

ASPECTS OF CHICANO ART

By Silvia Gorodezky

I
Art is man's creative activity and plays an important role in our culture; it has been used as a powerful and effective tool to protest against social, political and economic exploitation. The Chicano artist almost always finds himself in such a situation and is exploited three times: as an ethnic group, as a social class and as an artist. By means of his art he is able to express and communicate with his people and present his plight to public opinion by reaffirming his Chicano Culture and penetrating the Anglo ideology.

II
What is Chicano art? it has many phases, it can be heterogeneous, communicative, controversial, pluralist or universal and is manifested in murals, posters, graffiti. It finds its roots in the Pre-Colombian age, the Indigenous era, the Mexican Revolution and the American Southwest and passes through different influences: Hispanic, Mexican Muralism and culminates with the Chicano Movement of the 60's. Chicano art can be considered militant and nationalistic because its artist belong to the working class of North America. They are in the process of a rebirth (renaissance) and often do not have access to museums and galleries so they create their own spaces using empty walls and garage doors in order to carry out their political and cultural message.

III
Chicano art can be defined as colorful and passionate because of its Latin temperament and expresses the soul and the culture of its people. Malaquias Montoya is considered the visual historian of the Chicanos, together with Rupert Garcia, Frank Romero, Gilbert Lujan, John Valadez and Carlos Almaraz were the first to use resistance to assimilation. They received their inspiration from the Mexican Muralistic Movement and the "Taller de la Grafica Popular" dealing with social critique and social equality and against the migrant policies of the United States.

IV
Chicano artist satirize and poke fun at their own people, as in the work of Cesar Martinez, "Bato con Sunglasses"; here he portrays the "pachuco" as he sees him, isolated in his barrio. Yolanda

Lopez is an irreverent artist who dressed in shorts places herself in an altar, taking the place of the Virgin, with her paint brushes in her hand. In "Kitchen Spanish", Mel Casas portrays an American family and in the background a Mexican maid made out of cardboard who says: "si señor, si señora, si niña, si perro" in order to survive.

V
The typical "macho" is represented in "Hombre que le gustan las mujeres" with the tattoos of his women and his "Virgencita de Guadalupe" engraved in his chest. It is folk art, art of the barrio, of Mexican traditions because the Chicano artist is the voice of his people, he doesn't forget where he comes from, but he questions the "American Dream" and its values in the best way he knows, in his paintings, in his murals, in his graffiti... This is the voice of "La Raza".



"Hombre que le gustan las mujeres"

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