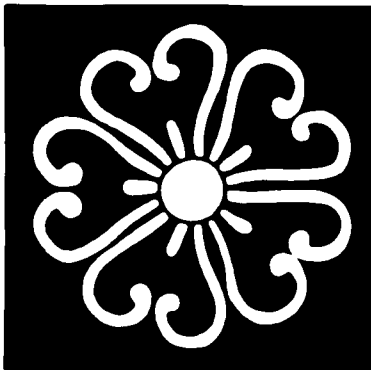


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Tenth Annual  
ERNESTO GALARZA  
Commemorative Lecture  
1995



Memory, Cultural Identity and the Social  
Imaginary: Art of the Chicana/o Community

Presented by

AMALIA MESA-BAINS  
ARTIST  
1992 MACARTHUR FELLOW

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## ERNESTO GALARZA



### **In Memoriam 1905-1984**

**T**his lecture was named in honor of Dr. Ernesto Galarza, a Stanford alumnus, intellectual, visionary, and activist scholar who galvanized national attention on the plight of farm workers in the 1940s and 1950s, and who later focused on urban institutions that impeded the health, educational and socio-economic development of Chicana/os in the United States. The legacy of his contributions to civil rights include the founding of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). A few years before his death, Dr. Galarza donated all of his files to Stanford. Several renowned scholars conduct research based on his materials in the special collections archive at Stanford University's Green Library.

*This portrait of Ernesto Galarza was painted by José Antonio Burciaga in 1979 as part of a series of portrait studies of Chicano heroes that eventually resulted in "The Last Supper of Chicano Heroes" mural at Stern Hall, Stanford University. The portrait was donated to the Stanford Center for Chicano Research by his wife Mae Galarza on 28 April 1995.*

# José Antonio Burciaga



1940-1996

*La verdad\**

*La verdad es que me canso.  
me canso de gritar,  
me canso de escribir,  
me canso de pintar,  
pero no se más que gritar,  
escribir y pintar.*

This publication is dedicated to the memory of José Antonio Burciaga, artist, writer, and humorist of international renown. Burciaga's book-length publications include two collections of his essays, *Spilling the Beans: Lotería Chicana* and *Drink Cultura: Chicanismo*, and a book of poetry *Undocumented Love*, a 1992 American Book Award winner. Burciaga was also a founding member of the comedy group Culture Clash. From 1985 to 1994 Tony Burciaga served as a Resident Fellow at Stanford University. During his tenure at Stanford he was largely responsible for painting many, and coordinating all, of the murals at the student dorm Casa Zapata. Among these murals is the now famous *Last Supper of Chicano Heroes*. Tony was a well known and respected cultural worker and beloved mentor within the Stanford community. His numerous essays on cultural and political topics, his books of poetry and other writings, and his murals represent a significant contribution to the intellectual and artistic life of the Chicana/o community at Stanford and beyond. His courage, humor, and truth will be missed by all who were privileged to know him, read his writings, or see his paintings.

\* From "La verdad", in *Undocumented Love/Amor Indocumentado*, Chusma House Publications, San Jose, CA, 1992. "La verdad" originally appeared in *Restless Serpents*, 1976.

# WELCOMING REMARKS

## LUIS RICARDO FRAGA

Associate Professor of Political Science and  
Director, Stanford Center for Chicano Research

**G**ood afternoon, buenas tardes. I am Luis Ricardo Fraga, Director of the Stanford Center for Chicano Research and Associate Professor of Political Science. On behalf of the Stanford Center for Chicano Research I would like to welcome you to the Tenth Annual Ernesto Galarza Lecture. Bienvenidos.

It gives me great pride to state that this has been a particularly fruitful year for the Center. In the last academic year our Center contributed to the development of two book manuscripts, four refereed articles, four monographs, four major funding proposals, and over twenty papers and essays. The Center received \$98,000 in grants and \$16,000 in private donations. Perhaps most importantly, we have been able to maintain the enthusiastic participation of a broad group of faculty from different disciplines, with many involved in collaborative interdisciplinary research that would not have been conducted were it not for the SCCR. Our faculty, in combination with an ever growing group of graduate and undergraduate research assistants, are our greatest resources. To our administrators, staff, faculty and students, I want to give my sincere thanks for all of your hard work.

In the tradition of Dr. Ernesto Galarza of overcoming the barriers that are so often placed between academic scholarship, policy activism, and community empowerment, I would like to offer you some thoughts on politics, research, and our contemporary civic debate.

I am greatly troubled by what I currently see as the state of our discourse on public policy. Politics has always been a tough rhetorical arena. Name calling, misrepresentation, innuendo, and the catchy phrase and label have always been part of our politics. Today we see how far, and how destructive, politics and policy-making can be when it is based largely on name calling, searching for the lowest common denominator of fear within the public, and disregard, if not utter contempt, for straightforward, honest, informed discussion, disagreement, and inclusive consensus building.

As a professor of political science, I have trouble these days distinguishing between the rhetoric of some of our influential state and national politicians and the rhetoric of some radio talk show hosts. This is not comforting to me. Perhaps even more discomfoting is that oftentimes the radio talk show hosts seem to be far better informed on issues than public officials. "Policy analysis by slogan" is the state of much of our civic debate today. Not policy analysis by insight, thoughtfulness, respect, and inclusiveness, but policy analysis by scapegoating those who are least able to defend themselves. A country does not better itself through this type of policy analysis by slogan, and subsequent public policy making. A country does not enhance its economic competitiveness and its capacity to forge understanding in world affairs through such thinking by slogan. Politicians may get elected, political parties may grow, electorates may have a sense of empowerment, but the long term public interest of the nation is not served. Slogans do not address the long-term. Their influence and power is immediate gratification. Slogans may speak of investment, but they do not define it. Our civic debate today is sorely lacking for a long-term focus and plan.

Today, perhaps too many of our national and state officials make substantively shallow and politically popular policy decisions justified by a vision of the public interest that is based, in my view, largely upon exclusion, punishment, denial of opportunity, and most significantly, a denial of "public" responsibility, often through the agencies of government, for contributing to a larger social good. Whether the focus is immi-

grants, recipients of need-based assistance, children receiving school lunches, women and people of color only beginning, in most instances, to get ahead through some affirmative action programs, funding for scientific research, or funding for the arts, there is no long-term focus or plan that defines a clear public interest. There are few, if any, examples of nations that grow in power, wealth, and stability through misguided retrenchment, attribution of blame, scapegoating of racially, ethnically, and otherwise distinct segments of the population, or enhancing the disparity of wealth within its citizenry. Although a rhetoric of the public interest and long-term social good may be used to justify the sorts of short-term, self-interested policies so many support today, this type of public interest has little substance, it has no capacity to educate the citizenry, and it has no mechanism for including the diverse perspectives and interests that increasingly are the American nation of today, and especially tomorrow.

As a scholar of American political development, I want to conclude by suggesting that in developing thoughtful responses to the contemporary environments of much of our majoritarian national and state politics, it is important that those responses not fall into the same trap of focusing on short-term self-interest, but on an oppositional perspective. That is to say, I fear contemporary politics is characterized substantially by the excessive use of superficial slogans, name calling, and attempts to make us feel comfortable, if not confident, in our prejudices. An oppositional politics should not be subjected to the same use of slogans, blaming, and sense of righteous indignation.

What I am suggesting is that those who might want to bring our national and state politics to different ends than the ones to which much of our politics seem to be heading, would be well served by spending as much time, creativity, and analysis working to build and articulate that vision of the *public interest* served through policies and programs. How are the larger interests of economic growth, equality of opportunity, upward job mobility, effective conflict resolution, and social stability attained through certain policies

and programs? How is mutual self-interest, i.e., mutual across the diverse segments of our nation, including majorities, attained through policies and programs? In my view our society can advance to its democratic promise only through a vision of an *informed public interest*, informed by research, informed by political viability, informed by diverse perspectives, informed by tough argument and disagreement, but **ultimately** informed by the building of a consensus as to what most contributes to an agreed upon conception of the larger social good. Those of us who have the luxury of thinking about our state and national politics away from its daily defeats and triumphs should be able to contribute to the building of this informed public interest. I think that a research center like the Stanford Center for Chicano Research is ideally situated to contribute to enhanced understanding of major issues of national importance and to the attainment of that informed public interest. I think that much of our national civic debate and policy making will benefit as a result. Thank you.

## REMARKS MADE BY MAE GALARZA

I appreciate very much the opportunity to express my good feelings about this deal, which was concocted by I don't know who. I think partly, Tony Burciaga of course, because he is the painter of the portrait, but he also needed the Stanford Center for Chicano Research to help out at this moment. So, it is very pleasant for me to realize that this portrait of Ernest is going to stay right here with all of you. When I thought this deal over, and I like that word "deal," I smiled and said, how appropriate. How appropriate for a master researcher to be presented to your particular Center.

Ernest had a tireless determination to get at the truth for the work which was his most important, and what he had worked on all his life — the study of the agricultural industry and the agricultural workers in this state. I think most of us don't think too much about this industry. If we're studying, we're probably studying something else. But it is one of the richest of any industry in the whole world, and certainly we are at the heart of the growing and producing of all this good food. So California was the place to be, and he was here most of his life. He spent just a few years of study and teaching and lecturing in the east. The rest of the time, about twenty years, he was in California.

And as far as education was concerned, he had opportunities that many of us could hardly understand unless you knew him. He started out in elementary school in Sacramento, with wonderful teachers who showed such kindness, such consideration, toward their pupils. And then he went to the junior high and began writing. His writings were accepted with such appreciation, that he had to continue in that. They saw that he did. He was put on the debating team and he was a speaker, although I knew nothing about it until later on when he was honored at Occidental after his death. I saw

then what he had done, read letters from people at that time, and saw his pictures, many photographs of him. I don't know where they got them all. And then I found out there wasn't one honor in the high school that he had not received. He didn't have one member of his family at any celebration that he was part of. His family were at the outdoor celebrations when he played in the band. He did much singing during the war, yes. But not in the school.

Because my own education was about twelve miles from our capital city, and in a very, very country sort of place with no libraries and no books, and teachers who had very little training, I could appreciate the vast difference in our educations, in spite of the fact that it was about the same time, and that he was very, very privileged. Now he wasn't privileged as far as grants were concerned, they didn't do that sort of thing. You see he wasn't young enough, or he was too old I should say, to have received that type of privilege.

Well now, with Ernest's tireless determination to know the truth in this agricultural industry, he, of course, looked into laws, the records of previous officials, and many other sources. All this research was so necessary for the driving power of his written works, as well as his speeches. The research was always very, very necessary, as well as very long and complex, and yet he never suffered a bit from the effort or from the time that it took. For quite a time, when he was asked to cite his occupation, he used the title "Researcher". And now, here he is, at least his image, at another great research organization. And that seems so appropriate.

The professors who use his books frequently remark, "It was a joy to be able to teach research techniques along with the subject of the content", whatever that might have been, and generally his books were used in school when they were discussing this agriculture industry, its performance, what needed to be done, and what would have to be done someday. So I am very, very pleased to be able to tell you just a

little of him, and I am also very grateful to Tony Burciaga, who had the talent and desire to paint his portrait. And also because he asked this association, this Center, if they would please frame the picture and put it in a proper place. Apparently, they said yes; this was part of the deal which I knew nothing about. So, you can see that I am pleased and grateful, very grateful, to the Stanford Center for Chicano Research and to Tony Burciaga. I thank you all.

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## PREFACE

The Stanford Center for Chicano Research was very pleased to have Dr. Amalia Mesa-Bains as the guest lecturer for the Tenth Annual Ernesto Galarza Lecture. Not only is Dr. Mesa-Bains a world renowned Chicana artist, she is someone who through her commentary on the social production of art and the politics of museum exhibition has challenged many directors, curators, and other determiners of cultural production to be more inclusive in their understanding of what constitutes validated art.

Dr. Mesa-Bains has also enlightened us about which art has often served as both the inspiration and documentation of much of our Chicana/o politics. Art that derived from the Chicano Movement allowed many practitioners of more applied traditional politics to reflect on the meanings of Chicana/o individual identity, cultural identity, empowerment, history, and expectations of the future. Unlike much political rhetoric that comes from some leaders, art has a way of giving meaning to ideas and hopes that might better guide those engaged in more traditional electoral and legislative politics. Dr. Mesa-Bains has always worked to allow us to appreciate the significance of cultural production to larger issues of access, opportunity, and socio-economic mobility.

Lastly, I wish to give my thanks to the members of the selection committee for that year, and a special thanks to Professor Yvonne Yarbrow-Bejarano, Chair of the committee.

Luis Ricardo Fraga  
Director, 1996

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## INTRODUCTION OF GUEST LECTURER

YVONNE YARBRO-BEJARANO

Associate Professor, Department of Spanish and  
Portuguese

**B**uenas tardes y bienvenidos a este evento de la comunidad Chicana conmemorando a Ernesto Galarza.

Good afternoon and welcome to this event commemorating the spirit and scholarship of Ernesto Galarza. I am honored to be up here introducing our distinguished speaker. In her many-faceted activities, Amalia embodies the spirit that infuses this annual tribute, blurring the at times all too concrete borders between the university community and those communities beyond, just as she crosses the boundaries among activism, art, and education. If I were to detail all of her accomplishments and awards, there would be no time left for her to speak. So let me give you a general idea of her scope and range, which is certainly crowned by, but not limited to, her stunning altar installations which she will share with us today.

The cold facts, reprinted in our program, of Amalia's credentials already tell you a great deal about her cross-disciplinary inclinations and motivations, linking artistic process with educational and social issues. I'd like to add that from 1986 to 1988 she was the producer and host of a community affairs program on KPIX TV, once again choosing avenues beyond the walls of the classroom to reach a large diverse audience with our concerns and contributions.

In this role, as arts advocate, and in her numerous scholarly articles and lectures across the nation, she has worked tirelessly to define a

Chicano and Latino aesthetic in the U.S. and Latin America. She has been recognized with many, many special achievement awards, including the prestigious distinguished Mac Arthur Fellowship in 1992, commonly referred to as "The Genius Grant."

This label is richly deserved as the name Amalia Mesa-Bains is synonymous not only with inspired and inspiring art work, but with the visionary weaving of the diverse strands of our social experience, collective history and cultural legacies to display a public tapestry focusing national attention on the beauty and meaning of our diverse ways of life, as well as our incessant struggle for civil rights and social justice.

Focusing now on the area of art alone, we see the same criss-crossing of boundaries. Her work as a scholar is invaluable in documenting and interpreting Chicano art in an American context understood hemispherically, especially the importance of our everyday cultural traditions and practices. She has had curatorial experience since 1985, lending her expertise and activism to help effect the potential shift of today's museums from temple of bourgeoisie art, to forum for America's diverse populations, especially those historically underrepresented in the art world. She has been the guiding vision of a number of landmark exhibitions that exemplify this shift. I'll mention only two. In "Ceremony of Memory" composed of altar installations including Indo-Hispanic as well as Afro-Hispanic traditions, Amalia completes the triangle formed by her scholarly documentation of the home altar tradition, her own artistic production of epically complex, fabulously and minutely layered altar installations, and — as the third angle her curatorial dedication to fostering and disseminating this innovative art form. "Art of the Other Mexico" is currently at the Center for the Arts in San Francisco. I recommend it highly, as an exhibit not to be missed. It is a substantive and important exhibition displaying the work of over twenty Chicana and Chicano artists exploring the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation, between Mexican ancestry and critical aspects of contemporary Chicano culture, organized around the themes of land, family and spirituality. We are forever indebted to Amalia for

these and other groundbreaking exhibitions that live on in catalogues and in our memories. They demonstrate her vast knowledge of Mexican and Chicano interconnections as well as her inter-ethnic, comparative and transnational vision.

Of all of her commitments in art and educational activism perhaps the closest to her heart is her involvement with la Galaría de la Raza's Regeneración Project to support the next generation of Chicana and Chicano artists. This is the project she currently feels most strongly about. The creation of an institution like la Galaría that will incubate, protect and preserve these artists, in great part as an antidote to other institutions that have marginalized and alienated them, especially women, gays and lesbians. In addition to failing to provide Chicana and Chicano art professors for students to work with, these institutions inculcate individualistic and competitive modes that ill-equip these young artists to do collective work in their communities. Amalia is acutely aware of the self-renewal gained by the older generation in giving back to the next generation and helping them establish themselves as artists. Regeneración has two senses. In this intergenerational project, the collective interactive process of group decision making is more important than the exhibitions themselves.

The title of another exhibition Amalia curated, "Ceremony of Spirit" could stand as an emblem of her own work in all these many areas, but particularly her altar installations. And this brings us back to the spirit of Ernesto Galarza evoked here today, with its connotations of the force that keeps us in the struggle for social justice in all our varied paths of life work, in the face of overwhelming odds, burnout, and the threat of stress related illness and exhaustion. Part of what we're celebrating together is the impossibility of limiting that word "spirit" to either its spiritual or its activist meanings. This is what Amalia's scholarly work on home altars and her own altar installations mean to me. This blending of art and activism, of spiritual journeys and fleshly struggles, of communication on earth with the divine within and all around us. In a society that values technological progress over the health of the mind

and body of every individual, Amalia's art brings us a sweet respite of spiritual and aesthetic communion with our collective traditions and ancestors. As Chicanas, we are also grateful to Amalia's multiple endeavors honoring the unique realities, experiences, creativities and achievements of women, as in the home altar tradition. Her article on Chicana artists "El Eterno Feminino" is required reading in my course on expressive culture, as some of you know.

It is typical of Amalia's collective politics that she had to be persuaded to include more of her own work in today's presentation. I would like to close with a quote from another very special person who also embodies this cross-disciplinary border-blurring arts activism we are celebrating in this event. In 1987 Tomás Ybarra-Frausto wrote of Amalia's artwork: "Inscribed within the venerable legacy of altar making, Amalia Mesa-Bains has evolved site specific installations echoing and transforming Chicano devotional art forms. In an ongoing quest to make art inseparable from life, the artist has infused a personal idiom upon a communal expression to revitalize and expand its meaning. Through her experimentation, a core principal has been that the intention of the work has guided the form."

Here with us today to speak of that vision that informs her work and the art of other Chicanas and Chicanos is Amalia Mesa-Bains. Join me in welcoming her.



## MEMORY, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND THE SOCIAL IMAGINARY: ART OF THE CHICANO/A COMMUNITY

AMALIA MESA-BAINS

**B**efore I begin my talk today I would like to thank the staff and board of the Center for Chicano Research here at Stanford for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would like to recognize my parents, Lawrence Escobedo Mesa and Marina Gonzales Mesa, who are in the audience today. They have taught me the value of my cultural heritage and the commitment to my community. I would like to dedicate this talk to them and to my dear colleague, José Antonio Burciaga, esteemed artist, writer and activist, whose dedication to the arts and learning are well known to you at Stanford.

It is with both a sense of honor and gratitude that I address you today. Like many of the cultural workers of my generation, Ernesto Galarza remains a model of the integration of scholarship, community, and service. His visionary efforts in the realm of social struggle were an extension of his own personal experiences in reclaiming a Mexican Culture. The touching story told by Mae Galarza describing his early childhood in Mexico were filled with the wonderment and beauty of village life where everyday practices empowered the imagination of a young Ernesto. It is just in this space of memory and the social imaginary that the Chicano artist has situated a transformative practice. The artist has participated in the construction of a cultural identity in service of the larger Chicano community. I want to use this opportunity to consider the role of the arts and the artist in the development of critical consciousness.

I would like to present a series of artists' works as a counterpart to the academic perspective on Chicano Studies. So often the visual life of the politics of the early Chicano Movement has been understood as finite. As though the cultural production of artists has lost its relationship to social struggle and community identity. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact the work of the cultural centers and the work of the artists has contributed to maintaining a frontline space of critical production for over 25 years. With the current conservative onslaught and in the wake of Proposition 187 we are even more responsible for the creation of a strong and resilient base of resistance. Chicano art is evidence that art does not simply reflect ide-

ology but rather is an active agent in the construction of ideology. Theorists such as the feminist critic Griselda Pollock have helped us to see that art can create social reality. Art is a social practice through which identities and world views individually and collectively lived are reconstructed, reproduced, reformed, and redefined. Who can forget the images of Andrew Zermeno in *El Malcriado* or the painted walls of *Las Mujeres Muralistas* in the critical years of the Chicano Movement? These Chicano images reflected antecedents in the Mexican graphic tradition of José Guadalupe Posada and the social realities of the Mexican muralists, while they simultaneously signaled a collective moment of transformation within the borders of the United States.

The art of the Movement was a galvanizing agent in inspiring resistance. The conditions of exploitation for farm workers was the provocation for Rupert García's *DDT* poster. Done in 1969, the peril of toxic pesticides and harsh labor conditions stand as a metaphor for racism. Throughout his artistic career García has brought a visual practice to the reclamation project of Chicanos. In *El Día de la Raza or the Cristóbal Enterprise* done in 1989 we experience the chronicle of suffering endured in our indigenous world at the hands of the Spanish colonizers. Here

the brutal history of invasion and death is recalled through the vision of Cristóbal. Aztec chroniclers wrote:

"Broken spears lie on the roads. We have torn our hair in grief. The houses are roofless now, and the walls are red with blood. Worms are swarming in the streets and plazas, and the walls are splattered with brains. The water has turned red as if it were dyed and when we drink it, it has the taste of brine. We have pounded our hands in despair against adobe walls, for our inheritance, our city is lost and dead. The shields of our warriors were its defense but they could not save it..."

**Art is a social practice through which identities and world views individually and collectively lived are reconstructed, reproduced, reformed, and redefined.**

García's painting is a redemption of those who were lost to us in the catastrophic settling of the new world.

Walter Benjamin reminds us that the dead have a social contract on the living, a secret agreement between past generations and the present one that our coming was expected on earth, that the past has a claim on us that cannot be settled cheaply. In his more than twenty years of artistic production Rupert García has never wavered from his commitment to an examination of the acute historical conditions of the colonial aftermath.

The development of community consciousness required the artist to engage public dialogue in the public space. Judith Baca's collective mural work in this public site has been a practice of securing both visual and social space. *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* by Baca has been the largest-scale mural in the world but more importantly it has been a space for the production of social relations as well. The appropriation of the Tujunga Wash, the cemented river way, for the depiction of the multi-racial history of Los Angeles, was a project involving culturally diverse teams of young people under the mentorship of Baca. These groups of young artists learned a civil rights history and gained the inter-cultural skills to work

together, overcome their differences, and collectively produce this rich alternative chronicle. In this sense, group life and visual representation took place in the social space of the mural as a public art form. In her cinematic narrative style Baca has worked on an international project called the World Wall and remained engaged in cultural activism as the artistic director of the Social Public Art Resource Center.

We have seen the relationship between social struggle and visual representation in art that is a form of social practice. In collective forms such as the poster and the mural there is a production of public consciousness. Yet practice and consciousness are also anchored in the local. It is often the power of popular culture that is central to visual life. This is evident in Baca's piece *Raspados Mojados* done in

1993. Despite her large-scale public work she has produced art from the everyday. In this sculpture her mini-murals adorn the sides of a street vendor's cart and the play on what is served up is narrated by historic events such as the Bracero Wars and the agricultural and domestic labor realities of Los Angeles. The lid of her paleta cart depicts Governor Pete Wilson as an INS agent in true *rasquache* style. Recontextualizing the utilitarian object as a subversive tool brings consciousness through irony.

The use of popular culture materials as the basis for political critique is exemplified in *Sun Mad* by Ester Hernández. The commercial image is undermined through the application of the Mexican tradition of Posada's death and satire. By appropriating the benign image of the little maid, Hernández strips away the subterfuge and allows us to witness the perilous truth. In her *Tejidos de los Desaparecidos* the visual sincerity of the everyday object of the *rebozo* is emblematic of the suffering endured by the indigenous communities of Latin America. The *rebozo* is also a sign of the everyday life where details of affiliation, social practice, and ordinary ceremony occur. In her print the *rebozo* acts as a text of longing and

a horrific reminder of the missing with its pattern of skulls and helicopters. The poignant irony lies exactly in the opposition between the innocent and cherished aspect of women's dress and its interwoven design of devastation. The image stands as a silent remembrance of the lost ones and confirms that art can be a redemptive practice. Benjamin again reminds us, "we are the historians who fan the spark of hope and firmly believe that not even our dead will be safe if the enemy wins."

Memory has played a part in the process of reclamation and redemption that has inspired our cultural critique. It has been a memory called upon in moments of extremity to strengthen our resistance. It has been a memory to seize the impermanent and transitory, and to affirm the cherished intimacy of our families. Memory has been

our bridge between the living and the dead, and even the bridge between the forced division of our land. Memory has been the key to our ancestry and the basis of our resistance. We experience voluntary and involuntary memory. The cognitive and emotive qualities of memory are such that fragments and condensations of experience come to us in unexpected ways. We have tolerated migration, separation, and loss through our remembrances. The function of memory has been compensatory in the Chicano World. It is the mechanism that holds our identity together over time and across distance. It is partially from memory that the artistic vision arises.

Artists fully understand that their very survival depends on the capacity to transform these destructive experiences into knowledge and meaning that serves as a liberatory practice of community memory. I can think of no artist more central to this practice than Carmen Lomas Garza. Her recalling of family and community events is more than a narrative. It has accrued for over twenty years in an unfolding cosmology where the marvelous and the real have been encoded, as Tomás Ybarra Frausto crystallized in his seminal

**The function of memory has been compensatory in the Chicano World. It is the mechanism that holds our identity together over time and across distance. It's partially from memory that the artistic vision arises.**

essay on Lomas Garza. In *Abuelitos Piscando Nopalitos* the cutting and gathering of the cactus is a classic moment in the family life. Sincere labor and the collective process are reminders of the best of our cultural values and wisdom. Perhaps also this image stands as an antidote of truth against the corrosive stereotypes of the sleeping Mexican of our past and the newly constructed campaign of anti-immigrant hatred. Lomas Garza revives, through her cosmology, an order to the cultural universe where social relations and critical histories are in paradox. In *Pachucas Razor Blade Do* the image is both familiar and transgressive. Like José Montoya's *Zoot suitors* placed in the context of resistance as the first Chicano Freedom fighters, Lomas Garza's *Pachucas* are an avant guard for the shy and gentle Chicanas of Carmen's neighborhood. Her visual recollection is one layered with glamour and danger, with domestic intimacy, and institutional racism as the figures in the painting prepare for another encounter with discrimination.

The cultural production of the women artists of our community is embedded in the intracultural struggle for equality and respect. Artistic and cultural work defined under the early Movement emphasized an ethnic identity that superseded issues of gender. Struggles between men and women for leadership and content in the mural movement produced the organizing of the *Mujeres Muralistas* and provided direction for the lifework of Judith Baca. Consequently, the later work of Chicana artists has contributed to a more complex identity in which sexuality, ethnicity, and class intersect. Within this intersection are the concepts of domestic tension and self-recovery. From installation work to painting, artists have both affirmed and simultaneously contested the domestic world. This tension is the space between biculturalism, feminism, lesbianism and family histories. As individuals we have had the devotion and continuity of our mothers and grandmothers as a strength in forging new and more independent

**Consequently, the later work of Chicana artists has contributed to a more complex identity in which sexuality, ethnicity, and class intersect.**

identities for ourselves. Yet the very traditions that have guided us have also become the limitations from which we have broken. In my own work the examination of the personal has become a site for larger concerns of women's roles, histories, and the possibility of liberatory practices. In my visual autobiography *Venus Envy, Chapter One ,or the First Holy Communion Moments Before the End*, the ceremony of community in the church serves as both a personal and collective investigation of individual and institutional roles in which women are cast. A memorial quality is present in the reliquary container in which the mementos of artists evidence a shared past. The vanity mirror reveals the presence of

*Coatlque* and in the Baroque tradition of *Vanitas* she acts as the specter of death which renders all false knowledge, wealth, and beauty an illusion. So also are the fictions within the institutions of the church, marriage, and family disclosed in the representations of the bride, the nun, and the virgin. Yet the spiritual and the ceremonial remain as the states of hope and healing.

The installation containing the *Library of Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz* was part of the second chapter of *Venus Envy*. This installation, which included *The Harem and Other Enclosures* as well as Sor Juana's *Library* was presented at Williams College. In the restating of the struggle for intellectual privilege within the life of the colonial church dominated by men, Sor Juana is situated in all her rich and powerful curiosity. The overlapping of the historical and the contemporary creates a duality in which the colonial nun and the young women students of the present are renewed. The Latina students of Williams college whose hunger fast brought about the hiring of Latina faculty are represented through video images and self-inscribed text in Sor Juana's *Library*. In this practice of politicizing spirituality, art reconnects the academic and the recontextualizing of objects from the Williams Museum collection with constructed interventions such as the mirror and chair. The historic image of Sor Juana appears in the mirror.

This image painted by Miranda in the 1680s provoked her famous sonnet on vanity:

"This that you gaze on, colorful deceit that so immodestly displays art's favors, with its fallacious arguments of colors is to the sense cunning counterfeit, this on which kindness practiced to delete from cruel years accumulated horrors, constraining time to mitigate its rigors, and thus oblivion and age defeat, is but an artifice, a sop to vanity is but a flower by the breezes bowed, is but a ploy to counter destiny, is but a foolish labor, ill-employed, is but a fancy, and as all may see, is but cadaver, ashes, shadow, void."

As this poem attests, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz's intellectual and cultural role was a perfect subject for a project where visual history and the student community life could be brought together.

But art is not just a sign of the past. It is the reflection of the contemporary. The visual life of our communities is filled with the signs of popular culture and everyday struggle. The urban centers of the Southwest have become ruralized encampments as the displaced populations of Latin America have made their way into the industrial spaces of the megalopolis. The work of John Valadez has captured this hyper-reality in the portraiture of Los Angeles. *La Butterfly* and *The Vendors* are part of the allegories of Valadez which consistently record and transform barrio life. His exquisite renderings are more than a faithful chronicle of the day-to-day personas of the community, they are an incisive iconography which reveal the spirit within. In this time of xenophobia Valadez's pastels are an expression of acute conditions in our communities.

His epic *La Frontera* is a redemptive apocalypse of history. The use of primary colored fields

functions as a cinematic device much like film cells. Each colored lens illuminates an historic set of references that subvert the pastoral quality of the landscape. Here the social imaginary presents its collective view of a fragmented past. The possibility of a union of divided parts is heightened as we remember extremity, discord, and diaspora. The real double borders of a Chicano culture are the first border between Mexico and the U.S. and the second border between the rural and

the urban. No longer the Utopian dream of *Aztlán*, the social imaginary brings us to a site of renewed struggle. Historical examination, popular culture, and visual allegory have extended the cultural critique through the works of many artists too numerous to be presented today. In this difficult

time of increasing racism and exploitation of women and children we must create signs of our existence in cultural terms of our own making. The artist is entrusted with the task of creating from a spirit within and through acts of remembering. We are standing on the edge of the millenium and we know that the images we create will be in the years ahead the critical record of our survival as a cultural community. As we fashion the social imaginary we join with the writers, thinkers, and activists dedicated to the collective struggle to which Ernesto Galarza committed his life work.

**The real double borders of a Chicano culture are the first border between Mexico and the U.S. and the second border between the rural and the urban.**

## STANFORD CENTER FOR CHICANO RESEARCH

The Stanford Center for Chicano Research (SCCR) was established in 1980 to promote cross-disciplinary research on Mexican American and Latino communities in the United States. Under Associate Professor of Political Science Luis R. Fraga, director from 1993-94 to 1995-96 the Center continues to promote interdisciplinary study, and focuses on major issues of public policy through projects that examine implications of the expanding presence of Latinos in California and in the United States generally, as well as the implications of increased diversity among Latinos themselves.

One important goal of the SCCR is to enhance dialogue between the research community and the public. As concerned citizens as well as researchers in academia, faculty want to contribute to the local, state, and national discourse of public policy and promote effective long-term problem solving through their work at the Center.

In 1992-96, projects at the SCCR included: *Environmental Poverty: Assessing the Risk of Pesticides to Farm Labor Children; Latinos, Voting Rights and the Public Interest; The Public Outreach Project; Pediatric AIDS and Infectious Diseases; Chicana Art: Multimedia Database Project; Racing Lesbian Studies;* Meeting New Needs: *Professional Development & Language Minority Children; Cultural Citizenship; Civic Capacity & Urban Education; Bay Area Latino Community Studies Project; The Uses of Languages Other than English in the Courts; and International Childhood Immunization Strategies.*

The Center holds public forums, coordinates research seminars, and presents the Annual Ernesto Galarza Lecture each spring. Research activities are published through the Center's newsletter, *La Nueva Visión*, and the SCCR Working Paper Series. In tandem with the Chicana/o Fellows program and the Chicano Graduate Student Association, the SCCR sponsors colloquia that highlight the research of faculty, visiting scholars, and graduate students.

SCCR sponsors programs which focus on students, a central part of our academic mission. Beginning in the Fall of 1993, the Center implemented the SCCR Student Research Fellows Program to link targeted minority undergraduate and graduate students with faculty conducting interdisciplinary research projects at the Center. Currently this program receives funds from the James Irvine Foundation.

Each spring, we call for summer research project proposals from the Stanford graduate and undergraduate student community. Funded by the Escobedo Commemorative Fund, students may create an original research project or may join an on-going project at the SCCR. The Center also hosts the Latino Leadership Opportunity Program (LLOP), a one year national program of study and practicum designed for undergraduate Latina/o students interested in public policy and governance.

Copies of this publication and a list of other publications of the  
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