

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Chicana Indígena as a Creative Path

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My formative years were spent in far-flung locations throughout the United States and Europe. During my artistic grounding, I became increasingly immersed in the Chicano/Latino arts and indigenous communities—experiences that have informed my cultural perspectives and, by extension, my art practice.

Spirit of Quetzalcoatl (1980) was created after the completion of my MFA in printmaking from Cal State University Long Beach. During this time, I worked with Self Help Graphics' Barrio Mobile Art Studio using images from Mexican pre-Columbian culture to teach printmaking classes to East Los Angeles elementary school students.

In *Spirit of Quetzalcoatl* I broke the traditional limits of the printmaking medium by using cut-up lithographs along with hand-made paper and various found objects to create complex relief sculptures that evoked Pre-Columbian culture.

Tonantzin (1990) moved this practice “off the wall,” by constructing a totemic figure on an armature of a knobby tree trunk along with handmade paper and mixed media to depict the “great grandmother” of the earth, the archetypal feminine who inhabits the earth and sky.

At this point I was deeply involved in Chicano Indígena ceremonies throughout the country. I was learning a great deal about the Indigenous community's respect for the earth and all of its creatures. My artistic goal over

the next few years was to express my dedication to a healthy ecosystem and humanity's intrinsic connection to nature.

Sacred Rocks (2005) was a part of the "Los Cielos" suite of more than fifty works (1997–2005) including oil on canvas and paper, and gouache on paper. These paintings portrayed California mountainscapes with the horizon line and its relationship to the human character; ancient monumental rock formations bespeaking the grandeur of nature; and oceanscapes illustrating deep sea life forms with intricate crystalline symmetry.

After thirty years of creating work that depicted my interest in Mexican Pre-Columbian culture and involvement in Chicana Indígena I turned to a new image entitled *Make 'Em All Mexican*.

I began traveling internationally and had the opportunity to view hundreds of contemporary works of art made of pre-produced objects. At one point in my creative process I found myself ruminating, "What would repurposed images look like if created from my personal Mexican-American, Chicano lens?" I began appropriating and repurposing antique photographs and figurines to deconstruct iconic international culture images to create a world that included my cultural perspective.

Make 'Em All Mexican leads you down an ironic path to find yourself confronted by some of the most difficult questions of our time, "Do race, color, and class define our status in the world? Is it possible to be a part of and earnestly contribute to multiple cultures simultaneously?"

Dick and Jane (2010, from the Durón Family Collection) was the first of these new works. This particular piece was created at the moment I "realized" that I could paint the world brown and "make 'em all Mexican like me."

La Victoria (2014) continued this process by appropriating and repurposing a statue of *The Winged Victory* or *Nike of Samothrace* using automobile paint to create a “chocolate candy” surface envisioning “brown” as monumental, desirable, and delicious.

The *Make 'Em All Mexican* series carries a strong electric charge. To some viewers, the images are hyper-political; for others, they are emotional portals to a past remembered and sometimes forgotten; and for another group, they are just down right hilarious.

It has taken my entire artistic career of over forty years to fuse images that define my multicultural experience of the world and my place in it. The works in this publication illustrate the results of my studies in Mexican Pre-Colombian mythology and symbology, continuing with images inspired by my role in the Chicana Indígena community, and finally to the most recent works that are the culmination of decades of engagement in the Chicano community and culture.