



**MX**

**21**

**RESISTANCE,  
REAFFIRMATION  
& RESILIENCE**

**09.17.2021-02.27.2022**



# WELCOME

The Mexic-Arte Museum is dedicated to enriching the community through education programs, exhibitions, and the collection, preservation, and interpretation of Mexican, Latinx, and Latin American art and culture for visitors of all ages.

Throughout 2021, Mexico is observing and commemorating major events in history: the falling of the Mexica capital Tenochtitlán, the invasion by Spain, and the Independence of Mexico. Mexic-Arte Museum will present an exhibition and programs in conjunction with Mexico's 2021 events, and reaffirm our common cultural history.

The exhibition MX 21-Resistance, Reaffirmation & Resilience is divided into three sections: Resistance refers to the Original Peoples resisting the Spanish invasion and occupation of Mexico, which was really not "conquered." Reaffirmation speaks to affirming the unique history and cultural diversity of our shared heritage. Resilience represents the on-going evolution of Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and other Latinx peoples, despite and because of struggles to achieve liberty, social justice, and plurality. Invited artists respond to these themes to help the public better understand and appreciate how Mexico's history has impacted and inspired our shared U.S.- Mexico cultural history in the Americas, as Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Latinx peoples.

Participating artists include Luis Abreux, Santa Barraza, Cande Aguilar, Angel Cabrales, Tomas Filsinger, Eduardo Garcia, Tita Griesbach, Mari Hernandez, Michael Menchaca, Delilah Montoya, Juan Navarrete, Yelaine Rodriguez, Sergio Sanchez Santamaria, Andy Villarreal, "Kill Joy", and artwork from the Mexic-Arte Museum Permanent Collection.

The goal is to participate in Mexico's remembrance, and at the same time, reflect on history and current reality here in the U.S., reclaiming and reaffirming shared heritage and experiences through the work of contemporary artists.



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This project is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department.

# RESISTANCE

Before the Spanish arrived in the Western hemisphere, the land was densely populated by an advanced civilization. It was not called "America". The First Peoples inhabited every region, living within the diversity of the land and developing cultural lifeways dependent on the land. Five hundred years have passed since the invasion and fall of

Mexico-Tenochtitlan. The inhabitants moved from violent rebellion, to a more understated version. Rather than give up ancestral traditions, the Aztecs and other First People continued practicing their traditions, sometimes in clandestine manners. They resisted the Spanish invasion, occupation, and assimilation from the beginning, and throughout the centuries. Resistance, however small or revolutionary, became the way of life for communities of "occupied" lands. Resistance was expressed in dances, hidden behind masks, or worshipping "idols" behind altars. Endurance itself is resistance.

# LEGEND OF AZTLAN

According to legend, the Aztec people were forced to leave their home of Aztlan nearly 1,000 years ago. Aztlan is the name of the mythical homeland of the Nahuatl people. Nahuatl legends relate that seven tribes lived in Chicomoztoc, or

"the place of the seven caves". Each cave represented a different tribe and were also a metaphor for the seven wombs of each tribe. Because of their common language, Nahuatl, these groups are referred to as the Nahuatl people. These tribes first settled in the area of Chapultepec, then later moved to an island in the center of Lake Texcoco. This island developed into the Mexicacity of Tenochtitlán, which means "on the cactus of the stone".

In the 1960's, during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, Aztlan began being used to refer to the region of the U.S. that once belonged to Mexico.



*The seven caves of Chicomoztoc, from Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*



**NESTOR QUINONES**

*Detalle, 1990*

Oil on canvas, 48" x 49" x 1"

# MEXICO BEFORE THE INVASION

Pre-Columbian Mexico traces its origins to 8,000 BC and is identified as one of the six cradles of civilization. It was home to many advanced Mesoamerican civilizations, most notably the Maya and the Mexica (Aztecs).

From their mythical homeland of Aztlan, the Mexica migrated south, led by their divine leader, Huitzilopochtli. The legend states that Huitzilopochtli, god of war, the sun, and human sacrifice, directed the Mexica people to look for the eagle on the prickly pear cactus and build a temple in his honor. They followed the order and found the place on an island in the middle of the lake:

*“There they saw perched on a prickly pear cactus stem, a royal eagle of extraordinary size and beauty. An oracle that the omen indicated the site of their future city. The place, called Tenochtitlan, also known by its other name, Mexico, derived from the Aztec war god Mexitli. The eagle with the serpent and the cactus form the insignia of the modern Mexican republic.”*

Upon seeing this vision, the Mexica people proceeded to build their city on that spot, which is now the site of present-day Mexico City. Thus, both the name of the country, Mexico, and its national flag are based on the founding of the great city of Tenochtitlan.

The Mexica in particular worshipped many deities or gods and goddesses. Cōātlīcue is the goddess who gave birth to the moon, stars, and Huitzilōpōchtli, the god of the sun and war. Represented as a woman wearing a skirt of writhing snakes and a necklace made of human hearts, hands, and skulls. Her feet and hands are adorned with claws and her face is formed by two facing serpents.

Most artistic representations of Coatlicue emphasize her deadly side, because Earth, both consumes and regenerates life. She represents the devouring mother, in whom both the womb and the grave exist, an example of the creation and destruction we must all balance in our time on Earth.



**Arturo García Bustos**, *La Vida y La Muerte (Life & Death)*, n.d., Linocut on paper

Contemporary artists are influenced by pre-Columbian, revolutionary ideologies, civil rights movements, social, political and cultural issues. Communities continue to work to resist and challenge dominant social norms and stereotypes. Some have focused on building awareness of collective history and culture, human rights, and equity. Art has evolved over time not only to illustrate current struggles and social issues, but also to inform new generations, unifying around culture and histories.

# SOL AZTECA

The Aztec Stone of the Fifth Sun, (often referred to as a calendar), is one of the greatest artistic accomplishments. The Sun god Tonatiuh can be seen in the center, sticking out his blade tongue, asking for the sacrifice of human hearts (clutched in his hands). The Aztecs believed there had been four previous creations and destructions of the universe,



and thus we see four previous eras, or suns, around the head of Tonatiuh.

**Revost**  
*Sol Azteca*, n.d.  
Serigraph on paper

Around these four symbols we see the twenty day signs which represent the eighteen months totaling exactly 360 days. Notice also the two gods who face off at the bottom of the stone.



This piece is developed from the combination of an ancestral graphic cultural legacy such as the Olmec culture with techniques of the digital age such

**Galamot & NAVA**  
**@Latinotoons**  
*Mictlantecuhtli*, 2016  
Vinyl and augmented reality

as pixel art, a style based on the minimum unit of the image, which in turn reminds us of traditional techniques such as embroidery, mosaic, and pointillism.



Still from Tomás Filsinger and Jesús Gerardo Medina's video, *Reflections in the Obsidian Mirror: Mexico/Tenochtitlan 1323-2021*

# TENOCHITITLAN

By 1521, the capital city of Tenochtitlan was among the largest cities in the world, with perhaps as many as 200,000 inhabitants. In less than 200 years, it evolved from a small settlement on an island in the western swamps of Lake Texcoco into the powerful political, economic, and religious center of the greatest empire of pre-Columbian Mexico. Tenochtitlan was a city of great wealth, obtained through the spoils of tribute from conquered regions. Of astounding beauty and impressive scale, its towering pyramids were painted in bright red and blue, and its palaces in dazzling white. The mercados had a variety of food and goods which impressed native visitors and invading Spaniards alike. Today, the ruins of Tenochtitlan are in modern day Mexico City.

## MOCTEZUMA II

In the year 1502, Moctezuma II became the emperor of the Mexica empire at the height of its power. Moctezuma led numerous expeditions in the name of Huitzilpotchtli, the god of war and the sun, to obtain captives for ritual sacrifice. Throughout the 18 year reign of Moctezuma II, the empire began to weaken by the resentment of subject tribes due to the increasing demand of tributes. He ruled until the beginning of the fall when the Spanish arrived in 1519.



# THE FALL OF TENOCHITITLAN

At the beginning of the 16th Century and starting ten years before the arrival of Cortés and his men, Emperor Moctezuma was witness to 8 omens which foretold the end of the empire and his own death. Because of these omens there was an underlying feeling that the Mexica were doomed, and when the Spanish arrived those who remembered the omens saw their fates as sealed.

Whether these omens actually occurred is a question for historians and folklorists alike. They are mentioned in The Florentine Codex, in Book 12 of the Codex, the 8 signs that predicted the doom to befall the Mexica. Scholars are divided as to whether or not these omens were made up after the Spanish Conquest. According to the legends, Moctezuma did not dismiss the omens but meditated on them and took them very seriously. In spite of having the best astrological and priestly counsel, the emperor had no idea what the omens meant or what fate would befall him or his realm. As news of the omens spread through the empire, all who had heard of these omens had a feeling that big changes were on the horizon, and they were right.

# ARRIVAL OF THE SPANISH

In 1504, Hernan Cortés left Spain to make his fortune in the Americas. He sailed for Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), and then onto Cuba where he assisted Diego Velázquez in his invasion of the island and made a reputation for being ruthless to get what he wanted. Cortés persuaded Velázquez, who governed Santo Domingo, to make

him commander of an expedition to Mexico, where the land was rumored to contain great wealth.

Shortly before Cortés set sail, Velázquez, who was suspicious of his motives, canceled his commission. Cortés ignored the orders, and with his fleet of about 600 soldiers and sailors set sail and landed in Mexico around 1519. They established a settlement (now Veracruz), made local allies, then set their journey to the rumored city of riches, Tenochtitlán.

The Spanish encountered the Mexica Empire, not as a bunch of lost cities in the jungle, but as a living, breathing civilization. They were welcomed into the capital of Tenochtitlan by Emperor Moctezuma II in 1519. The Mexica had controlled most of central Mexico by outright subjugation and various systems of tribute, and their influence was felt as far as Central America to the current American Southwest. Many living under Mexica control wanted the empire out of their lives, and when the Spanish arrived they welcomed those who would help them overthrow the empire.

Shortly after Cortés was welcomed by Emperor Moctezuma II, he took the Emperor as prisoner to gain control of Tenochtitlán. In 1520, Cortés left the city under Spanish control, leaving Pedro de Alvarado in charge. Alvarado grew paranoid and murdered leading Mexica chiefs, prompting a battle which caused the Spanish to suffer heavy casualties.

While held captive by Cortés, Emperor Moctezuma II was forced to persuade his people to cease their hostility towards the Spanish. Contemporary sources indicate that as he was speaking, he suffered a severe head injury and died when hit by a rock thrown by one of his own warriors. While others suggest he was murdered by the Spaniards. His younger brother, Cuitlahuac, became the new leader and emperor of the Mexica Empire until his own death from smallpox.

# THE OMENS OF MOCTEZUMA II



- 1** The burning corn in the skies of Mesoamerica. According to the stories, it resembled an elongated triangle, with a reddish color, shining in the sky with the force of the moon.
- 2** A fire in the temple of Huitzilpotchtli, the most important Mexica deity. The fire persisted for days even though the temple was made of rock.
- 3** A lightning bolt that, according to the Mexica fell without sound on a day of calm rain in the temple of Xiutecutli, a god of fire, leaving behind a pile of ashes.
- 4** The impact of a meteorite: “three stars running lit together and with long tails left from the west heading east.”
- 5** A Tsunami in Lake Texcoco that caused the waters to rise and flood the city, destroying homes. It seems that it was the first time that the Mexica saw a phenomenon of this type in the once calm waters of the lake.
- 6** The appearance of the “spirit” of a woman crying over the disappearance of her children: “Oh my children, we are already lost! Oh my children, where will I take them?” The emergence of the legend of the weeping woman.
- 7** The capture, in the lake, of a large bird, similar to a crane, that seemed to have a crystal between its eyes. Moctezuma saw in that glass “the arrival of men mounted on vessels on a deer without antlers and in a combat attitude.
- 8** The appearance in various places of the city of two-headed monsters that disappeared in the waters.



# THE PANDEMIC OF THE 1500s

The conquest of Mexico was hugely influenced by the arrival of deadly diseases; the defeat of the people of Mexico was significantly contributed to by the smallpox virus. Spaniards and their animals carried smallpox when they arrived in the New World on a ship that landed on Hispaniola, an island that is now divided between two sovereign nations, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Smallpox spread to the mainland and reached Tenochtitlan. Similar plagues, measles,

and later cholera, nearly wiped out the city's Indigenous population after the invasion. When Cortés and his army began their campaign against the Mexica in 1519, over 30 million people were living in Mexico. One hundred years later, after a series of smallpox epidemics had decimated the local population, it is estimated only around 1.5-3 million Indigenous people had survived. Some estimates are even higher and state that as many as 90% of the population died.

## CUAUHTÉMOC

The last Mexica ruler of Tenochtitlan from 1520 to 1521.

Cauhtémoc, meaning Descending Eagle, as in the moment when an eagle folds its wings and plummets down to strike its prey. A name that implies aggression and determination. When Cauhtémoc was elected at a very young age, Tenochtitlan had already been rocked by the invasion of the Spanish and their Indigenous allies, the death of Moctezuma II, and the death of Cuītlahuac, who succeeded as ruler, but died of smallpox shortly afterwards.

Cauhtémoc was said to have had considerable military experience before he became emperor. Unlike Moctezuma II, Cauhtémoc saw the Spaniards as a grave threat from the beginning and he was determined to defeat them. At first, he succeeded in pushing the Spanish back in a series of land and naval assaults.

# CUAUHTÉMOC

Cuahtémoc was captured on August 13, 1521, while fleeing Tenochtitlán by crossing Lake Texcoco. According to Spanish sources, upon capture he asked Cortés to take his knife and “strike me dead immediately”, and be sacrificed to the gods. Cortés refused and instead took him captive.

In 1525, Cortés took Cuahtémoc on his expedition to Honduras, as he feared that Cuahtémoc could have led an insurrection in his absence. During the expedition, Cortés had Cuahtémoc executed. Cuahtémoc is the embodiment of indigenist nationalism in Mexico, being the only Aztec emperor who survived the invasion by the Spanish Empire and their native allies.



**LEOPOLDO MÉNDEZ**  
*Cuahtémoc*,  
ca. 1950 Lithograph  
of original on paper

This warrior represents, by his strength, his bravery, his struggle and his martyrdom, the greatness of the

nationalities that were in full historical ascendancy when the Spaniards arrived. In Cuahtémoc, Mexicans see the symbol of their past and the heroic defender of the indigenous homelands destroyed by the Invasion.

# MALINTZIN

Malinche was known by many names, baptized as a Catholic by the Spaniards, and named “Marina”. The Nahuatl called her 'Malintzin'. She was born to local rulers in the Nahuatl-speaking area of Coatzacoalcos around 1500. After her father's death and her mother's remarriage, she was

deliberately given away to people from Xicanlongo so that her step brother would have the rights of heir. She was then passed on to other nearby Maya speaking people, learning their language among them. This later enabled her to communicate with Jerónimo de Aguilar, an interpreter for Hernan Cortés who spoke Yucatec Maya and Spanish. Early in his expedition to Mexico, Cortés was confronted by the Maya at Potonchán. In the ensuing battle, the Mayas suffered significant loss of lives and asked for peace. In the following days, they presented the Spaniards with gifts of food and gold, as well as twenty women, including Malinche.

Malinche’s language skills were soon unearthed, and from then on, she worked with Aguilar to bridge communication between the Spaniards and the Nahuatl. Cortés would speak Spanish to Aguilar, who translated into Yucatec Maya for Malinche, who in turn translated into Nahuatl.

In 1522 Malinche gave birth to a son by Cortés and stayed in a house built for her in the town of Coyoacán, eight miles south of Tenochtitlán as the Mexica capital city was redeveloped to serve as Spanish-controlled Mexico City. Later, Cortes would marry her off to his compatriot Juan de Jaramillo



with whom she had a daughter.

**TITA GRIESBACH**  
*Malinche II*, n.d.  
Lithograph on  
paper

Scholars have estimated that she died less than a decade after the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, around February 1529. She was survived by her children, who would each be raised by their fathers' families. La Malinche’s legacy is one of myth and legend, with opposing opinions of the Mexican people about the legendary woman. Some see her as a traitor, while others see her as a founding figure of the Mexican nation, caught between cultures, forced to make complex decisions.

# 450 YEARS OF STRUGGLE: HOMAGE TO THE MEXICAN PEOPLE

The Spaniards were not satisfied with defeating and subduing the Mexica people. They wanted to raze their civilization to the ground. They assassinated Cuauhtémoc and the most courageous leaders. They demolished temples. They overthrew the indigenous gods and made the old manuscripts



**ANGEL BRACHO**  
*Fall of Tenochtitlan,  
Caída de Tenochtitlan*  
ca. 1960  
Lithograph of original  
linocut on paper

disappear. They strove to liquidate, in body and spirit, the society of the ancient Mexicans. Thus, many precious elements to reconstruct the profiles and character of a great civilization were partially lost. In this destructive, historically irresponsible work, the first bishop of Mexico, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, distinguished himself.



**PABLO O'HIGGINS**  
*The Destruction of  
Ancient Mexico  
La Destrucción del  
México Antiguo,*  
ca. 1960 Lithograph  
of original color on  
paper

On May 22, 1521 Spanish forces laid siege to the powerful Aztec capital where present day Mexico City now stands. The Spanish proceeded in a final invasion of Tenochtitlan, where they captured and tortured Cuauhtémoc by burning his feet to reveal the location of gold, but he never gave in. August 13, 1521 marks the fall of the Mexica Empire. Following more than a year of war, a smallpox outbreak, and a siege, the Mexicas surrendered to the Spanish conquistadors and their Indigenous allies, who took the Mexica capital.

As the Spanish Empire invaded and colonized the region from its base in Mexico City, they established the territory of New Spain. During this time, the Catholic Church played a role in spreading Christianity and the Spanish language as Indigenous people persevered and struggled to maintain their culture, languages, and traditions. Spaniards were also transporting thousands of enslaved people from West, Central and South Africa forming around 10 percent of the population. Native and Black populations were subjugated and heavily exploited to mine rich deposits of precious metals. This contributed to Spain's status as a major world power for the next three centuries, as well as a massive influx of wealth to fund wars. Over time, people resisted assimilations while simultaneously forming the Mexican identity, based on a fusion of European, African, Asian and indigenous customs.



**ARTURO GARCIA BUSTOS**  
*Jacinto Canek,* ca. 1960  
Lithograph of original  
linocut on paper

The Natives were never completely subdued during the three hundred years of Spanish domination. The nonconformity, and rebellions of the conquered followed one after another throughout the territory of so-called New Spain, until the War of Independence broke out in 1810. One of the most vigorous rebellions was in Yucatan, in 1761, by Jacinto Canek a half Spanish, half-Mayan, whose memory has not been done full justice. At the head of a multitude of his compatriots, he fought with enormous courage against the Spanish troops and was hardly subdued. He died as a painful symbol of the martyrdom of his people, tied up and tortured. His body was burned and his ashes thrown into the air. That was the justice of the Spanish invaders.

Artists document, appropriate and retell stories to inform and to call attention to the five hundred years of resisting invasion and violence. At every opportunity, native and mestizo heritage have been celebrated and preserved. Artists identify with Cuauhtémoc, sympathize with La Llorona and La Malinche, dispel myths of yesterday, proudly wear the Aztec Calendar (Piedra del Sol), and use the pandemic of centuries ago to bring awareness to the pandemic of today.

## GASPAR YANGA

Known as El Primer Libertador de las Americas, or the First Liberator of America, Gaspar Yanga was the leader of the first revolt of the enslaved Africans in Veracruz. After the revolt in 1570, Yanga created a Marrón colony of nearly 500 people in the highlands of Veracruz, surviving by outwitting and undermining Spanish colonialists. To sustain the settlements, they would often rob Spanish merchants who traveled on the Camino Real, a popular trade route.

In 1609, the Spanish launched an attack against the colony fearing that more slave revolts would follow. After defeating the Spanish attack, he garnered a treaty of freedom which resulted in the recognition of San Lorenzo de los Negros (currently called Yanga) as a free town in 1609 and the first community of free Black people in the Americas. Today, the legacy of Gaspar Yanga lives on as the regions of Veracruz, Guerrero, and Oaxaca which are known for their well-preserved African culture.



**ADOLFO  
QUINTEROS**  
*The Black  
Rebellion  
Rebeliones de  
Negros,*  
ca. 1960  
Lithograph of  
original on  
paper

As these events occurred in Mexico, military leader and Emperor of France Napoleon Bonaparte, occupied Spain to overthrow the monarchy in 1808. The ensuing war between Spain and France caused the government of New Spain to fall into disarray, triggering events that led directly to the Mexican War for Independence. A series of revolts began throughout the Spanish colonized territories, as a financial crisis and political transformations occurred.

## MIGUEL HIDALGO Y COSTILLA

Born on the Corralejo hacienda near Guanajuato, New Spain (Mexico), on May 8, 1753. Hidalgo enjoyed a comfortable upbringing as a Creole, or

Criollo – a citizen of Spanish descent born in Mexico. Hidalgo studied philosophy and theology and was ordained a priest in 1778. In the early 1800's, Hidalgo moved to the small pueblo of Dolores, Guanajuato. The parish priest was known for being unconventional, questioning the reason that priests could not marry, reading books banned by the Catholic church, and challenging the absolute authority of the Pope in Rome. He, along with other Spanish intellectuals, such as Ignacio Allende, felt that by the 1800s Spanish colonial rule of Mexico had to end.

The ruling class had bred itself into a hierarchy of two levels: the Gachupines (Spanish born aristocrats) and the Criollos (of Spanish descent). The Criollos, which Miguel Hidalgo was a member, saw this instability as an opportunity to overthrow the Gachupines and claim ruling stature. They planned to begin their push for power in December of 1810; however, the Criollos were betrayed, and Hidalgo was forced to make a quick decision – flee to safety and begin forming a new plot, or turn to his parish, which was starving for freedom from Spain, and seize the opportunity to spark a true revolution for independence. Choosing to stay and fight, Hidalgo sped to his church, and ordered the bells to be rung.

## EL GRITO DE DOLORES

Just before midnight on September 15, 1810, Hidalgo made an impulsive decision that revolutionized Mexican history as the church bells rung. Hidalgo cried out to the native Mexicans and the working classes, urging them to stand up and take back the lands stolen from their forefathers. He denounced Spanish rulers and their three hundred years of domination and pillaging. El Grito de Dolores sparked revolutionary action by thousands of Indigenous people, Criollos, and Mestizos, who banded together to challenge Spanish authority over the entire nation.

Despite initial success, the Hidalgo rebellion lost steam and was defeated. In July 30, 1811 a few months, not even a year, after the beginning of the Great War of Independence, its most illustrious initiators paid for their patriotic feat with their lives. Hidalgo was degraded of his priestly condition by the hierarchy of the church, treated as a villain, and was shot. The night before his death, he wrote verses, with charcoal, on the walls of his prison cell in Chihuahua. His name lives on in the Mexican state of Hidalgo and every year, September 15, 1810 is still celebrated as Mexico's Independence Day.



### ÁNGEL BRACHO

The Cry for Independence  
Grito de Independencia  
ca. 1960  
Lithograph of original  
linocut on paper,  
14½" x 10½"

At midnight on September 15, 1810, Hidalgo, in the atrium of the church of Dolores, exclaimed the cry of Mexican Independence. A brief and energetic speech, calling the people to overthrow the bad government, to destroy the Spanish power in Mexico.

## JOSE MORELOS

José María Morelos y Pavón was one of the greatest insurgent military commanders during the Mexican War of Independence. Morelos was born into a poor "pardo" (Afro-Mexican) family in Valladolid, Mexico on September 30, 1765. In 1790 he studied at the Colegio de San Nicolás, operated by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, eventually becoming a full-fledged priest by age 32.



### CELIA CALDERON

Morelos, ca. 1960  
Lithograph of original color linocut on paper  
14½" x 10½"

Following El Grito de Dolores, Morelos was summoned by Hidalgo, who joined the battle and soon became a commander. After Hidalgo was executed, Morelos assumed leadership. Morelos led forces that surrounded Mexico City and confined the Spanish to coastal ports. In 1813 Morales organized the National Constituent Congress, which assembled the "Sentimientos de la Nación," that abolished slavery and racial class. They also bestowed the title of "Your Highness" to Morelos, but he refused it and instead accepted the title "Servant of the Nation."

The Spanish Army expanded its efforts and searched for rebels, including Morelos. Eventually Spanish forces overpowered his army and captured him. Morelos was brought to Mexico City, tried for treason in a Spanish court, found guilty for his revolutionary activities, and executed on December 22, 1815. Although Morelos united the people initially in their fight for their freedom, independence would not be won until six years after his death in 1821. This early leader of the Mexican War of Independence is fondly remembered in this country where his achievements are acknowledged. His home town of Valladolid was renamed Morelia & the government also created Morelos, a state in Mexico.

## VICENTE GUERRERO

A native of the state that today bears his name, Guerrero was the third great leader of the Independence. In the mountains of his native land, with admirable tenacity, he kept the flame of the emancipation struggle burning, even in the most difficult days when it seemed that the insurrection had been crushed. With his army at his feet he attended the consummation of the Great War and the proclamation of independence.

Vicente Guerrero was born in the Spanish colonies



**FRANCISCO MORA**

Vicente Guerrero, ca. 1960

Lithograph of original color on paper  
14½" x 10½", 2020.2.204.19

in 1781 during a period whereby African descendants were subjected to many disadvantages. Spain's 1812 Constitution gave privileges to Indigenous and white mestizos and excluded people of Afro-descent. Guerrero's campaign relied on undermining Spain by emphasizing that the majority of people in the colonies were of African descent and that they far outnumbered those with European heritage. Mexico's Black roots are further underscored considering that the majority of people participating in the war effort, both soldiers and generals, were of Afro-Mexican descent.

Vicente Guerrero also emphasized the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition, which had extended itself into Mexico between 1571 and 1810. The Inquisition increasingly restricted the freedoms of workers and enslaved people. The success of the Mexican Revolution dismantled laws that specifically targeted Black people. In 1823, children were no longer born into slavery, and by 1829 slavery was abolished. This granted Black people full citizenship and land rights. While Spaniards often found a way around this by declaring the enslaved people were indentured servants, having been forced to sign dubious contracts, it was the step towards progression that ended the widespread practice of slavery in Mexico. Guerrero went on to become the second President of Mexico and the first Black President of Mexico.

# REAFFIRMATION

Artworks in this section affirm the unique history and cultural diversity of our shared heritage, complex identity, and vitality shaped by experiences in the Americas. The notion of affirmation has to do with culture, as well as politics. Affirmation of one's culture is to strive for political change.

Artists work to affirm, self-determine, and resist racial stereotypes. Our struggles to achieve liberty and social justice are one. We affirm our similarities and embrace our differences, and artists respond and contribute to the pursuit of social justice today. We reflect on history and current reality here in the U.S., reclaiming and reaffirming shared history and experiences. They were of diverse origins, bought from the Portuguese or captured through war like the Moros, Malays, Javanese, Bengalis, Arabs, and other ethnic groups, including Japanese and Chinese people. Indigenous, Asian, African people in Latin America are decentered and blurred from history.

The painting *Archipelago to Acapulco* by artist, KillJoy, explores the cultural contributions between people of the Philippines and their long history in Mexico. For two and a half centuries, around the mid-1500s to early 1800s, Spanish trading ships known as Manila Galleons sailed across the Pacific from Manila to ports of Acapulco.



## KILLJOY

*Archipelago to Acapulco*, 2021

Acrylic on panel, 48" x 96"

The route served as a chokehold that Spain held over both its colonies of Mexico and the Philippines, resulting in slave trade between the two coasts and economic ruin for the islands. However, from this violent colonization also came a resilient exchange of customs, language, food, various commodities, new materials, and ways of building structural elements like houses and ships.

Palapas are recognizable for their thatched palm roofs throughout Mexico. Palapas are actually a structure brought over from the Philippines and

taught to people living on the coasts of Mexico. The word "Palapas" has its roots as a Filipino word meaning: palm. Fruits that are synonymous with Mexican cuisine, like tamarind and mango, were sailed over through channels that served as a gateway for Spain to trade with the Philippines and Asia. During return galleon trips, indigenous people from Mexico were amongst those taken to complete labor in the Philippines. Consequently, this introduced words from their native language of Nahuatl to the archipelago that are still used in present day.

In "*Archipelago to Acapulco*", people from the Philippines are represented by the Lapu Lapu fish, named after the warrior general Lapu Lapu, who led the successful first organized attack of the Philippines against Spain (that would also be the death of Ferdinand Magellan). People of Mexico are represented by the Xoloitzcuintli dog that has both sacred and practical significance to pre-Columbian Aztec and Mayan empires. They work together to build a palapa that protects galleon items that will eventually be part of the evolving Mexican identity and serve as a divergence from Spanish cultural oppression. In the background stands the Colima volcano, smoking and boiling hot with the energy of rebellion. Both Acapulco and Colima would be homes that birthed long generations of Filipino presence and communities that would call Mexico their new forever home. The stories of Mexico and the Philippines are intertwined and complex. Initially pitted against each other, yet they built networks of resistance, rebellion, and resilience.

*Contemporary Casta Portraiture: Nuestra 'Calidad'* by artist Delilah Montoya is the investigation of the cultural and biological forms of "hybridity." Looking at this concept as a signifier of colonialism, the portraits echo the aesthetic and cultural markers formulated by the Casta paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in present-day familial settings of New World multicultural communities. The idea is to witness the resonance of colonialism as a substructure of our contemporary society.

This series aims to demonstrate that our heritage comes from this mixed ethno-racial colonial social structure. Like the Colonial Casta paintings, *Contemporary Casta Portraiture: Nuestra 'Calidad'* gazes at the subject's domicile, biology, vocation and consumerism. The intention is to use contemporary tools such as DNA testing and digital media to assemble a portrayal of the biological connection to one's learned community. Their DNA study and family monologue is accessed through a QR code located on the lower right of each portrait.

The portraits are photographic studies of selected families whose ancestry derives from the New World colonial past. The families' DNA is tested to demonstrate their migration pattern and ethno-racial mix. In using present-day tools (DNA testing and digital media) as part of the construction of the

familial settings, the photographic study includes the ancestral migration and ethno-racial affiliations in the same way that the semiotics of the Casta painting reveals the colonial social structure.

*Contemporary Casta Portraiture: 'Nuestra Calidad'* updates the Castas by juxtaposing the "Costumbrismo" aesthetic markers that detail everyday life as a genre study within a contemporary fine art portraiture style. As a collection of environmental portraits of United States families who trace their ancestry to the colonial history of the New World, these portraits represent a cross section of the social, economic and historical lineages. The photographic study integrates genetic migration with current domicile or work environments.

Like the Casta paintings, this body of work represents household units: however, *Contemporary Casta Portraiture: Nuestra 'Calidad'* does not define the members by means of colonial terminology. Instead, the ethno-racial mixture is represented by a DNA study of the mother and father's global ancestral migration. All the families depicted in the series trace their ancestry to American colonial communities with possible miscegenation in their past. As collaborators for these familial environmental portraits, the participants consented to share their National Geographic Genographic DNA analysis with the contemporary portrait study.



**DELILAH MONTOYA**  
Casta #7, 2018,  
Mixed Media, 38"x36"



Casta #14, 2018,  
Mixed Media, 38"x36"



During the colonial period race was a concept that was imposed on the people of Mexico by the Spanish colonialists. Although the concept of race had not quite crystallized until the 18th century, colonialists applied a caste system based on origin and nationality which used various terms to describe the inhabitants: Negro (Black) Mulatto (Black and White), Pardo (African ancestry), Chino (African and Asian), Moreno/a (dark-skinned), Mestizo (Black, Indigenous, and White), Lobo or Zambo (Mixed African and Indigenous), and Coyote (Mulatto and Indigenous). The Spaniard colonialists used these classifications to distribute rights and privileges to certain groups while excluding others.

### DELILAH MONTOYA

Casta #1, 2018, Mixed media, 38" x 36"

Spain's Constitution of 1812 excluded people with African ancestry, and played a role in people's reluctance to legally identify as Black. The race-based distribution of rights led Black, Indigenous and mixed race people to convince census-takers into declaring them as Spanish in order for them to gain privileges the Spaniards enjoyed, such as no military service or taxes. People brought from Malaysia, Borneo, New Guinea and the Philippines as indentured servants were also often miscategorized as Black people as the demand for slaves increased.

Artists have recovered, rewrote, and reconstructed history. Reclamation of indigenous roots has become a symbol of belonging. Casta paintings were depictions of racial mixtures of the inhabitants of Spain's American colonies. They were presented most commonly as depicting a man, woman, and child, arranged according to a hierarchy of race and status. In an idealized Mexico where people of African, European, Asian and indigenous heritage were intermingling in seeming harmony, the Casta paintings were a reminder to Spaniards that there was still a strong hierarchy of racial purity – with Europeans on top. Today artists use century old canons to retell family lineage today with DNA testing to demystify the concept of purity and to combat xenophobia.

It is essential that we acknowledge the physical, economic, and psychological trauma that colonialism has inflicted on so many communities throughout the Americas. It is also essential to acknowledge that historic and momentous moments of resistance and human rights movements continue today.

# THE WORLD HAS TRANSFORMED

Today is a product of historical acts. Artists continue to be the voice of survivors, and nurturers of culture, in recognizing 500 years of resistance to domination and colonization.

In the early 1960s, socio-political movements by people of color organized into a unified voice to create change and focus on a fight for civil and political rights, and to bring attention to struggles for equality throughout the United States. The civil rights movement addressed police brutality, lack of social services, education and represented generational concerns. Strikes, marches, and boycotts raised awareness. Today, we still see this resistance taking place throughout the Americas with people of different backgrounds coming together through shared causes and fights for equality, equity, and freedom.

## RESILIENCE

Resiliency springs from adaptation to the most difficult situations. Communities reshape themselves and the environment in response to adverse elements. This is the very definition of self-determination. Using symbols such as the black eagle helped raise awareness of social issues. Aztlán unified the Mexican Americans under a term of inheritance of land and culture. The imagery

articulated cultural and historical identities through connections to indigenous heritage, religious icons, revolutionary leaders, and current life. Art today continues as an activist endeavor, challenging the social constructions of racial/ethnic discrimination, citizenship and nationality, labor exploitation, and traditional gender roles in effort to create social change.

According to scholar Maria Herrera-Sobek, by tapping into pre-Conquest symbols, personal memories, and traditional sacred art forms, such as the retablo and codex, Santa Barraza shows how Mexican artistic traditions have the power to nurture and sustain cultural identities on this side of the border. Her art has increasingly drawn on the colors and forms of Mesoamerica.



**SANTA BARRAZA**  
*Codex of Trinity*, 1993  
Acrylic on canvas, 51" x 48"

Most recently, the Aztec and Mixtec codices have offered her a symbolic way to claim her roots, and to invoke from the ancient ways of her ancestors.

She adapts these images by incorporating contemporary figures such as her own mother or labor leader Emma Tenayucca. Barraza paints bold representations of Nephantla, a mythic "Land Between." The term was first used by Nahuatl-speaking people of Mexico in the 16th century to describe their situation amongst the Spanish colonizers. Her work depicts the historical, emotional, and spiritual land between Mexico and Texas, between the real and the celestial, and between present reality and the mythic world of the ancient Aztecs and Mayas.



**SANTA BARRAZA**  
*Codex of Sacred Heart*, 1993  
Acrylic on canvas, 51" x 48"



**DANZA DE VAQUEROS O ESPUELEROS:  
DANCE OF THE COWBOYS OR SPUR MAKERS MASKS**

ca. 1890

Pueblo Originario - Tlapaneco

San Miguel Axoxuca, Guerrero, Mexico

Leather helmets, acrylic, and glass, Various dimensions

In the area of Axoxuca, Guerrero, it is a community tradition that on Glory Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday, the Dance of the Cowboys is performed. The dance lasts most of the day, and it is accompanied by violin, drums, and wind instruments. This tradition, which originated in colonial times, and survives with deep roots among the settlers. It derives from the large cattle ranch boom of Costa Chica between 1850 and 1890. The dance depicts the Spanish landowners and *caporales* who exploited the Indigenous and Black cowboys enslaved on the farms.

Andy Villarreal's work is enriched by his travels to many of the architectural sites across North and Central America, Europe, and their Indigenous populations. Fusing the past and present, Villarreal's work crosses cultures and explores humanity, social beliefs, spiritual narratives, as well as the celebration of life, death and the roots of these amazing cultures.



**ANDY VILLARREAL**

Two Inseparable Friends, 2019  
Oil cutout on wood, 92½" x 32"



**ANGEL CABRALES**

*Hueyi tepekulkan Tanqukulkan*, 2019

Mixed media

*"The work is a celebration of who we are, with a mission to instill curiosity into the untaught histories of our Meso-American heritage through the science fiction motif of the Uncolonized universe. I strive to nurture the dignity in one's ethnic heritage, creating thought, generating conversation and discussion to forge a strong sense of honor in who we are as a people."*

-Angel Cabrales



**ANGEL CABRALES**

*Aterrizaje Lunar de la Pinata Cosmica*, 2019

Mixed media

# Exhibition Credits

Executive Director:	Sylvia Orozco
Curatorial Team:	Sylvia Orozco and Museum Staff
Registrar Associate:	Amber Amezquita
Visual Communicator:	Sara Palma
Visual Communicator Associate:	Diana Garcia
Head Preparator:	Savannah Diaz
Installation Team:	Nicholas Baham, Aiden Escalante, Alonso Estrada, Oscar Guerra, Michael Robles & Todd Rychener
Education Associates:	Nikki Diaz & Jose Martinez
Teaching Artists:	Selene Bataille, Jasmine Garduño Danni Hyche & Angel Ortega
Public Relations & Special Events:	Mario Villanueva
Development Coordinator:	Danielle Renae Houtkooper
Docents:	Laura Carrisosa & Elsa Perez
Store Associates:	Andrea Gandaria, Diana Garcia, Nicole Pollentier, Laura Carrisosa & Elsa Perez

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Interns: Michelle Brun, Collections, UT Austin. Sarah Emery, Development, Southwestern. Katarina Garcia, Development, St. Edwards. Karina Becerra, Collections, Hamilton College. Geovany Uranda, Design, University of Nevada. Carolyn Izaguirre, Design, Woodbury University. Elyse Garcia, Design, UT Austin. Daniella Gonzalez, Social Media, St. Edwards University.

