perduran en la casa del Dador de la Vida.

Aquí en la tierra es la región del momento fugaz.
¿También es así en el lugar
donde de algún modo se vive?
¿Allá se alegra uno?
¿Hay allá amistad?
¿O sólo aquí en la tierra
hemos venido a conocer nuestros rostros?

AYOCUÁN CUETZPALTZIN

Poet and sage known as the "White Eagle of Tecamachalco". He is one of the most important poets of the nahuatl world. His style is of the same tradition as Nezahualcóyotl who uses existentialism as a primary theme. He was prince of of the provinces of Cohuayocan and Cuauhtepec which today we know as the Mexican state of Puebla. He was the son of the Chichimec governor Cuetzpaltzin who ruled over the province for 21 years from 1420 to 1441.

Poeta y sabio conocido como "águila blanca de Tecamachalco". Es considerado uno de los poetas más importantes del mundo náhuatl. Su estilo de poesia viene la misma tradición de Nezahualcóyotl y tiene por tema preferido la fugacidad de la existencia. Era principe de las provincias de Cohuayocan y Cuauhtepec que hoy se conoce como estado Mexicano de Puebla. Fue hijo del Tlatoani Chichimeca Cuetzpaltzin quien gobernó el señorío de Tecamachalco por 21 años, de 1420 a 1441.

(Translated by Miguel León-Portilla in the book *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World.* Traducido por Miguel León-Portilla en el libro *Quince poetas del mundo náhuatl.*)

POETICAS

Where ?
The poetry
The poem:
-in effect-
like a mental voyage
whose blackmail to reality
like to pretext the poetry
whose sketch of a dream
like a fictitious first person
who speaks while absent
like a rock song without origin
whose abstract graph
like an obtuse content
whose lipstick upon open lips
like essence narrated
whose persecuted graffitty
like a dialogue of the blind
whose language true to children
like light = ver bal flash
whose metaphor performance
like inconclusive reality
whose reconstructed performer
like word filter
whose babble which does not say
like to versify to speak of you
whose verse which is not image
like that which you observe and the idea and you
say say say say say say say saaaaaaaay
whose lightning thought
like a poem like poetry like saga
whose interrogation and response to the real
like -not the one who speaks- but " another voice "
who listens to dialogues of unknown insects
like to have declared the death of poetry today

– Gloria Enedina Alvarez

La gran calaavera electrica by José Guadalupe Posada

Refranes Mexicanos ~ *Mexican Proverbs*

¡AL DIABLO LA MUERTE, MIENTRAS LA VIDA NOS DURE!
To hell with death while life is lasting!

UNO PROPONE, DIOS DISPONE, LLEGA LA MUERTE Y TODO LO DESCOMPONE.
One proposes, God disposes, along comes Death and everything decomposes.

EL MUERTO A LA SEPULTURA Y EL VIVO A LA TRAVESURA.
The dead to the grave and the living to mischief.

Where shall we go?

Where shall we go
where death does not exist?
But should I live weeping becuase of this?
May your heart find its way:
here no one will live forever.
Even the princes die,
people are reduced to ashes.
May your heart find its way:
here no one will live forever.

¿A dónde iremos?

¿A dónde iremos
donde la muerte no existe?
Mas, ¿por esto viviré llorando?
Que tu corazón se enderece:
aquí nadie vivirá para siempre.
Aun los príncipes a morir vinieron,
hay incineramiento de gente.
Que tu corazón se enderece:
aquí nadie vivirá para siempre.

Though it be Made of Jade

I, Nezahualcóyotl ask:
Is it true that one really lives on earth?
Not forever on earth,
only a brief time here.
Though it be jade it falls apart,
though it be gold it wears away,
though it be quetzal plumes it is torn asunder.
Not forever on earth:
only a brief time here!

Aunque sea de jade

Yo Nezahualcóyotl lo pregunto:
¿Acaso de veras se vive con raíz en la tierra?
No para siempre en la tierra:
sólo un poco aquí.
Aunque sea de jade se parte,
aunque sea de oro se rompe,
aunque sea plumaje de quetzal se desgarra.
No para siempre en la tierra:
sólo un poco aquí.

ACOLMIZTLI NEZAHUALCÓYOTL

The Fasting Coyote. Tlamatinime or sage of the náhuatl world. He is the most famous of all the poets and philosophers of ancient Mexico. Poet, architect and learned in divine matters. Governor of Tezcoco and counselor to Tenochtitlan. Nezahualcóyotl was fully aware of a millennial intellectual legacy that allowed him to develop extraordinary forms of thought and poetry. In the history of pre-Hispanic Mexican poetry, no one has equalled him in quality. His work (a handful of poems) is both emotional and philosophical and possesses the perfection of a style that other authors would try to achieve but never master. For his excellence in this artform, he is known by the nickname the "Poet King".

El coyote en ayuno. Tlamatinime o sabio del mundo náhuatl. El de más grande fama entre los poetas y filósofos del México antiguo. Poeta, arquitecto y sabio en las cosas divinas. Gobernante supremo de Tezcoco y consejero de Tenochtitlan. Nezahualcóyotl tuvo plena conciencia de un legado intelectual milenario que le permitió desarrollar formas extraordinarias de pensamiento y poesía. A lo largo de toda la historia de la poesía mexicana prehispánica, nadie lo iguala en calidad. Su obra (un puñado de poemas) es a la vez emotiva y filosófica y posee la perfección del estilo que otros autores seguirían sin alcanzar su maestría. Por excelencia recibe el sobrenombre del "Rey Poeta".

We Only Come to Dream

Thus spoke Tochihuitzin,
Thus has said Coyolchiuhqui:

We only rise from sleep,
we come only to dream,
it is not true, it is not true,
that we come on earth to live.
As an herb in springtime,
so is our nature.
Our hearts give birth, make sprout
the flowers of our flesh.
Some open their petals,
then they become dry.

Solo vinimos a soñar

Así lo dijo Tochihuitzin,
así lo dejó dicho Coyolchiuhqui:

De pronto salimos del sueño,
sólo vinimos a soñar,
no es cierto, no es cierto
que vinimos a vivir sobre la tierra.
Como yerba en primavera
es nuestro ser.
Nuestro corazón hace nacer,
germinan flores de nuestra carne.
Algunas abren sus corolas,
luego se secan.

Así lo dejó dicho Tochihuitzin.

TOCHIHUITZIN COYOLCHIUHQUI

Lord of Teotlatzinco, poet and son of Itzcoatl, Mexica emperor of Tenochtitlan. Tochihuitzin was a contemporary of Nezahualcoyotl. He helped Nezahualcoyotl escape the Tepanec warriors from Azcopotzalco that assasinated his father.

Fue señor de Teotlatzinco, poeta en lengua náhuatl e hijo de Itzcóatl, el tlatoani mexica de Tenochtitlan. Tochihuitzin fue contemporáneo de Nezahualcóyotl. Ayudo a Nezahualcóyotl escapar de los guerreros Tepanecos de Azcopotzalco que asesinaron su padre.

An excerpt from

THE HUMMINGBIRD'S DAUGHTER

by Luis Alberto Urrea

Cayetana greeted that dawn with a concoction made with coffee beans and burned corn kernels. As the light poured out of the eastern sea and splashed into the windows from coast to coast, Mexicans rose and went to their millions of kitchens and cooking fires to pour their first rations of coffee. A tidal wave of coffee rushed west across the land, rising and falling from kitchen to fire ring to cave to ramada. Some drank coffee from thick glasses. Some sipped it from colorful gourds, rough clay pots that dissolved as they drank, cones of banana leaf. Café negro. Café with canela. Café with goats milk. Café with golden-brown cone of piloncillo melting like a pyramid engulfed in a black flood. Tropical café with a dollop of sugarcane rum coiling in it like a hot snake. Bitter mountaintop café that thickened the blood. In Sinaloa, café with boiled milk, its burned milk skin floating on top in a pale membrane that looked like the flesh of a peeled blister. The heavy-eyed stared into the round mirrors of their cups and regarded their own dark reflections. And Cayetana Chávez, too, lifted a cup, her coffee reboiled from yesterday's grounds and grits, sweet with spoons of sugarcane syrup, and lightened by thin blue milk stolen with quick squeezes from one of the patrón's cows.

On that long westward morning, all Mexicans still dreamed the same dream. They dreamed of being Mexican. There was no greater mystery.

Only rich men, soldiers, and a few Indians had wandered far enough from home to learn the terrible truth: Mexico was too big. It had too many colors. It was nosier than anyone could have imagined, and the voice of the Atlantic was different from the voice of the Pacific. One was shrill, worried and demanding. The other was boisterous, easy to rile into a frenzy. The rich men, soldiers, and Indians were the few who knew that the east was a swoon of green, a thick-aired smell of ripe fruit and flowers and dead pigs and salt and sweat and mud, while the west was a riot of purple. Pyramids rose between llanos of dust and among turgid jungles. Snakes as long as country roads swam tame besides canoes. Volcanoes wore hats of snow. Cactus forests grew taller than trees. Shamans ate mushrooms and flew. In the south some tribes still went nearly naked, their women wearing red flowers in their hair and blue skirts, and their breasts hanging free. Men outside the great Mexico City ate tacos made of live winged ants that flew away if the men did not chew quickly enough.

So what were they? Every Mexican is a diluted Indian, invaded by milk like the coffee in Cayetana's cup. Afraid, after the Conquest and the Inquisition, of their brown wrappers, they colored their faces with powder, covered their skins in perfumes and European silks and American habits. Yet for all their beaver hats and their lace veils, the fine citizens of the great cities knew that they had nothing that would ever match the ancient feathers of the quetzal. No cacique stood atop a temple clad in jaguar skins. Crinolines, waistcoats, Operas, High Mass, *café au lait* in demitasse cups in sidewalk patisseries. They attempted to choke the gods with New York pantaloons, Parisian petticoats. But still the banished spirits whispered from corners and basements. In Mexico City, the great and fallen Tenochtitlán, among streets and buildings constructed with the stones of the Pyramid of the Sun, gentlemen walked with their heads slightly tilted, cocked as if listening to this puzzling murmur of wraiths.

They still spoke a thousand languages – Spanish, too, to be sure, but also a thicket of songs and grammars. Mexico – the sound of wind in the ruins. Mexico – the waves rushing the shore. Mexico – the sand dunes, the snowfields, the steam of Popocatépetl. Mexico – across marijuana fields, tomato plants, avocado trees, the agave village of Tequila.

Mexico…

All around them, in the small woods, in the caves, in the precipitous canyons of copper country, in the swamps and at the crossroads, the harsh Old Ones gathered. Tlaloc, the rain god, lips parched because the Mexicans no longer tortured children to feed him sweet drafts of their of their tears. The Flayed One, Xipe Totec, shivering cold because priests no longer skinned sacrifices alive and danced in their flesh to bring forth the harvest. Tonántzin, goddess of Tepeyac, chased from her summit by the very Mother of God, the Virgen de Guadalupe. The awesome ferocious warrior god, Hummingbird on the Left, Huitzilopochtli. Even the Mexican's friend, Chac Mool, was lonely. Big eared and waiting to carry their hopes and dreams in his bowl as he transited to the land of the gods from the earth, he lay on his back watching forever in vain for the feathered priests to return. Other Old Ones hid behind statues in the cathedrals that the Spaniards had built with the stones of their shattered temples. The smell of sacrificial blood and copal seeped out from between the stones to mix incense and candles. Death is alive, they whispered. Death lives inside life, as bones dance within the body. Yesterday is within today. Yesterday never dies.

Mexico. Mexico.

Un pasaje de la novela

La Hija de la Chuparrosa

por Luis Alberto Urrea

Cayetana suludó aquel amanecer con una bebida caliente hecha a base de granos de café y de elote tatemados. Mientras la luz chorreaba del mar del este y salpicaba las ventanas de costa a costa, los mexicanos se levantaron y se dirigieron a sus millones de cocinas y fogatas con el fin de servirse su primera ración de café. Un veradadero maremoto de café avanzaba hacia el oeste y oscilaba de una cocica a otra, de una fogata a la siguiente, de una enramada a una cueva. Unos bebían el café en vasos gruesos. Otros lo sorbían de coloridos jarros, o de rústicas ollas de barro que se iban disolviendo conforme bebían su contenido, o incluso de conos hechos con hojas de plátano.

Café negro, café con canela, café con leche de chiva, café con un cono de piloncillo dorado, derritiéndose adentro cual pirámide rodeada de una inundación negra. Café tropical con un piquete de ron de caña que se enrosca adentro como víbora caliente. Café amargo de los altos que te espesa la sangre. En Sinaloa, café con leche hervida, con una capa de nata flotando encima como piel de ampolla reventada. Los que tienen mirada pesada se miran en los espejos redondos de sus tazas y contemplan sus negros reflejos.

Cayetana Chávez también levantaba su taza de café, recocido de los asientos de ayer, endulzado con miel de caña y rebajado con leche bronca de una vaca del patrón ordeñada a escondidas. Aquella mañana occidental todos los mexicanos soñaban el mismo sueño: soñaban que eran mexicanos; y serlo era el misterio mayor. Sólo los ricos, los soldados y algunos indios se habían alejado del hogar lo suficiente como para captar la terrible verdad: México era demasiado grande. Tenía demasiados colores, era demasiado ruidoso. La voz del Atlántico discrepaba de la del Pacífico. Una era aguda, acongajada, siempre realmente; la otra era estridente, proclive a tornarse frenética. Los ricos, los soldados y los indios, sabían que el aire en el oriente estaba preñado de verde con profusos aromas de fruta madura y flores, y de cerdos, de sudor y sal y lodo. En el oeste era púrpura profuso. Las pirámides se elevaban de los llanos polvorientos y de las selvas túrgidas. Serpientes tan largas como caminos rurales nadaban mansas entre las canoas. Los volcanes lucían sus sombreros de nieve. Bosques de cactos se elevaban más altos que los árboles. Los chamanes comían peyote y volaban. En el sur, algunas tribus todavia andaban en cueros, sus mujeres llevaban flores rojas en su cabello, con falditas azules mientras sus senos colgaban libremente. Fuera de la gran Ciudad de México, comían tacos de hormigas con alas que se escapaban volando si no las devoraban rápido.

¿Pues qué eran? Los mexicanos eran todos indios diluidos, mezclados con leche como el café en la taza de Cayetena. Amedrentados por sus propias envolturas cafés después de la conquista y la inquisición, se coloreaban el rostro con talco, se cubrían la piel con perfumes, con sedas europeas y prendas americanas. Y sin embargo, con todo y sus gorras de castor y sus velos de encaje, los finos habitantes de las grandes ciudades sabían que nada se comparaba con el venerable plumaje de un quetzal. Ningún cacique anduvo jamás en la cúspide de algún templo cubierto con pieles de Jaguar. Crinolinas, sacos. Óperas, misas, café au lait servido en tacitas demitasse en reposterías de banqueta. Intentaban ahogar a los dioses con pantaloncillos de Nueva York y fondos parisinos. Pero de todos modos lo fantasmas desterrados susurraban por los rincones y los sótanos. En la Ciudad de México, la grande y caída Tenochtitlán, por entre calles y edificios construidos con las piedras de la Pirámide del Sol, los caballeros caminaban con la cabeza ligeramente inclinada, como si escucharan el sorprendente murmullo de los aparecidos. Todavía hablaban mil lenguas – ciertamente español entre ellas – además de otro montón de canciones y gramáticas. México – el sonido del viento entre ruinas. México – las dunas, montículos de nieve, vapor que escapa del Popo. México, sembradíos de marihuana, tomate de vara, árboles de aguacate, agaves en la Villa de Tequila.

México…

Todo a su alrededor, en los arbustos, en las cuevas, en los precipicios de la Cañada del Cobre, en los pantanos y encrucijadas, se reunían los ancianos. Tláloc, dios de la lluvia, con los labios partidos porque los mexicanos ya no torturan a niños para alimentarlo con la dulzura de sus lagrimas. Vituperado, Xipe Totec, tiembla de frío porque los sacerdotes ya no le quitan la piel a los sacrificados ni bailan sobre sus desnudas carnes para que la cosecha sea fructifera. Tonántzin, la diosa del Tepeyac, fue expulsada de su cima por la mismísima madre de dios, la Virgen de Guadalupe. El apabullante y feroz dios guerrero Huitzilopochtli. Incluso el amigo de los mexicanos, Chac Mool, se sentía solitario. Orejón, esperando llevar en su tazón sueños y esperanzas mientras pasa de la tierra de los mortales a la de los dioses, permanecía echado de espaldas, esperando en vano el regreso del sacerdote emplumado. Otros ancianos se escondían detrás de los ídolos en las catedrales que los españoles construyeron con las piedras de sus templos destrozados. El olor de la sangre y del copal escapaba entre las piedras de sacrificio para mezclarse con el incienso y las velas. La muerte está viva, susurraban. La muerte vive dentro de la vida, mientras los huesos danzan dentro del cuerpo. El ayer está dentro del hoy. El ayer nunca muere.

México. México.

Backyard Lessons on Dying

by Carribean Fragoza

If you press your face against the screen window to inhale an autumn night such as this, almost silent and almost dark, you will know for certain what is coming. You recognize the winter on the breeze filtering through the mesh. Tonight, the backyard feasts have retreated their steaming pots of tender spiced goat meats and silenced their boombox rancheras into the small interior of homes. The rust-colored industrial glow has receded back over the hill's spine and left this sky to reflect on its own internal shades. No clouds for brooding, the shifting colors of its depths do not ask for names.

My mother sits alone in the backyard, as she's done around this time of year for the past three years. Her body seems small and surrendered in the white plastic lawn chair at midnight, contemplating the winter. This is a time for slowing, ceasing, and dying. You learn to spot the modest changes on some trees, edges of leaves begrudgingly browning. The blood of pomegranate hearts blackened and soaked into the earth. With these sensibilities I am only beginning to understand the subtle labor of dying and death. Like the seasons in LA, you just have to pay attention to the transitions and processes taking place.

Around this time 3 years ago, my grandmother lay dying of cancer in a hospital in Guadalajara. My mother and her siblings, my tíos y tías, waited at her bedside and in the hall for the inevitable, cada quien contemplando lo suyo from thereon. Acá en el norte, I waited too. My mother has tried to explain to me the pain of my grandmother's death. However, its my own memories of my grandmother, her unspoken suffering and guarded internal struggles that best inform me of the pain of her death. That, and my own inherited traits, unexplained vestiges of rage and abandonment trickled down through blood, land and borders. And here I am, in South El Monte, holding live emotional embers and sifting through the burnt-edge shards of stories never told.

But I realized that more than anything, what my mother describes in her re-telling is the rigor and labor of dying, including of survivors, in a practical ritual of passing. How she and her siblings took turns sitting at her side, the things they said to her, the things they said to each other in the hallway –words both kind and cutting. We have gone over variations of the same details many times in the last 3 years, for her sake because she experienced it, but also for mine because I was not there. I had been spared of the process of dying when my great grandmother passed away the year before. She didn't need a process –she took off unceremoniously with the fluttering hummingbird wingbeat of her heart. There are established rituals for death, wakes, masses, burials complete with elaborate sets of prayers that extend days, weeks, even months after. But the rituals for dying seem to remain a mystery. For my grandmother, dying seemed to be a process not just for her but for everyone.

Very recently the father of my partner, grandfather of my 2-year old daughter, mi suegro, passed away. And truly, despite the deep anguish our family experienced, I also felt and continue to feel blessed by it. It helped me understand the labor of dying more deeply. The stillness of waiting bodies in a hospital room holds a very elaborate tension, a tightly woven choreography that sustains the process. A shift by any material or non-material body requires overall adjustment, slackening and tightening of this physical and energetic web. At the center, the dying body, despite its' seeming inertness, performs its great labor.

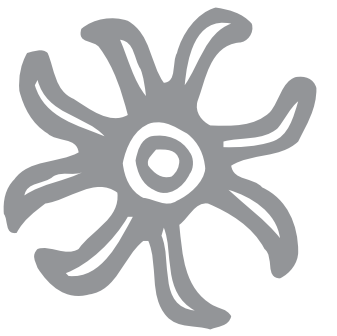
And yet, despite the inevitability of death, it continues to catch us unprepared and almost without exception draws us into the intimate heart of suffering. This is not to say that suffering can or should be avoided, as many songs have flowered in its dark fodder. Our humanity revealed to us through eyes shrouded in sorrow. For each of us, a revelation breaks open the world and makes it again new –and it is. With each life and each death, the world begins and ends again and again, always as if it were the first. I see this in my backyard as the chabacano tree drops its last pit onto the bed of dry leaves below, and its bare limbs stand against the sky, as if asking again the cause for this pain of loss. With the seasons and years, it remembers and forgets, remembers and forgets. As if by design, its seedlings will be born again next year breaking through the crust of earth, wiped clean of the memory of that pain. They forget as soon as they unravel the first green tendril like a tiny hungry tongue to the sky.

tiempo es papél

vuelan hojas cosmicas

dobladas, vidas

~endy



EN NUESTRA MEMORIA SERAN ETERNOS. **AN HOMAGE TO OUR DEPARTED FRIENDS** *In our memory you will live forever.*

Sister Karen Boccalero, A Memory

by Tomas J. Benitez

Sister Karen Boccalero was a Franciscan nun who was the driving force behind Self Help Graphics & Art, Inc., a non-profit, community based Chicano art printmaking studio in East Los Angeles, California. All the facts in one long sentence, but hardly the full story.

Carmen Boccalero was born in Arizona but raised in East L.A., just up the street from where the center had been located on the corner of Gage and Cesar E. Chavez Avenue. As a kid in the neighborhood she would ride her bike past the location almost every day. Her step-dad was Jewish, and her mom a devout Catholic. Carmen was Italian but learned to love Mexican culture growing up in the hills east of downtown L.A. She had a gift for art, which was nurtured at Immaculate Heart College, where she developed her skills and talent, and where she met her mentor and later friend for life, Sister Corita Kent. She chose to answer her calling and join the Franciscans but continued her career, eventually winning a prize in Italy in the early 1960's for her artwork. A young American nun, a woman, winning anything in Italy in those days was unprecedented, but that pioneer profile was merely the precursor of things to come. When Karen returned home she set up a printmaking table in a garage back up in those hills again, and other artists began to come around and work with her, developing printmaking skills and talking about art and community. When the group outgrew the space and moved to a public location, a walk up on old Brooklyn Avenue near St. Louis Street, they changed the world, not anything less.

Sister Karen was always quick to credit the artists for all that Self Help Graphics would go on to achieve, including building an historic archive and body of Chicano (and non-Chicano) prints, building a foundation for Chicano art making AND collecting, nurturing the nascent careers of hundreds of artists, creating one of the most long sustaining accessible community based galleries in East LA, Galeria OtraVez, exhibiting more Chicano art and imagery around the world than any other institution in the United States, creating a destination for art and culture for citywide, regional and eventually national and international visiting audiences, and for being one of the key progenitors of Día de los Muertos, The Day of the Dead.

As she related to me once, she was at a crossroad to either continue doing her own art or to concentrate on building a community center and place for artists. She couldn't do both, yet she chose SHG&A. Perhaps it was her Franciscan philosophy, or another calling of a higher nature, but her lifetime dedication to SHG&A left an indelible chop mark on the rise of Chicano art and culture in the United States. Her vision and leadership was built on promoting the importance of cultural expression and the vital role artists play in the daily lives of their community. She understood the power of creativity and identity and that Chicano art was part of the American landscape and deserved recognition as such. That vision was carried out with heart, tremendous intelligence and fiery stubbornness.

She was a nun, hardly a saint, and all the stories about her cussing and growling, all true. She could be tough on people, yes, as many of us well remember, especially artists, and in particular, women. "Women have to work harder!" she once said. She wasn't echoing a random endorsement of the sexist pecking order in society, she was stating the facts. Women had to work harder to get the same things men had to get. So work harder, and smarter, and demand more of yourself, do your art. She could be terse but hardly ever missed the mark. One time I told her I didn't like the way a story I was writing was going, it was "eluding" me. Very esoteric stuff the life of a writer. She snapped back at me, "Then, write something else dummy!" She had so little patience for creative angst. On the ride back from meeting His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who was well prepared and spoke highly of her work and that of SHG&A, I asked her, "So what did you think of him, what he said? Isn't it great somebody like that knows the importance of Chicano Art?" She thought about it a minute. "He has very nice hands." Of course. She knew Chicano art is a national treasure, why shouldn't he, no big deal. After an all night yakking session on faith, (of which she hardly ever talked about publicly nor ever preached), and after a dozen pots of coffee and a couple of packs of smokes each, she said to me, " Kiddo, don't ever let religion get in the way of your spirituality, and don't ever let the church get in the way of your relationship with God." This is from a nun.

Her toughness was a reflection of a desire for artists to fulfill their role as active citizens in the cause of their people, and for society to recognize the value of their creative voice and vision. Every thing she did was to make that happen, for the artists and community. She was the most generous soul I ever met, even when she cussed me out; usually right.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Día de los Muertos at SHG&A, started by a group of artist working out of the old studio, and to this day still one of the largest artist led and public cultural celebrations in the country. Rooted in Mexican culture, then revived by Chicano artists, it has become part of the national dialect. Karen would smack anybody on the head for trying to give her credit for starting the contemporary celebration; she'd say, "No, it was the artists!" She'd be right, but she was always right there with them.

Image by William Acedo ©2011

WRITE YOUR OWN HISTORY: *Sal Castro's Legacy*

By Carlos Manuel Haro, PhD.

We have lost a great figure in the Chicana/o Movement. Salvador "Sal" Castro, an educator, activist, and civil rights leader, died April 15 quietly in his sleep. But his life was tumultuous and exemplified the transition of the World War II generation and Mexican Americans into the Chicano Movement of the latter 1960s. During his lifetime he faced many of the challenges confronting Mexican Americans: while working as a shoe-shine boy, he witnessed the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles in 1943; while in the military during the Korean War he came to understand the sting of racial discrimination while he was stationed in southern states; and from elementary school to the university level he suffered the inequities faced by Mexican students in the United States' educational system. He swore to combat educational inequality throughout his adult life by becoming a teacher and counselor, always with the presumption that Mexican children came to school ready to learn but poorly trained and ill-prepared teachers, and poorly run schools repeatedly failed them.

It was early in 1968 when I first met Sal Castro. I was a student at UCLA and participating in a meeting of United Mexican American Students (UMAS) and Castro was invited to speak. All of us in UMAS knew of Sal Castro; he was already well known for his dedication to students and challenging the school system to meet the needs of Mexican American youth. However, we thought that we, as university students, were at the forefront of a new movement to change society. Very quickly we realized that Sal Castro was well ahead of us in trying to bring about concrete change--specifically change in education for Mexican Americans.

Sal brought several high school students with him and he talked about how these young people were no longer going to accept unequal educational conditions, which were resulting in more than 50 percent of Mexican-descent students leaving school before graduation. He told us these high school students were going to act, they were planning demonstrations against poor quality education, and these events were going to happen soon. He asked UMAS college students to join with the high school students and lend them support.

Then the events of March 1968 occurred, with thousands of students walking out of East Los Angeles high schools, including my alma mater, Roosevelt High School, and several middle schools. The Los Angeles Unified School District faced a series of protests unlike anything that had occurred in its history. The Mexican American movement for full civil rights had moved from the agricultural fields--the farm worker movement lead by Cesar Chavez--to the city with the largest population of Mexican Americans living in the United States. And Sal Castro was at the center of this new social and political challenge to the status quo.

Sal did not go unnoticed by the authorities. He was arrested and faced fifteen counts of conspiracy to disrupt public schools and fifteen counts of conspiracy to disturb the peace. If convicted he would have been in prison the remainder of his life. The school district acted by removing him from the classroom. Ultimately, all charges were dropped and, with strong support from the community, Castro was allowed to teach once again.

Fundamental to the 1968 walkouts were the high school students and supportive college students that Sal Castro was able to mobilize. However, many of these students had experienced the Mexican American Youth Leadership Conference, a three-day conference held at Camp Hess Kramer in Malibu, California. Beginning in 1963, Castro, as a young teacher, was a volunteer at this annual conference. But he quickly changed its nature and scope from what he called "a law and order," and "stay out of trouble" conference to something he felt would be more meaningful to Mexican American youth. Working with students from various high schools, he had them question the conditions in their schools, how they perceived themselves, and how they were being treated. Sal noted that the students attending this three-day "camp", as he often referred to the youth conference, were always changed by it. They left secure in their identity and confident and motivated to educate themselves and be agents for change.

It was Castro's camp graduates who took on leadership roles in planning the 1968 walkouts, including Moctesuma Esparza and Susan Racho, both of whom were UCLA students in 1968. Juan Gomez-Quinones, a UCLA graduate student at the time and now a UCLA professor of History, lent support to the walkouts and later helped challenge the LAUSD Board when it attempted to dismiss Castro. Racho would later make a documentary on the walkouts released in 1997, and Esparza was the executive producer, with Edward James Olmos directing, of the 2006 HBO film, Walkout. The list of graduates of the youth leadership conference and the college students who volunteered as counselors during camp includes Carlos Moreno, former California State Supreme Court justice; Antonio Villaraigosa, Mayor of Los Angeles; Gloria Molina, Los Angeles County Supervisor; elected officials Richard Alatorre, Richard Polanco, and many, many other young people whom Sal Castro mentored to become teachers, school administrators, lawyers, and doctors, among other professionals.

Some will argue that the demonstrations of 1968 did not cause significant change in the educational system, and they will point to the fact that Chicano students are still leaving school at alarmingly high rates before graduation from high school. But the walkouts were a seminal event because Castro prompted a dramatic change in the youth, particularly Chicanos in the Los Angeles region. We were no longer ambivalent about our identity, we were Chicanos and Chicanas, and we were going to create change in our schools and in other areas of society that affected our communities. The post-walkout period brought a significant increase in student applications and admissions to local colleges, and an array of programs were established to recruit students and provide financial and academic assistance. Esparza has commented on another change that occurred due to the events of 1968 and the emphasis on education: the stimulation and growth of a Chicano professional class.

Castro had a long association with UCLA. Soon after the school district reinstated him to teach, in 1969, he coordinated an Upward Bound Program at UCLA for high school youth. He was also one of the community representatives who supported Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), formerly UMAS, students and our proposal to establish a research center—what became the CSRC. Through the years, Sal and I would periodically meet at social events, but it wasn't until around 2003 that Sal and I reconnected to work on educational projects. He recruited me--and those who worked with Sal understand what I mean by "recruited"--to annually volunteer as a speaker at the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. I met with students at the camp and discussed the Mendez v. Westminster case and the long struggle to end school segregation of Mexican youth in California. Sylvia Mendez, who had suffered from being segregated in a "Mexican school" in the 1940s, and Nadine Bermudez, a UCLA doctoral student, joined me. No one was paid; we volunteered our time because Sal asked us to join him, and because the youth conference was important to us.

In 2004, I interviewed Sal for an oral history project at the CSRC. We also collaborated on, *Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference: Developing Chicano Leaders Since 1963*, a significant research conference at UCLA in 2006 that focused on the Camp Hess Kramer Youth Conference, the young leaders that emerged from it, and the dramatic events of 1968.

The HBO film *Walkout* dramatized the 1968 events and Sal Castro's central role in them. In the film, Castro speaks to students attending the youth leadership camp and asks them to "write your own history." This was, in fact, how he confronted all of his students. He would say that the history of our people was excluded from the history books, or worse, misrepresented by educators. He challenged students to educate and prepare themselves to make a difference for themselves and their community. Ultimately, Sal Castro succeeded in changing the lives of a generation, and he did, indeed, write his own history.

SAMUEL BARAY

by Tomas J. Benitez

"A gentle, beautiful person, a prolific, innovative artist-educator- and friend. Sam along with his wife Mitzi, were connected to Self Help Graphics for several years where he left a legacy of fine printmaking through the atelier program. I have long admired Sam and his creative techniques, producing a large body of important works. The world has lost a great human being. Rest in Peace dear friend."

-Ofelia Esparza

Although Samuel Baray's parents were both born in Chihuahua, Mexico, they came to the United States separately during the Mexican Revolution and met in EI Paso. After their marriage they moved to Los Angeles, where his father became a cabinetmaker and his mother learned enough English to translate religious materials into Spanish for a Baptist publisher. It was in the East Los Angeles community that Baray was born and raised. Growing up in a primarily Spanish-speaking household, Baray did not immediately become fluent in English, but this disadvantage was mitigated when he found that drawing was a natural language for him. Soon some of his elementary and middle school teachers began to notice and encourage his ability. Baray, as he later recalled, "became the official poster artist, mapmaker, and set designer" in his schools.

After graduating from Garfield High School in 1956 he enrolled in the School of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. While studying there, he was granted government loans to study Spanish art and literature at the University of Madrid, Spain. He went on to earn his B.A. in Art Education at California State University, Los Angeles, and an M.A. in Urban Educational Policy and Planning from the University of California, Los Angeles, which led him to work extensively with Los Angeles inner-city schools.

However, Baray always remained dedicated to his art. Although he originally worked in traditional silkscreen printing, he developed a technique of his own that combines printing, cardboard stencils, and painting. He was an active artist at Self-Help Graphics in Los Angeles from 1987 to 1997.

Baray has produced numerous works on paper, particularly serigraphs (especially at Self-Help Graphics) but also ink drawings and acrylic on paper. He also creates acrylic paintings on canvas. He continued to work on "developing a synthesis between silkscreen painting, paper cutting, and direct hand application to the paper."

Baray's work centers around the religious, spiritual, and cultural themes of Chicano/Mexicano art and, less commonly, political issues. Although his work was typically figurative, he was at the same time particularly concerned with abstract forms and with producing compositions that endow his work with powers and balance. The manifestations of his subjects, often Virgins or other women, had the quality of a mandala, a transcendent and abstracted composition characterized by flowing lines, geometric designs, and highly intricate linework and details. In addition, Baray's work embraces a highly dynamic, refreshing tension between design and color; his vivid hues return us from the cool world of meditative abstraction to the domain of the popular, the folkloric, the celebratory. Executed by a highly adept colorist, it bears resemblance to Mexican, particularity Amerindian, folk art' he has commented about on of this pieces that "during years of using my grandmother's blankets, I must have unconsciously been receiving images of the old Indian roots of Mexican heritage. I found myself creating [the serigraph] Recuerdos y memorias de Dona Inez."Advenimiento de primavera, 1990 34" x 23.5"

Virgen de la Guarda was conceived as a memorial to Sister Karen Boccalero, who directed Self-Help Graphics since its founding, and was completed shortly after her death in the summer of 1997. The youthful Virgin, foregrounded beneath the plumed serpent Quetzacoatl and other pre-Hispanic motifs, embraces and protects both religious and community structures, her hands in turn making "the sign of the pyramid, as any Chicana/o youth might, to claim she is indigenous and that she is proud." Despite these elements of protectiveness and vigilance over the community treasures, the overall impact of the composition is typically serene, transcendent, and formal.

The highly colorful *Advenimiento de primavera*, reminiscent of one of Diego Rivera's paintings of women bearing flowers, depicts a woman in splendid dress, typical of the countryside but transcendently so, as would befit a formal herald of the abundance of springtime. The mandala-like quality of the image of the woman is reinforced by framing her within an arch as well as by the rich, checkered background and the lush foliage on which she stands and which surrounds her. As in Virgen de la Guarda, there is a syncretic combination of Christian and pre-Hispanic or pagan motifs. The most overtly Christian element is the series of crucifixes on the hemline of the herald's garment. On the other hand, the cross that subtly backs her is less overtly Christian (it is reminiscent of the Greek cross but could also be interpreted not as an icon but as a non Western design), and it is partially over taken by the rich abundance of flowers and greenery.

Baray's work has been seen in numerous exhibitions, both domestic and international. Among them are *Chicano Expressions* (Pretoria Arts Museum, Pretoria, South America 1994), *SHG Print Exhibition* (Amerika Haus-U.S. Cultural Center, Berlin, Germany, 1995), *Chicano Expressions* (Musee du N. Monde, La Rochelle, France, 1995), *SHG Print Exhibition* (Los Angeles Public Library-Arroyo Seco Branch, 1996), *Aerospace Diversity Week* (The Aerospace Corporation, El Segundo, CA, 1996), *Chicano Expressions* (Cite du Livre, Aix-en-Provence, France, 1996), *Virgins & Madonnas* (DADA, Los Angeles, 1996), *Chicano Expressions* (Centro Comercial Plaza La Cachanilla, Mexicali, Mexico, 1996), *Works from the Collection of SHG* (Riverside Art Museum, Riverside, CA, 1997), *Las Tunas/Prickly Pears* (Rancho Santiago Community College, . Santa Ana, CA, 1997), *Traditions Abandoned/ Traditions Retained* (Riverside Art Museum, Riverside, 1997), *SHG Print Exhibition* (County of Los Angeles, Monterey Park, 1997), *Dos de East Los* (Glenn Green Galleries, Santa Fe, NM, 1997), *and Millennium Exhibit* (London, 2000). The latter exhibition was cosponsored by Self-Help Graphics and ACAVA, a London-based artists' cooperative; during the show Baray served as the London representative of Self- Help Graphics.

In Memory of José Montoya (1932-2013)

by c/s Ella Maria Díaz

José Montoya was a Chicano poet, muralist, poster maker, professor, labor organizer, co-founder of the Royal Chicano Air Force, and iconic voice of the Chicano movement. He passed away on September 25, 2013, at 81 years of age. He was in his home and surrounded by family. With his vision of a Chicano/a art that spoke to, and not for, la gente, and that made art with, and not for la comunidad, José Montoya fused image with word, melody with water color, harmonizing a Chicano/a worldview born in spirit, struggle, laughter, and protest.

In his canonical poem, *El Louie* (1969;1972), José tells the tale of an epic underdog who more than endures his circumstances; he presents himself with such style that he becomes larger than life. *El Louie* was based on a pachuco that José knew and loved. In his poetic rendering, Louie became someone we all knew and loved. Rough around the edges and always embattled in battle, Louie is what Raúl Villa calls the "Chicano everyman" (2007, 181). He is a self-respecting dude who made the best of his lot - like serving in the armed forces during the Korean War, attending Mass when he can, and graduating barber school with honors. El Louie got the job done. In lifting El Louie from el calle del barrio, Montoya lifted up the lives of everyone who had been left out of the American dream. *El Louie* changed the game for countless people listening to Montoya recite at his One More Canto, a poetry series first held at Reno's Café, then Luna's Café in Sacramento,. Later on, *El Louie* (and many other poems by Montoya) also changed the game for reading audiences. In fact, after reading *El Louie* and discovering its brilliant historical references and powerful literary devices, one should immediately recite it for the acoustic experience. A whole curriculum could be developed around José Montoya's poetry and called "Chicano Sound Studies." Raúl Villa notes that Montoya, with his musical ear, innovated the "Chicano performance poem or spoken-word text," which his "reading style certainly anticipated" (181).

A pioneering bilingual poet, Montoya mixed and fused Spanish and English in ways that brought out corresponding sounds of different consonants, as he does in this line from his poem, *El Padre Nuestro And the Park* (1975). Montoya sings, "This Park—so near / My house — casi-kitty-corner, / Como quien dice — / This simple, yet Majestic park!" A clever play on words that are similar in sound, Montoya captured how bilingual people speak, using both languages and often switching between them. Layered in "sound texture" taken directly from the mouths of Chicanos/as (Villanueva 2000, 694), Montoya's poetic voice also integrated caló into his bilingual poems, producing a trilingual atmosphere that brought crowds of people into the bar to hear what he had to say.

And this was the key to Montoya's artistic worldview: he made art not for art's sake, but for people's sake, as he creatively labored to lift the consciousness of his Chicano/a community. Like El Teatro Campesiono's performances in the fields and theatrical actos born on the frontlines of a labor strike, Montoya's sound was born on the political stage of the farmworker's movement. Later, his poetry continued to transform "flor y canto" through the music he made with his band, El Trio Casindio.

Montoya's sound was also his vision. As a co-founder of the vanguard Chicano/a arts collective, The Royal Chicano Air Force, in Sacramento in 1969, José and his colleagues theorized Chicano/a art through process—literally making it and teaching it as it came into being. Known as "the graphic arts arm" of the United Farmworkers union (UFW), the RCAF made silk-screen posters to cheer on all kinds of political causes (from "BOYCOTT GRAPES!", to "VIVA LA HUELGA!") and celebrate events in the Chicano/a community.

José Montoya also conceived of Barrio Art in the 1970s. An arts education program, Barrio Art connected college students from the local University in Sacramento, to the Chicano/a community. University students were offered college credit to instruct inner-city youth and the elderly. In turn, local youth and the elderly taught a thing or two to those college kids. As an art professor at Sacramento State (for close to thirty years), Montoya saw and felt the need for more connection between the university and his community. In 1977, Barrio Art came under the directorship of RCAF artist Ricardo Favela who supervised the program until his untimely death in 2007. An innovation in college curriculum, Barrio Art was Montoya's vision made real: he believed that educational institutions should serve people and not only ideas. Barrio Art classes continue to be taught at the Washington Neighborhood Center in José's neighborhood

Montoya also created his own prolific body of artwork. This included sketches, watercolors, posters, murals, and even tortillas that celebrated Chicano/a culture and its historical precursors, particularly the 1940s pachuco era. From his section of the RCAF's Southside Park Mural (1977; 2001) that emblazoned portraits of El Pachuco y La Victoria on an outdoor stage, to his tribute to the Chicano family centered around love, books, togetherness, and pride at Chicano Park (1975; 2011), Montoya also embarked upon multimedia events like his 1977 exhibition, *El Pachuco Art: An Historical Update*.

Kind of slim and drawn,
There toward the end,
Aging fast from too much
Booze y la vida dura. But
Class to the end.

— Taken from *El Louie* (1969) by José Montoya's *In Formation: 20 Years of Joda* (1992)

Attempting to "set the record straight" about the pachuco era in Mexican American history (Montoya 2001, 31), Montoya and the RCAF planned an art show that rewrote historical misrepresentations by drawing upon personal memories and firsthand accounts. He created a series of sketches and watercolor portraits of pachucos/as based on childhood recollections of his older siblings. But the show's announcement poster was a tribute to Montoya's "ideological mentor" during his training at the California College of the Arts in Oakland (Montoya 2001,28). Having been born in New Mexico, Montoya and his family moved to California in 1941 (Romo 2011, 13). He experienced firsthand the hard labor and hard living of California's Central Valley and, after serving in the Navy during the Korean War, he used his G.I. Bill to go to San Diego City College. He next moved onto the California College of Arts and met "El Ralph Ornelas." He describes his mentor as a "pinto poet, revolutionary, and accomplished thief and scholar. This is the same Ralph whose memory I was posthumously honoring in the Pachuco Art Poster" (28).

According to Montoya, Ornelas "instilled in us the power inherent in uncovering the true history of Chicano people and exposing the lies" (33). Using a "pachuco calaca," or skeleton figure known in the illustrations of Mexican engraver and artist José Guadalupe Posada, Montoya honored Ornelas in a way that he hoped would to speak to the people—that would resound in their bones. Montoya's renowned poster is at once a biographical memory, a culturally identifiable symbol for an emerging Chicano/a community, and "an historical update" to the distorted record of twentieth-century Mexican American history. These layers of meaning are enunciated by the words that Montoya included in the poster. Next to his depiction of Ralph Ornelas as a "pachuco calaca" Montoya writes: "La Verdad."

Montoya also made this poster with his RCAF colleagues. While José drew all the images, directed their placement, and supplied the necessary text, Rudy Cuellar and Luis González actually "pulled" the poster (Montoya 33). This kind of group work was, (and still is) a kind of "no-no" in western visual art, which so often celebrates the individual. But José wasn't having that. He rejoiced in collaboration.

El Pachuco Art: An Historical Update opened in December 1977 in Sacramento, California, at the Open Ring Gallery on J Street; it was also the subject of a documentary film entitled El Pachuco: From Zootsuits to Lowriders, directed by Joe Camacho. The film captures the opening reception and includes shots of the exhibition, which not only featured Montoya's art, but also numerous photographs, letters, and personal belongings that Montoya had collected from the Chicana/o community. "High schoolers," Montoya adds, "were given the task of raiding their family photo albums for snapshots of the forties to be blown up for the show….Other high school students had learned to dance the jitterbug.…And there were enough older ladies in the classes who could still rat an outrageous pompadour" (2001, 31–32). The show traveled to San Francisco's Galería de la Raza and to Los Angeles in 1978. At each opening reception, Montoya and the crowd performed pachuquismo; they dressed in zootsuits and they boogied.

In his opening address to the crowd, José remarked on the historical rendering of pachucos/as in U.S. history and, subsequently, in the collective consciousness of the Chicana/o generation. José declared that pachucos/as were "the first Chicano freedom-fighters of the Chicano movement" (Montoya 1977, 1). The collaborative process of this "documentary exhibit" transformed it into an act of "collective remembering" (Sánchez-Tranquilino and Tagg 1992, 561). The show testified to a collective—and not individual - memory or experience. It was the people's art and the people's show.

The outpouring of tributes to this man and his life on social media outlets in the days following his death is astounding. It reflects who he was as a leader, a charismatic presence, a performer, a generous spirit, a politically committed artist and a human being. I believe that José would be smiling wide over all the online buzz, but not because it is about him. He would be excited that people are excited—enthused, writing, talking, shooting the breeze once again about Chicano/a art, Chicano/a poetry and Chicano/a thought. A longtime friend and fellow artist, Alex Escalante, commented that he was honored when José came to read at the opening of his Poetrait exhibit in 2007 at Luna's Café. Alex had created a series of portraits of Sacramento poets who had impacted him. Alex had known José his whole life before and after Montoya was Sacramento's poet laureate from 2002—2004. The portrait Alex painted is near photographic and positions José on a stage, where he belongs, with his words all around him. His longtime compadre and RCAF colleague, Juan Carrillo wrote that as he prepared to write about José, he was "listening to his music, his words ... my memories of this old friend, this mentor, this voice of my generation. I think about all the people that he touched across this country and beyond." Francisco X. Alarcón posted his poem, *A Poet is a River*, which he originally wrote for José and prefaced the piece with the following: "To José Montoya, Chicano poet laureate, who decided to celebrate his book, *InFormation: 20 Years of Joda*, by reading poems at La Raza Galería Posada on April 24, 1993, the same day César Chávez passed away." Among the countless offerings of "descanse en paz," and "rest in power," we also heard from several of Montoya's adult children, who shared their father with all of us so generously. I have often thought about how tough it must be to let your dad be everyone's father figure, but as Cherríe Moraga remarked, "he carried a kind of grandness in his aspecto because his calling was greater than the individual man...I am so grateful for his life and am proud to now call him Ancestor."

This flood of tributes and reflections about José Montoya signals that he has returned to the collective Chicano/a consciousness that he helped unfurl and inspire.

¡José Montoya Presente!

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DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Noches de peliculas • Film Series

GRATIS y Para toda la family! FREE & Family Friendly!

Friday, November 8 at 7-10pm

5 Suns: Sacred History of Mexico

(30 minute excerpt, English)

1996, USA
A animated film by Patricia Amlin
Petate Productions

Macario *(91 minutes)*

(Spanish with English Subtitles)
(español con subtitulos en ingles)

1960, Mexico
Directed by Roberto Gavaldon
Cinematography by Gabriel Figueroa
Starring Ignacio López Tarso and Pina Pellicer.

During the feast of All Souls Day, Macario, a peasant living in colonial Mexico, revolts against his lifetime of poverty by vowing never to eat again until he has a whole turkey for himself, despite his large family's needs. The day he finally gets his turkey, the Devil, God and Death who each ask to share his large meal with them and weigh on his conscience.

Macario was the first Mexican film to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language film and was also entered into the Cannes Film Festival. The cinematography is reputed to be Gabriel Figueroas best and was to be his final major work in black and white film. B. Traven, a shadowy figure whose real identity is still disputed today, wrote the novel, which the film is based on.

Durante la fiesta de Día de los muertos, Macario, un campesino que vive en el México colonial, se rebela contra su vida de pobreza, jurando no volver a comer hasta que tiene un pavo entero para el solo, a pesar de las necesidades de su familia. El día que finalmente consigue su pavo, el Diablo, Dios y la muerte le piden a compartir su comida con ellos y le pesa sobre su conciencia su capricho.

Macario fue la primera película mexicana de ser nominada para el Oscar por la mejor película de lengua extranjera, y fue introducida al Festival de Cine de Cannes. La cinematografía tiene fama de ser la mejor y la ultima obr de Gabriel Figueroa en blanco y negro. B. Traven, una figura misteriosa, cuya identidad real sigue siendo disputada hoy, escribió la novela en la que se baso la película.

Friday, November 15 at 7-9pm

2501 Migrants *(57 minutes)*

(Chatino & Spanish with English Subtitles)
(Chatino y español con subtitulos en ingles)

2009, Mexico/USA
A film by Yolanda Cruz
Petate Productions

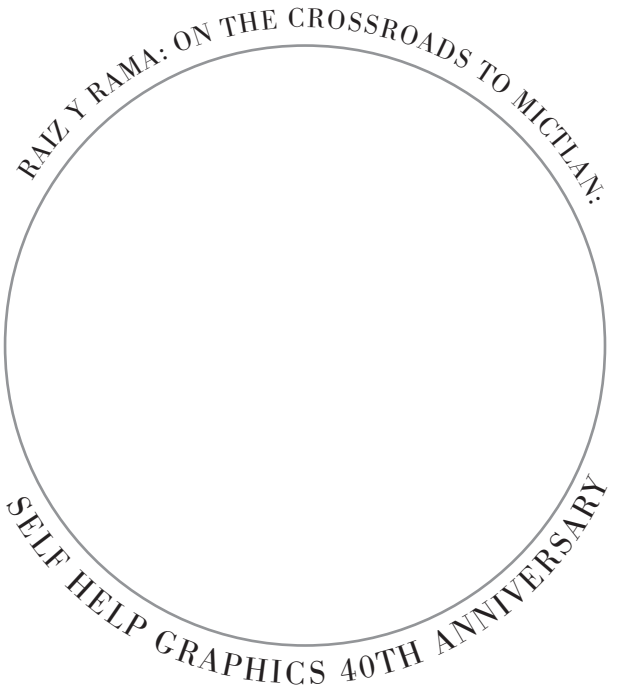
Daily, thousands of primarily poor and young indigenous Mexicans abandon their native homes. They start voyages to the first world in search of jobs and the hope of a brighter future – or, indeed, any economic future at all. In their wake, they leave behind the hollow footprints of a cultural and domestic abandonment. 2501 Migrants illustrates this through the story of Alejandro Santiago, a middle-aged artist and family man from Oaxaca, Mexico. Relatively affluent and erudite, Alejandro returns home after a brief self-exile in France. But upon arrival to his native Teococuilco, he is struck by what he perceives as a virtual ghost town. Alejandro experiences, first hand, the reality that Oaxaca has emerged as one of Mexico's leading exporters of human labor to the United States. Inspired by this, he decides to create a monumental installation art piece: 2,501 life-size sculptures an homage to each individual migrant who left his village.

Alejandro Santiago, passed away on July 22, 2013 in Oaxaca city at the age of 49. His wife, Zoila Lopez; son, Lucio Santiago, 26; daughter Alejandra Santiago, 12; his mother, Isabel Santiago; two sisters; and a half-brother, survive him. We celebrate and remember his life through the screening of this film.

Todos los días, miles de jóvenes, principalmente jóvenes indígenas mexicanos, abandonan sus hogares natales. Comienzan los viajes al primer mundo en busca de trabajo y la esperanza de un futuro mejor - o, de hecho, cualquier futuro económico. A su paso, dejan atrás las huellas profundas del abandono cultural y nacional. 2501 Migrantes ilustra esto a través de la historia de Alejandro Santiago, un artista de mediana edad y hombre de familia de Oaxaca, México. Exitoso, Alejandro regresa a casa después de un breve auto-exilio en Francia. Pero, al llegar a su pueblo natal de Teococuilco, es impactado por lo que percibe como un pueblo fantasma. Alejandro ve la realidad en que Oaxaca se ha convertido en uno de los principales exportadores de mano de obra a los Estados Unidos. Inspirado por esto, él decide crear una instalación monumental obra de arte: 2.501 esculturas de tamaño natural de un homenaje a cada migrante que dejó su pueblo.

Alejandro Santiago, falleció el 22 de julio de 2013 en la ciudad de Oaxaca a la edad de 49 años. Su esposa, Zoila López, hijo, Lucio Santiago, 26, hija de Alejandra Santiago, 12, y su madre, Isabel Santiago, dos hermanas y un medio hermano, le sobreviven. Nosotros celebramos y recordamos su vida a través de la proyección de esta película.
migrant who left his village.

Alejandro Santiago, passed away on July 22, 2013 in Oaxaca city at the age of 49. His wife, Zoila Lopez; son, Lucio Santiago, 26; daughter Alejandra Santiago, 12; his mother,



RAÍZ Y RAMA:
ON THE CROSSROADS
TO MICTLÁN

Art Exhibition Curated by Daniel Gonzalez

November 2, 2013 - December 1

ARTIST RECEPTION

Thursday, November 14, 2013 7 PM - 9 PM

This exhibition celebrates the complexity, depth and understanding that artists now possess about Día de los Muertos as a result of many years of scholarly work, knowledge gathering and community participation.

Pavel Acevedo * Beatrice Coron * Ofelia Esparza * Ricardo Estrada * Jennifer Gutierrez Morgan * InstituTo de Grafica de Chicago * Omar Lopez * Rebeca Mendez * Stephanie Mercado * Victor Solis * Arturo Romo Santillano * Reyes Rodriguez

GRACIAS

Jose Alpuche
Joel Garcia
Amber Amaro
Victor Rosas
Dewey Tafoya
Martha Carillo
The Esparza Family
Flor Quinto
William Acedo
Colin Gunckel
All of our volunteers and artists who participated in this year's Dia de los Muertos!

THANK YOU!

Image by William Acedo ©2013-