

# REIMAGINING THE NARRATIVE: DECOLONIZING CHICANX AND NATIVE/INDIGENOUS ART

**By: B, Sydney, MJ, & Ethan**

# EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION

With this exhibit we invite you into a space that celebrates the complexities of the mestiza/o identity. Throughout these halls you will find yourself viewing art created by both Chicanx and Native American artists, intermingled throughout the space to show that the mestiza identity is made up of rich cultural backgrounds that defy the existence of racial categories.

# THEME

- We want our guests to walk away from this exhibit with a better understanding of the importance of identifying and creating interstitial spaces.
- Drawing on third world feminist scholars and anthropological/borderland theories, we wanted to emphasize the in-between nature of Chicax and mestiza/o identities and their existence despite hegemonic influence.
- Through our exhibit layout, both through the placement of the works and the lack of categories present throughout the exhibit, we hope to convey the complexities of mixed identities and show that categories only exist to limit the ways we understand people.

# DESIGN

- Maze-like exhibit enables us to ponder the complexities of the interstitial spaces that form a mestiza identity
- Highlight the journey undertaken by artists of color to decolonize and reclaim the historical museum space in which they are situated
- Mestiza identity is an intertwining of Mexican and Native American cultures



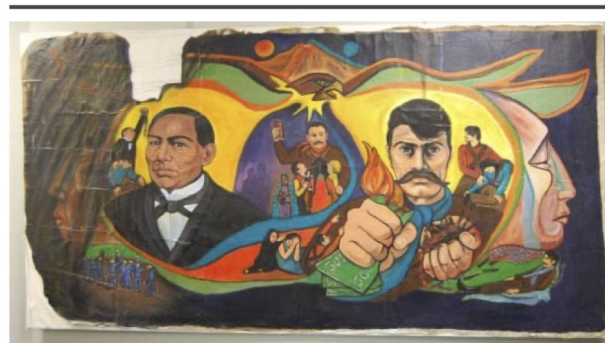
# OUR PUBLICATION



## Reimagining the Narrative: Decolonizing Chicax and Native American Art

*Exhibit Brochure*

*This exhibit has been curated by B & Ethan Fuentes, Sydney Story, and Mariollivia Jiménez*



*Mexican Heroes, Carlota Espinoza, 1966, oil*

### Welcome!

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This museum space celebrates the complexities of the mestiza/o identity. You will find yourself viewing art created by both Chicax and Native American artists, which intermingles throughout the exhibit to show that the mestiza/o identity is made up of rich cultural backgrounds that defy the existence of racial categories.

#### **Artwork Featured in this exhibit:**

Ladies and Gentlemen, We're Floating in the Space, Ernesto Muñoz  
Incomplete Drawings of Decolonization, Anna Tsouhlarakis  
Straight Ahead, Anna Tsouhlarakis  
Mexican Heroes, Carlota D. Espinoza  
La Alma, Emmanuel Martinez  
Take Back the Power, Gregg Deal  
Gloria Anzaldúa, Angela Yarber  
Chicana, Arlette Lucero  
Drawing IV (Burn Images of Native American sports mascots), Anna Tsouhlarakis

“

Nothing is thrust out, the good and the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only [do they] sustain contradictions, [they] turn the ambivalence into something else.

-Gloria Anzaldúa

”

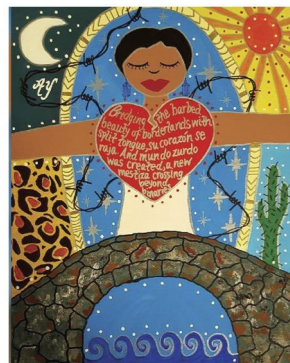


**Straight Ahead**, Anna Tsouhlarakis, 2019, sculpture

Featuring work by Anna Tsouhlarakis

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Anna Tsouhlarakis is a Native American artist of Navajo, Creek, and Greek descent who works towards breaking down stereotypes imposed by dominant cultures. In pairing Tsouhlarakis' sculptured piece *Straight Ahead* with her performance art *Incomplete Drawings of Decolonization*, we highlight the use of the sineu wrapping as a purposeful inclusion of Native American cultural practices. This inclusion, made disruptive in her performance art and essential in the structure of this sculpture, indicates the necessary blending of cultures and the important positionality of using and claiming native identities.



Top: **La Alma**, Emmanuel Martinez, 1978, paint

Left: **Gloria Anzaldúa**, Angela Yarber, 2017, paint

Right: **Take Back the Power**, Gregg Deal, 2020, paint

CONTENT: WALKING  
THROUGH OUR EXHIBIT

# LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE'RE FLOATING IN THE SPACE

ERNESTO MUÑIZ, 2017

COLLAGE

The chaos and complexity of Ernesto Muñiz's *Ladies and Gentlemen, We're Floating in The Space* requires the viewer to confront the lack of categorization and boundary within the exhibit as a whole. Look for the purposeful duality of science fiction and Chicana cultural themes in the painting, not the way they intermingle with each other. Society tends to present us with constraints when we go about identifying ourselves, especially within Chicana and Native American cultures, which this piece works to defy and break down.



# INCOMPLETE DRAWINGS OF DECOLONIZATION

ANNA TSOUHLARAKIS, 2019

PERFORMANCE ART

Anna Tsouhlarakis' pieces are a rendition of decolonizing dominant stereotypes of indigenous art. By creating pieces that evoke feelings of unfamiliarity and confusion, the artist is challenging preconceived notions of what is considered indigenous art. Notice the binding during both her performance piece and her multimedia piece, which serves as a reference to Navajo tradition. By taking this traditional aspect and applying it to her pieces, she is taking a stance on the decategorization and labeling of art. Combining the traditional and forming the contemporary sends the message that indigenous art and presence persists despite what the dominant culture deems acceptable.



# STRAIGHT AHEAD

ANNA TSOUHLARAKIS, 2019

SCULPTURE

In pairing Anna Tsouhlarakis' sculptured piece with her performance art *Incomplete Drawings of Decolonization*, we highlight the use of the sineu wrapping as a purposeful inclusion of Native American cultural practices. This inclusion, made disruptive in her performance art and essential in the structure of this sculpture, indicates the necessary blending of cultures and the important positionality of using and claiming native identities.



# LA ALMA

EMMANUEL MARTINEZ, 1978

PAINT

Emmanuel Martinez's work "La Alma" is a gift to the Chicano community in Denver. Notice that one side of this mural depicts recognition of the Puebloans who occupied this land, while the opposite side is the mirrored image with a more modern take. View the outline of the city of Denver in the background tying together the past, present, and future. Chicano/a Murals of Colorado Project (CMCP) explains that this mural was also intended to show the youth of the community that they have the responsibility and power to make their own future while honoring their history.



# MEXICAN HEROES

CARLOTA D. ESPINOZA, 1966

OIL

Carlota Espinoza's piece shows three important figures in Mexican history: Former President Benito Juarez, Mexican Revolutionary Emiliano Zapata Salazar, and Francisco "Pancho" Villa, Mexican Revolutionary General. Look to the background to view a small vignette of the struggles of the Mexican people. Carlota is showing through her piece the various struggles of the Mexican people, both social and political, around the time of the Mexican revolution. This piece details the history of Mexico while emphasizing the resiliency and spirit of its people.



# TAKE BACK THE POWER

GREGG DEAL, 2020

PAINT

Gregg Deal's stunning 77-foot mural shares a powerful message of indigenous presence and conflict. The mix of traditional accessories and contemporary clothing signifies that indigenous peoples and cultures are persevering and are equally present in society. Notice the red handprint across the girl's face. This serves as a reference to the high rates of missing and murdered indigenous women. This mural exists not only to raise awareness of these individuals, but also to declare a purposeful presence in the places in which Native Americans were not intended to occupy. A punk concert, for example. Or a 77-foot wall.



# GLORIA ANZALDÚA

ANGELA YARBER, 2017

PAINT

Rev. Dr. Angela Yarber paints this piece to capture the essence of its namesake: well-known mestiza scholar and author Gloria Anzaldúa. She uses this piece to challenge us to “stand firmly on the bridge of your existence. Stretch your arms open wide, embracing every piece of yourself. And join Anzaldúa in creating a new world of justice and beauty that honors every piece of our fractured souls.” Notice the quote chosen to accompany this particular piece: Anzaldúa specialized in feminist theory and spent her career creating a space in higher institutions for untold or overlooked narratives, especially concerning what in those narratives was considered “invaluable.”



## PRINT

## DRAWING IV (BURN IMAGES OF NATIVE AMERICAN SPORTS MASCOTS, MARKS NOT EVENLY DISPERSED).

ANNA TSOUHLARAKIS, 2020

FIRE AND ASH ON PAPER

Once again, Anna Tsouhlarakis' Burning IV collection forces us to acknowledge the full, lived history of Native American relationships with western ways of life. By burning aspects of "American" culture that seem so essential to the creation of the country, Tsouhlarakis forces us to reckon with the violent nature of history. This reversal, in which she as a Native American artist is mimicking the violence against her own people, shows the resilience of Native American and Chicana individuals to exist in spite of their burning eradication. Instead, you can see they continue to exist as ashes, remnants, and will use their presence to remind those that burned them that they still remain.



# READING INFLUENCE

## Stuart Hall “The Work of Representation”

- According to Hall "representation connects meaning and language to culture"
- Emphasis on the importance of representation influenced our exhibition

## John Paul Rangel “Moving Beyond the Expected: Representation and Presence in a Contemporary Native Arts Museum”

- Decolonizing methodologies are also essential to acknowledging misrepresentation and to encourage movement past hegemonic practices.
- Rangel talks about the significance of Indigenous artist “Reclaiming and reeducating... to exercise cultural sovereignty and self-determination”
- Decolonizing practices in museum spaces: maze-like and variety of different artists

# CHALLENGES (COLLABORATIVE PROCESS)

- We all have very busy schedules so we often had to meet late
- We had a hard time narrowing down artist when there were a lot of really good options
- We struggled to initially to communicate what we wanted this exhibit to represent because of the complexities of identity, that we all know too well.

# BENEFITS (COLLABORATIVE PROCESS)

- We all had common interest and background knowledge
- We had easy access to communication
- We really appreciated the project being broken up into multiple sections, it made for much better time management
- We really enjoyed being able to connect with each other amidst a large class
- We really enjoyed working together !