

RECREATING THE YARDSTICK: An Interview with Delilah Montoya

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This interview took place on September 12, 2014, on the day of Delilah Montoya's gallery talk at the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe, where her show *Syncretism* was on display.¹ The interview is divided into two sections. The first section of this interview is a walking tour of Montoya's exhibit. Here, she discusses her inspirations for the pieces from her various series including *Sed: Trail of Thirst*, *Guadalupe en Piel*, *El Sagrado Corazón*, and *Women Boxers: The New Warriors*. The artist and I walked the exhibit space, discussing her theories and ideas regarding Chicana aesthetics, femininity, bodies, spaces, borders, and much more. Her work continuously challenges dominant aesthetics and, in our discussion, she explains her motivations and processes in understanding and imaging her subjects. The interview moves with the gallery and, in the second part, eventually settles in a meeting space in the museum's basement where Montoya takes the time to talk about other pieces not included in the exhibit. Her ideas surrounding collaboration, Aztlán, God, myth, funding, and her current project *Nuestra Calidad: Contemporary Casta Portraits* examine the Mexican casta painting tradition.²

The theme that holds together our discussion is syncretism, "the fusion of two distinct traditions to produce a new and distinctive whole" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2000, 229). Specifically, Montoya's focus on synergy in her subjects challenges active-passive matrices set in colonial objectification. Montoya's ideas surrounding syncretism bridge her with Chicana authors and artists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, and

Alma López. This interview shows Montoya's syncretic approach as the lens through which she shoots, refines, and reclaims her subjects.

The fluidity and interconnected nature of many of her pieces is enriched by the movement throughout the gallery, where Montoya expresses how she envisions her body of work from multiple series. Interviewing this way can be challenging, as we jump from subject to subject. However, the product of this discussion is a unique intervention in the ways we talk and look at the body of work of an artist and the spaces they are presented in and represent. The form of this interview is influenced by Alicia Gaspar de Alba's *Chicano/a Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*, in which the author studies the *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965–1985* (CARA) exhibition that “featured 128 pieces of art and 54 mural images by some 140 Chicano and about 40 Chicana artists” and traveled nationally (Gaspar de Alba 1998, 1).³ The study of the CARA exhibition demonstrates how Chicano/a artists created a dialogue within the “white space” of the museum in the early 1990s. Gaspar de Alba claims “this dialogue was part of CARA’s intention: to open the doors to the master’s house—the hitherto exclusionary space of the mainstream museum—to remodel the interior *al estilo Chicano* and create an environment where Chicano/a art could be the vehicle for dialogue and reflection” (Gaspar de Alba 1998, xv). Working within the “master’s house,” in the public space of the museum, renegotiates Chicano/a visibility in cultural studies and communities.

In many ways, this interview works like an extended gallery talk, capturing the moment of exhibition. Because the museum can often be an exclusionary space, limiting to Chicanas, this discussion with Montoya intervenes in those exclusions by placing her exhibition and her concepts surrounding her work into the larger body of Chicana studies. The form of this interview intends to demonstrate the lens of an artist, unobstructed by the (f)rigidity of a desk



Figure 1

and chair. Because Montoya's work is defined through its layering of histories and technique, this interview attempts to show how space, particularly the museum space, plays a role in how we think about art. Mostly, the interview's form and movement helps audiences understand how Chicana artists occupy the public sphere of the museum. In many ways, this may be the best fashion to talk to Montoya, whose body of work challenges multiple aesthetics, having her as a guide from piece to piece.

Part I

*Delilah and I began with her work on women boxers, the first series visitors see to the left as they enter the gallery. The exhibition was located on the second floor of the museum in the Arnold and Doris Roland Gallery (See Figure 1). We moved in a circular fashion, from left to right, through the exhibition.⁴ Her book, *Women Boxers: The New Warriors*, further explores the image of women in boxing.*

MONICA MONTELONGO FLORES What led you to do your project on female boxers?

DELILAH MONTOYA Well, I was thinking out this project even before *Sed: Trail of Thirst* and what I wanted to do is really continue on with this idea of really “bad” girls. Malcriadas. From my perspective, female boxers are our contemporary “bad girl.” Some become professional boxers and some jump in and jump back out again. There are various stories for each of the women, but still all of them like taking the challenge to participate in a combat sport. You know, the boxing ring is the bastion of masculinity and for that moment, that brief moment, they are taking control of the ring—they take control of the game. I wanted to do something to honor them. I intentionally shot the series with black-and-white film, because this is how famous boxing images...like the ones by Larry Fink, those bastions of masculinity...they are all in black and white. So I wanted to connect the women to that same history. The black and white worked out really well toward those ends.

MF It absolutely did. Can I ask you about “Pink?” How did that pose work out?²⁵

DM That was her, all her. I was outside a small town called San Ysidro where the casinos are, where the boxing matches are, on the border between Colorado and New Mexico on the Ute reservation. All the boxers were getting ready at the hotel, and I was walking up and down the halls, and I saw her and I asked if I could take her picture. She gave me this pose with those tiger eyes and I took the shot. It was like a lucky shot.

MF How about the other poses with the boxers?

DM For those I went down to their gym with an eight-by-ten camera. The portraits are staged with lights. I wanted the images to be very sharp, very

clean. I photographed Holly Holm when she was just getting started. I really wanted to capture Holly's strength. She's so strong. This one is just Holly's back.⁶ I really wanted to see that muscle on her back, yet there is still such femininity to her. The hair. She's holding her hair up so I could see her back. She's an athlete; all of the women are athletes. You know, these young women, they hit each other—a lot. They take hundreds of shots at each other. In this sport, you have to deliver the punches and you have to be able to take it. It's all about their training. Liz Drew was interesting, too.⁷ There were all kinds of innuendos that I found out while I was following the boxers around. One thing is that they tend to pair or partner a “foxy” boxer with a “butch.” In Liz's case, I remember at the Ohkay casino, she was getting harassed. Men were saying horrible things, calling her “butch” and “dyke.”

MF Since she's an athlete, were she and the other boxers prepared for that type of treatment? Is it the same for them as male athletes? Different?

DM In my book, *Women Boxers: The New Warriors*, Stone Hands Swindell talks about how men can tear each other up, take slugs at each other, and afterwards they are friends, fishing together, drinking beers, and it's all behind them. She says, women...they hold a grudge.

MF Let's talk about Jackie Chavez.⁸

DM That's one of the best pieces coming out of the show. When I was preparing to photograph her, setting up lights, eight-by-ten camera, I asked her “What do you want to look like? How do you want me to do this?” She goes, “I want to look like them...back there” (points to posters behind Jackie). So I told her to show me and she just hit that pose. She had been thinking about it. Relaxed but watching. Her arm is ready.

MF Something I've noticed is how you capture a balance between their athleticism and their gender.

DM With the women boxers, you get the sense that they are athletes, but you also are aware of their gender. Clearly, they are not men or male athletes. They are women athletes. The psyche is female, yet they desire the combat sport.

MF When you went into this project, were you planning on capturing the female psyche in the athlete? It seems like that is what we are seeing in these pieces.

DM I don't know. Usually, when I go into a project I start off with a hypothesis, with an approach, and I find that as I start proceeding through it and become educated about the topic, it shifts—it shifts me. I have to leave myself open to the knowledge that's going to happen. There's so much knowledge that I gain and use in the image itself. I start off with one idea, but by the time I get to the end...it's like "I got it."

Here, Delilah and I move to a section of her exhibition that holds the Sagrado Corazon series. The walls are graffiti-covered, fracturing the formality of the space by drawing the visitor's eyes to the images across the gallery (See Figure 2).

MF I read that when you approached the mechanic for *Jesus's Carburetor Repair* (1999) in the *Sagrado Corazon* series, you had a different automotive piece you wanted him to hold, but that he wanted to hold the carburetor because it was the heart of the car.⁹

DM That's right. I mean, if he was going to do this, he wanted to do it right. He brought the carburetor with him. He's like, "No Delilah, this is the heart of the engine." (Laughs)



Figure 2

MF I really love this whole series (*Sagrado Corazon*).

DM You know sometimes, I think people don't realize how small it is. These are small eight-by-ten prints, not large at all. That's because of the process I was using, it's a collotype. You know, I did this series of collotypes and I haven't really returned to them. I mean, I did a couple of other series in collotypes, but I really stopped doing the collotypes in the late 90s.

MF Why was that?

DM I didn't have access to the presses and the time that it took. Then my interests started changing to other topics; different things were more interesting to me. I'm just one of these people who like to move on...it's hard for me to step back into things, because my mind isn't there anymore, you know? When I do

my work, it has a lot to do with what I'm thinking about at that moment. At this point, I really liked the collotypes. They're really beautiful. (Pauses) And then I was like... "Okay, I'm done. What else can I do?"

MF It's important to be able to move forward.

DM Yes, it is.

The Guadalupe series is positioned to the right of the Sagrado Corazon series and on the opposite wall from the Women Boxers images (See Figure 3). Delilah was very reflective when she talked about these pieces and the interventions she wanted to make through her art in the cultural memory of the colonial Americas.

MF How did your *Guadalupe* series come about?

DM I was asked to put together a large installation in France. Francisco Benitez, an exceptional painter from Santa Fe, and his French wife were living in France for a while and talked a small museum in Rodez into showing an exhibition of New Mexican artists. As they were putting it together, they realized they had no representation of Chicano artists. They came to me and asked me to be in the show. They told me what they wanted. I was actually the only person they told what they wanted. They wanted me to do a whole installation dealing with the Guadalupe, because one of the first easel paintings of the Guadalupe was in that town. I thought that was interesting. I saw this as an opportunity to take this colonial image back to Europe as a contemporary statement. Usually, we are taught what Europe brought to the Americas and not taught what the Americas brought to Europe. The Guadalupe was one of those things that crossed the Atlantic from the Americas. What I wanted to do was talk about the colonial process and how she is a symbol of colonial mentalities, such as violence and



Figure 3

syncretism. She is the undercurrent for all that. She's not just a religious symbol. She is a cultural symbol. She is a symbol of a new culture, the coming together of the indigenous and Spanish. I thought, "What can I do that will drive that idea home, so that when I bring it to France they will have to step back and think not just about her as a pretty little religious symbol." So I was doing a lot of photographic studies; I was trying to figure out which one of these images would be the image that I would want to use. Finally, I got into a prison and photographed a prisoner's back.¹⁰ When I did it, I knew that was the one.

MF Did you know the second you took it?

DM I knew it. I thought, "This is it!" I was very nervous about processing it. I knew I wanted to make it really big. So big that it turned everything around it into a postage stamp. Big. It was this goliath image.

During our discussion of this last portion of her exhibition that displays images from Sed: Trail of Thirst, Delilah introduced concepts she incorporates into her art surrounding space and trauma. Delilah focuses on how she interrupts aesthetics and projects herself, as Chicana and as artist, into her work.

MF I read in a transcript from your talk at Stanford that *Sed: Trail of Thirst* was largely influenced by the immigrants' need for water during their dangerous journey in the desert. What was it about this lack of water and this idea about wanting to capture an absence that influenced this series?

DM You know, I was following the ideas of Amalia Mesa-Bains, which were that the land has a memory and that anything that has passed on the land or is passing on the land—our stories, where we've been, what has occurred—become scars onto the land. In many ways, that was the absence that she was thinking about, that she was discussing: our memory lies within the land, within the landscape. So the story is there. So that absence that I'm talking about are the scars where people have been, it's that presence, where you know somebody has been there because you have the water stations there, the discarded objects there, the footprints are there. You know they've been there because of the evidence of the things left behind. Through these items, their presence remains on the land as a remembrance.

MF In *Migrant Campsite, Ironwood, Arizona*, you use a shadow to capture that absence. Are you putting yourself into the text?¹¹

DM I'm interfering. It's interference. I'm not doing documentary photography, even though there's a lot of documentary-ish things going on. But it's not pure documentary photography and I don't want it to be. What I want to do is make this statement. I want to discuss the ideas of human suffering, human concerns,

particularly within the landscape. I want to be able to look at that in the landscape. The stories are already there. I thought back to one of those magical things you think about as a kid, like Peter Pan chasing his shadow, trying to catch his shadow. When I saw Orlando standing there, I wanted to capture his shadow.¹² I wanted the shadow to stay behind. So we can start to think about the presence, the absence of the presence, through the shadow. I want that story. I want the narrative. When you look there's the water bottles, the shoes, the backpack, all of these things that were left.

MF What's really incredible is the fact that there are children's artifacts left there as well. It's difficult to imagine a child having to make this same journey that an adult has to make.

DM The other thing, too, is that we are talking about families, the families that come. Some of the reasons for migrating are familia, educación, derechos, y trabajo. In essence, a search for a better life.

MF Often, when we think of an "immigrant," we think of the masculine, of a male. Was it important for you to capture something else?

DM The truth is those that come on that trail are the very young. The old don't make it. So it's the young really. The extreme young don't make it either. It's a group that's struggling, looking for that dream. I remind my students, "You know, they are your age." They are willing to risk it. I see the crossing as being a kind of middle passage. People don't want to talk about that crossing; they prefer to forget it.

MF The comparison of the crossing to a middle passage is fascinating. What made you compare it to the middle passage?

DM I very clearly saw it as being our contemporary middle passage. It's the same thing as the slave ships. Many died, yet others walked off the slave ships. When they make this crossing here in Arizona, on average three hundred bodies are found annually. When we were out there in the desert, the Border Patrol had found a young boy sitting along the migration trail. He had a tuna can and he was digging a hole for his sister.

MF In *Power Line Trail, Ironwood, Arizona*, it seems like you are interested in human movement, human passages.¹³

DM Yes, that movement creates the scarring on the land. That scarring is created by those who have passed through it.

Part II

After viewing the exhibition, Delilah and I moved to a meeting room in the museum to continue our discussion of the works in Syncretism, as well as pieces from her larger body of work that were not included in the exhibition. I decided to ask her about these pieces because they are important in understanding her lens, her theories, and her approaches to Chicana/o subjects as they relate to space, power, myth, and creativity.

MF How did you approach the landscapes captured in the Arizona desert or in *Road to Aztlán*?¹⁴ They are both pathways, but one is formal and one is informal.

DM There's two things that were going on when I was in Arizona, and you know, I didn't think about this until right now. The pathways-migration trails are ones that have been done by foot mostly, and some by jeep. These are back roads of sort. Most of the trails you are looking at, you are looking

into Mexico. Those trails are looking south into Mexico. The road to Aztlán is looking north. Aztlán is north. You have to remember, I am not a documentary photographer. In *Road to Aztlán*, the car was actually headed towards me. I wanted it to go away, so I picked it up digitally, put it on the other side and turned the headlights red. I wanted it going away from me, because it makes more sense if the car is moving away. There is this freedom of treating the image as text and that's what I do. A text that can be fiction and nonfiction.

MF Does a highway have any sort of special symbology for you?

DM Before I took the picture, I saw the highway, I knew the checkpoints were behind us and therefore we had passed the migra. I was thinking about the road. If they made it successfully through the checkpoints, by either walking around them or driving past, that road will take them to Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin. At that point, they would be free and that stretch becomes the road to Aztlán. To the dreams.

MF What does Aztlán mean for you?

DM We know that Aztlán was a mythical place. Actually, there's a lot of evidence that it probably wasn't that mythical, that there probably was an Aztlán. It's a place of a homecoming. It's the home. You're looking at this idea of migration and the migration isn't necessarily that they're leaving home, but that they are coming to a home. Aztlán is home. For the Aztecs, Aztlán is the true home. This (the US) is where the homes get built. So there's that whole idea of ownership, which in many ways, for dominant culture, when a Mexicano takes ownership of the idea of home, of Aztlán being north, it becomes a very fearful thing for dominant culture, because they feel as if they

could be taken over. But no, this isn't about taking over. It's (Aztlán) always been there. That border was porous. We moved back and forth fluidly. This is the Americas. This is a continent that we historically have and continue to move across.

MF Is there a particular region you feel drawn to capture, the Southwest, for example?

DM The space that I'm drawn to is Nepantla. The space of change, syncretism. I like to put myself in that center. It's a wonderful place to watch, to be an observer.

MF I know of the collaboration with Orlando Lara on the *Sed: Trail of Thirst* project. Would you mind talking about your collaboration in other projects?

DM I tend to do a lot of collaboration in my work. As a Chicana, I'm real interested in community. It's through the process of collaboration that the community begins to evoke itself. So a lot of my work has to do with opening up and pushing and pulling against community as a way of exploring one's self. I do this because I don't see myself as a documentary photographer. I'm not a documentary photographer. I see myself as an artist, but what I'm trying to do is create an aesthetic that makes more sense for la raza, for ourselves. So much of the time it's the aesthetics that have been developed for that bigger, wider art market that dominates how everybody is supposed to approach art and I don't think that for us (Chicano/as), that it makes a lot of sense. Even though some people kind of think there's this overarching human common denominator and you'll make a masterpiece and everybody will fall on top of it and say this is the most beautiful thing they've ever seen. You know, I think you have to be taught. You have to be taught how to look at things.

Part of that teaching has a lot to do with your experiences beforehand, the experiences that come from culture. Sometimes, I think art that becomes very well-known does so mostly because of the media. It has been written and thought about. But who's writing about it? Who's thinking about it? What yardstick is being used? With my work, I've always wanted to recreate the yardstick. Recreating that part of it is the idea of collaboration. The only way you are going to begin to find the aesthetic that generates some kind of commonality is to collaborate.

MF Do you see formal and informal ways to collaborate?

DM Collaboration happens on many different levels. When I was doing the portraits of the Sacred Heart, I was very clear in seeing that the sitter and the photographer were in collaboration with each other. That it was more than just me being the observer, but the person in front of me delivered to me, I had to be conscious of how they wanted to express themselves. The way that I approach this is the Sacred Heart is a portrait of Jesus, portrait of Mary, revealing their hearts. So what I wanted to do was make a portrait of the Chicano community in Albuquerque revealing their hearts. So I asked them, "What is in your heart?" "What is it that you do?" With, say Rudolfo Anaya, he's a writer; in *Bless Me, Ultima* he speaks the heart of the community. Because he is a writer, I asked him, "How do you want to reveal your heart?" There's one with Alicia Perea, who did a dance drama of Frida Kahlo. You see her with backdrops, costumes, makeup, in this incredible pose as if she were falling. It simultaneously suggests a couple of Frida Kahlo's paintings. That was her heart. On some level, there will always be some sort of collaboration.

MF I wanted to ask you about your installation on San Sebastiana (See Figure 4).¹⁵ You use myth often—Aztlán, Sebastiana. I read about the story of



Figure 4
Delilah Montoya. *Sebastiana: Un Trago*, 2002. Ink Jet on Rag Paper.

Sebastiana you heard from your mother. What made you consider the idea of capturing humanity in Sebastiana, capturing humanity in death?

DM The humanity is that we are all going to die. Death is there. Death is waiting. Her humanity was that she could be bought. That was her humanness. In my mind, Sebastiana would hold back death. She wouldn't snatch your soul if you could give her a good story. It was those deathbed confessions. She would let those confessions finish themselves out so that she'd get the story. That was one of the reasons she decided to take on the job, because she could get all the chisme.

Could you imagine the soap operas that she's seen? Deathbed confessions, "I'm sorry I was unfaithful to you." "I just want you to know I'm not really your father." "I buried all the money." (Laughs) On one hand, her humanity is her flaw, but it also helps people relieve their frustrations.

MF I like the feminine image of death she portrays. I know in New Mexico she is often represented as a calaca in a cart. You turned her into a diva. Where did that come from?

DM My mother told me she was Doña Sebastiana. I got to thinking, if she thinks she's a doña, then she's not that (calaca in a cart). I bet when she looks in the mirror she sees a doña, a reyna—she's beautiful. She couldn't understand why people kept running from her. When we look at her, she's the calaca, she's death.

MF She has an old Hollywood style. Even the poster reminds me of Rita Hayworth. Did that old Hollywood glamor play a role in *San Sebastiana*?

DM Most definitely. I was looking at those old movie posters. *La Dolce Vita*. Some of those posters. That's where our divas came from...they came from that era.

MF How about God in your installation?

DM I had the hardest time finding God's voice. I went through three different voices, redubbing different Gods' voices. Finally, I got a good God's voice, but it took me a number of years to find it. Think about God. You know, it can't be any voice. It has to be assured, but not sensual, not demonic—it can't sound too priestly, you know what I mean? It has to have that right balance, and it took me a long time. The backend on that project was interesting, going back to community, because Cecilio Garcia-Camarillo was the one who wrote it—wrote the script. He was a poet, part of the early movimiento. When writing the script, Cecilio based it on my concept, but he was the one who did the narrative and made it real. I wanted it to be with dichos, so I found all these dichos that we could just throw in there, because in northern New Mexico they always use to talk in dichos. The other part of it was that at that time Cecilio learned he had cancer and he was dying. What you hear in that script is him confronting his own death. There's certain sections where you can hear his voice. Where it says "death is not a period but a comma in life," "people who are afraid of death are also afraid of life." That's Cecilio dealing with his death. About eight months later he died.

MF Could you talk about your casta project?

DM Currently, I'm working on *Nuestra Calidad*, contemporary casta portraiture that includes a DNA study of Hispanic people as part of the portrait-making process, and what I'm coming across is that we come from both Indigenous and Mediterranean bloodlines along with Asian and sub-Saharan. Interestingly, for the Mexicanos, the Native population is from all over the Americas. The native population isn't just from Mexico. There are native bloodlines coming out of Peru, it's coming out of the north, the east...

That native Hispanos population, it demonstrates how fluid our borders have been because bloodlines come from all parts of the continents. It's not from just this little pueblito somewhere that had been there for hundreds and thousands of years. That native population was moving up and down those ancient roads. From the satellites you can see still all the ancient roadways. Our DNA is another testimonial to the memory of that movement. The memory lives within us.

MF What was the inspiration for your casta project?

DM I like the idea of trying different things, reconstructing and toying with aesthetics. Taking an idea and reapplying and moving an aesthetic tradition within it. That was one of the things that drew me to the project. Even though I'm not a documentary photographer, I found it fascinating that here we have a social system in front of us with dubious historical origins. The Mexican casta paintings actually point to the fact that the whole social structure was pretty well developed in the sixteen-, seventeen-, and eighteen-hundreds. The social structure was about race and class and how those boundaries were breached. It (the castas) clearly demonstrates that system. Art historians or historians want to call it something else. They want to call it *costumbres* or whatever. But when gente look at it, we know exactly what we are seeing. It's the cleaning of the blood. We know that. It's something that we live with and it is very much a part of our culture. It's not just our culture though, it's part of the larger culture as well. I asked myself, "How do you document, discuss something that is so much in front of us, but completely invisible to us?" The challenge is how do I put my finger on that. We all know this, but we don't want to talk about it. It's too uncomfortable to talk about. So I thought what if I do a contemporary version? But instead of giving labels, let's just DNA test. We'll use science here.

MF What kind of subjects are you using for your project?

DM I'm interested in colonial people, so I'm not just looking at Latinos or Hispanos, but I'm also interested in other colonial populations at large that include Africans. They've been here on the continent as long as Latinos have been. They have a colonial history here. Then the European, it's the same thing. They've been here too. So what I look for are old colonial family lines. The idea is the longer a family has been here, the more mixed they will be. I wanted to investigate the mixtures. So far I've DNA tested multiple families and since I'm in Houston that's a great place to encounter colonial Black families. New Mexico...that is another great place to encounter Indigenous families. The other issue was how do I photograph that core sample of the social classes that goes from that one percent on the top all the way to the prison culture. That range from the very top to the very bottom.

MF Has capturing that range in social class been a major challenge in the project?

DM Asking, "Hey, I want to do a portrait of you. Can I DNA-test you?" is a real challenge. I find the middle class is really easy to collaborate with, but accessing the lower and the one percent is really difficult. It's harder to encounter those two levels.

MF How's it going?

DM: I got quite a few images and now I am trying to figure out how I'm going to add the DNA into it.

MF I'm really looking forward to this project. Do you have a date that it will be completed?

DM In March (2015), I'm going to present some of the work in an exhibition called *Voices in Concert: In the Spirit of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. I'm busy working on it.

MF It's so unique.

DM It's so unique, I'm having trouble finding funding for it.

MF That's the double-edged sword.

DM It's hard to find funding. I did manage to seek out a little bit of funding to pay for the DNA testing. Getting the paper and everything else that goes with it...I'll keep looking. It'll get done. That's the same thing that happened to me with the *Sed* project. I had this idea that I wanted to photograph these migration trails. I started looking for funding, but I was having a heck of a time finding it. I barely got enough to get to Arizona and for the film. Afterwards it's like, "Oh wow, what a great project!" I'm like "Where were you when I wanted to expand this thing?" Now, the work has shown in multiple venues, yet I know it could have been better if I had the funding. Instead, it becomes a study in minimalism. (Laughs) I very minimally get these things done and hopefully I get one or two images out of it.

MF That's a real issue isn't it? The problem of funding?

DM Yes, the monetary cost to produce the work. The whole thing is... if you can make a couple of sales, then that kind of helps. If I break even, I'm just really happy. Although, you know...sometimes you sell something and the value triples on the secondary market. The artist never sees that money.

MF Is that a point of stress for you?

DM Has it stopped me? (Laughs) No.

The interview ends as Delilah began to prep for her gallery talk that immediately followed our discussion. We made our way back upstairs for her talk, where visitors had already begun walking the exhibition. After her talk, Delilah stayed and openly spoke about her work with many visitors. I want to extend my appreciation and thanks to Delilah Montoya for her generosity, taking the time to walk me through her exhibition and sit and talk so candidly about her work and her theories.

Notes

¹ The audio for this interview was digitally recorded and transcribed.

² Montoya's website for the project defines casta paintings in the following way: "Casta paintings are part of the eighteenth-century artistic tradition of Colonial Latin America. These generally appear in groups of sixteen portraits that trace the complex racial mixing or mestizaje of the people in New Spain. Each painting depicts a couple along with one or two children. An inscription describing the ethnoracial make up of the mother, the father, and the child(ren) usually appears as verbage within the painting or above the family" (www.delilahmontoya.com).

³ Montoya's work was displayed in the CARA exhibition.

⁴ Many thanks to Kate Ware at the New Mexico Museum of Art for her assistance the day of the interview, as well as the many gallery photographs she provided for this publication.

⁵ The photograph shows female boxer, Elizabeth "Pink Panther" Monge, centered, in the forefront of her hotel room, head slightly tilted down, eyes forward, fists up.

⁶ Holly sits on a stool in the corner of a boxing ring, her back facing the camera, centered, holding her hair up to show the musculature of her back (See Figure 5).

⁷ Liz stands sideways with a towel draped around her shoulders in the ring. She extends her right arm and glove toward the camera as she addresses someone outside the frame.

⁸ Jackie is centered, sitting on a stool, one arm on her knee, one fist lowered. She looks directly at the camera. The background is unfocused, drawing the viewer's eyes to Jackie's eyes.

⁹ A mechanic stands in the center, hands working over a carburetor on a stool.

¹⁰ The prisoner is centered, his back facing the camera. He is handcuffed and the top of his prison

jumpsuit is pulled down to his waist revealing an elaborate tattoo of the Virgen de Guadalupe.

¹¹ This is a color image showing the landscape migrants cross to get into the US. There is sparse vegetation in a very dry environment. Mountains can be seen in the left background, while in the right foreground to middle there are artifacts from the migrants' travels. A bodiless shadow of a man can be seen amongst the artifacts.

¹² Orlando Lara collaborated with Montoya on this series.

¹³ This is a color image showing a landscape similar to *Migrant Campsite, Ironwood, Arizona* (2004).

¹⁴ This is a color image showing a stretch of highway that is centered to the left of the frame, juxtaposed with a grassy landscape to the right. The highway leads to a cloud-covered mountain representing Aztlán. The foreground is shadowed, but the background is lit, revealing two red rear lights on a vehicle driving towards Aztlán.

¹⁵ In her interactive DVD installation, available on the artist's website, Sebastiana has a conversation with God. Her image as either calaca or diva can be navigated by the viewer's choice between the two different narratives.

References

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