Editorial Commentary

Art and Decolonial Love

CHARLENE VILLASEÑOR BLACK

Writing from my perspective as a Chicana art historian, ethnic studies scholar, and activist, this commentary contemplates how art can create and foster decolonial love. I draw examples from the rich history of Chicana/o art. As embodied political subjects, Chicanx artists have been engaged in envisioning decolonial love from the beginning of the Chicano movement in the 1960s—creating art that brings historical wrongs to light, fighting back against injustice, repairing us and our community, and visualizing more just futures.[1]

Allow me to suggest how these ideas manifest in what has been considered the first Chicano movement mural, created by artist Antonio Bernal in 1968 for El Teatro Campesino in Del Rey, California (figs. 1 and 2).[2] Painted on two wooden panels, the mural asserts the importance of the Indigenous past, proposes men and women as equal partners in revolution, and highlights Black/Brown alliances. The two compositions, each with eight aligned figures, mirror each other. In the left panel we see Indigenous people in procession, inspired by the eighth-century Maya murals at Bonampak and other Mexica (Aztec) sources. The amalgamation of costume and attributes gives visual form to pan-indigeneity. In the right hand panel Bernal presents a group of twentieth-century revolutionaries, acting together in alliance: an Adelita (a woman who fought during the Mexican Revolution), Pancho Villa (leader of the Mexican Revolution in the north of Mexico), Emiliano Zapata (Indigenous leader of the Revolution in southern Mexico), Joaquín Murrieta (a legendary Robin Hood figure of the western US who stole from rich white settlers to give to Mexicans during the California Gold Rush), César E. Chávez (activist and founder, along with Dolores Huerta, of the United Farmworkers), Reyes López Tijerina (leader of the New

FIGURE 1. Antonio Bernal, Untitled Mural (left panel), 1968, enamel on plywood, 6 x 15 feet (1.83 x 4.57 m). Del Rey, California. From photographs taken by Robert Sommer in the 1970s (photograph courtesy of Robert Sommer and the Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation Records, part 1, collection 10, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center)

FIGURE 2. Antonio Bernal, Untitled Mural (right panel), 1968, enamel on plywood, 6 x 15 feet (183 x 457 cm). Del Rey, California. From photographs taken by Robert Sommer in the 1970s (photograph courtesy of Robert Sommer and the CARA Records, part 1, collection 10, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center)

1. I suggest in another essay that Chicanx artists have long been engaged in what we describe now as decolonial praxis, using the example of Texas artist Mel Casas. Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Counterstorytelling Chicanx Art and Conceptualism," forthcoming in the catalog for the *Xicanx Body* exhibition curated by Cecilia Fajardo-Hill.

2. See the recent study of Antonio Bernal: Charlene Villaseñor Black, ed., *The Artist as Eyewitness: Antonio Bernal Papers, 1884–2019* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2022).

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Mexico land rights movement), Martin Luther King Jr. (the visionary Black civil rights advocate), and Malcolm X (the revolutionary leader of the Black Panthers).[3] The panels visually manifest revolutionary thinking in the early years of the Chicano movement as they suggest strategies for future activism. In both scenes, the procession of figures is led by a woman—an Indigenous Mexica dancer on the left and an Adelita on the right. In both, the artist references the ancient and colonial pasts, linking them to current struggles. The Mexica dancer leading the group on the left wears a Christian cross, a reference to the forced conversion of the colonial era. Bernal thus connects the ancient Mesoamerican past and the abuses of the colonial period to the Mexican Revolution, the civil rights movement, and El Movimiento Chicano, visualized in the corresponding mural on the right. Also significant is how Bernal imagined women and men working together in concert, both historically and now, as well as his assertion of the important alliance between Black and Brown peoples in the United States. Through these various references, Bernal's 1968 Del Rey mural visualizes decolonial love. The paired panels bring the colonial past to light, fight against injustice in the present moment, and through their representation of indigeneity repair our community. The very first Chicana/o mural, created in 1968 for El Teatro Campesino, thus represents an early formulation of decolonial love in Chicanx art.

My thoughts on art and decolonial love are inspired by recent theorizing in the areas of literature and decolonial studies, and by considerations of futurity and reparations, as expressed in the work of ethnic studies scholar Yomaira C. Figueroa, decolonial theorist Nelson Maldonado-Torres, author Junot Díaz, and others. Many of the ways that decolonial love is expressed in Afro-diasporic literature, ideas put forth by Figueroa in her study of Díaz's novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) and Joaquín Mbomío Bacheng's novel *Matinga: sangre en la selva* (2013), are evident in and perhaps even more pronounced (or at least, differently articulated or otherwise visible) in the visual arts.[4] This brief commentary suggests how Chicanx art expressed or was an agent of decolonial love, both in the past and continuing today.

DEFINITIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Several concepts are important to define as we begin this inquiry, some of which I have written on previously.[5] Drawing from the foundational work of Aníbal Quijano, I begin from the assumption that we are living in the era of coloniality—the idea that European social order, racial hierarchies, and ways of knowing imposed during the early modern era in the Americas live on and structure the world today.[6] To put it another way, coloniality is "the ongoing propagation of knowledge and ideas to foster and cement the interest of the dominant."[7] Decolonial approaches seek to recognize the damage and injuries wrought by colonialism in the historical past and the ways these effects structure and live on in the present world. They seek to upend coloniality, challenging Eurocentrism and Eurocentric notions of universality. I find Walter Mignolo's concept of "epistemic disobedience" a powerful strategy to effect these changes. To me, epistemic disobedience is the refusal to give in to Eurocentric models of thinking, being, and knowledge—a refusal that challenges the episteme of coloniality that continues to order our world, thinking, and very being. In the inspiring words of professor, activist, and theorist Nelson Maldonado-Torres, the decolonial turn is a response to colonialism's "radical, longstanding forms of systematic dehumanization"; it is "a project to undo the legacy of coloniality in every aspect of our existence including in knowledge, power, and being."[8]

3. On the mural, see Gabriela Rodríguez-Gómez, "History sin Fronteras: Antonio Bernal's Chicano Murals in Del Rey and East Los Angeles," in Villaseñor Black, *Artist as Eyewitness*, 12–28, esp. 14–20. An early and important essay on Black/Brown alliances is by Freida High, "Chiasmus: Art in Politics/Politics in Art; Chicano/a and African American Image, Text, and Activism of the 1960s and 1970s," in *Voices of Color: Art and Society in the Americas*, ed. Phoebe M. Farris-Dufrene (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), 118–65.

4. Yomaira C. Figueroa, "Reparation as Transformation: Radical Literary (Re)Imaginings of Futurities through Decolonial Love," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 4, no. 1 (2015): 41–58.

5. Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Decolonial Aspirations and the Study of Colonial Art," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 3, no. 4 (October 2021): 5–11; Charlene Villaseñor Black and Tim Barringer, "Decolonizing Art and Empire," *The Art Bulletin* 104, no. 1 (2022): 6–20.

6. Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (1989): 168–78; Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533–80; Walter Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto," *Transmodernity: A Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* (Fall 2011): 44–66.

7. George J. Sefa Dei, foreword to *Decolonization and Anti-colonial Praxis: Shared Lineages*, ed. Anila Zainub (Leiden: Brill, 2019), vii.

8. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On Metaphysical Catastrophe, Post-Continental Thought, and the Decolonial Turn," in *Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Archipelago*, ed. Tatiana Flores and Michelle A. Stephens (Long Beach: Museum of Latin American Art,

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What, then, is decolonial love? Various writers have attempted to answer this question. I begin with what may be a controversial response, proposed by Joseph Drexler-Dreis, in a book on Christian theology and salvation. Because he writes from the locus of Christianity, a Eurocentric, colonizing point of view if ever there was one, I find his thoughts important to consider. I compare them to art history, a similarly Eurocentric, colonizing framework of knowledge. Can theology or art history or other European structures of thinking ever truly be decolonial or engage in decolonizing?

Let us examine Drexler-Dreis's definition of decolonial love, based in his close reading of the work of James Baldwin (1924–1987), the influential US author, and Frantz Fanon (1925–1961), political philosopher and theorist from Martinique. About them, Drexler-Dreis writes, "They show what it means to love in a decolonial way, and what it means to incorporate an orientation of decolonial love into intellective work."[9] They do this in at least three ways, Drexler-Dreis suggests:

> Decolonial love exposes the idolatry of Western modernity and creates space for an alternative. It situates the human person in relationship to a transcendent and irreducible, even if unnameable, reality. And, it commits to catalyzing and authenticating historical movements—that is, hastening the end of the modern world-system.[10]

In a 2012 interview on decolonial love, author Junot Díaz provided this definition in a discussion of how his novels explore "psychic and emotional decolonization": "The kind of love that I was interested in, that my characters long for intuitively, is the only kind of love that could liberate them from that horrible legacy of colonial violence. I am speaking about decolonial love."[11]

Maldonado-Torres has connected decolonial love to notions of futurity. Employing Fanon's concept of the *damné* or condemned who struggle against coloniality as they imagine a different, more just future, Maldonado-Torres notes that the condemned work toward decolonization through "the decolonial praxis of love."[12] He defines decolonial love as "the humanizing task of building a world in which genuine ethical relations" create relationships not structured by coloniality.[13] Decolonial love is central to "decolonial futurities." Two other components are essential to his definition: decolonial love depends on recognition of the injustices of the past as it envisions reparations for a more just future.[14]

Writing from the perspective of education and in response to student protests in Africa, scholar Nuraan Davids advocates for a decolonial love that is "fluid and dynamic," one that recognizes the "pluralist ways of being human" and "epistemic diversity."[15] For Davids, decolonial love has the potential to shatter coloniality as it breaks down binary modes of thinking. She adds:

> As a form of rupturing, decolonial love calls upon the individual to afford humanity to the other as a means to restore his or her own humanity—that is, to restore what it means to be human by seeing the humanity in others. As a form of rupturing, decolonial love surrenders to an ethical conscience of what it means to be human, and as such, loves all people as a reflection of the majesty of being human.[16]

Figueroa's concept of decolonial love builds upon Maldonado-Torres's centering of reparations and provides a revision to current thinking. Reparations are, of course, a topic of great interest right now, as witness discussions about human enslavement in the United States and the United Kingdom.[17] Related work on truth

2017), 247; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions on the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (2007): 240–70.

9. Joseph Drexler-Dreis, *Decolonial Love: Salvation in Colonial Modernity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 11. Another book that similarly attempts to situate Christianity in a social justice framework is Robert Chao Romero, *Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2020).

10. Drexler-Dreis, *Decolonial Love*, 11.

11. Cited in Figueroa, "Reparation as Transformation," 48. For the full interview, see Paula M. L. Moya, "The Search for Decolonial Love: An Interview with Junot Díaz," *Boston Review*, June 26, 2012, https://bostonreview.net/articles/paula-ml-moya-decolonial-love-interview-junot-diaz/.

12. Cited in Figueroa, "Reparation as Transformation," 43–44; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 244.

13. Quoted in Figueroa, "Reparation as Transformation," 44; Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 244.

14. Figueroa, "Reparation as Transformation," 44; Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 244.

15. Nuraan Davids, "Love in the Time of Decoloniality," *Alternation* 24, special edition (2019): 116, 117.

16. Davids, "Love," 117–18.

17. For US discussions, see "Slavery Reparation Proposals Spurred by Widening U.S. Wealth Gap," *American Bar Association News*, August 9, 2022, www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2022/08/slavery-reparations-proposals-spurred/; and Jacquelyne Germain, "The Fight for Reparations Has Stalled in Congress. Here's What They Look Like in State and Local Governments," CNN, July 13, 2022,

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and reconciliation is taking place in Colombia and elsewhere.[18] Figueroa proposes a model of reparations that is not materialist or positivist in nature. Moving beyond apologies or financial compensation, she proposes reparations recast as forms of decolonial love. According to her, "a decolonial love politic" depends on "a reparation of the self" and a reimagining of the future.[19] In this framework, reparations "engage in intergenerational and collective acts of love; they demand an understanding of (and an accounting for) the longue-durée of colonialism."[20] She analyzes the two aforementioned novels by Díaz and Mbomío Bacheng as examples of how reparations can act as decolonial love. Central to her argument is the idea that "literary narratives offer discursive spaces through which to imagine and reimagine the possibilities of decolonial reparations as amends that are both material and immaterial."[21] Authors Díaz and Mbomío Bacheng both "craft different visions of what a more loving and repaired world could be" as they "imagine reparations as transformative projects beyond the scope of the material and toward a praxis of decolonial love."[22] The novels engage in "the reparation of the imagination, bodies and nations wracked by violence, and of communities at crossroads of liberation."[23]

ART AND DECOLONIAL LOVE: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Figueroa's argument about the power of literature to enact new, more just futures is a powerful one. Similarly, Maldonado-Torres has singled out both literature and art for their potential to express "forms of perceiving, feeling, and imagining that challenge the norm and its hierarchies."[24] Like texts written by colonized subjects, the arts can act as "an extension and expression" of embodiment, thus providing a different perspective, that of the colonized or *damné*, one that can provide "counter-catastrophic creative attitudes."[25] In a related vein, Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui advocates for the particular power of visual images to reveal ideas suppressed by official censorship of textual sources or speech: "Words do not signify, but instead conceal," she writes.[26]

In an earlier commentary, I suggested that the visual arts have the potential to articulate diverse viewpoints, given their ability to suggest ideas before they can be fully voiced or clearly spelled out. These viewpoints may be arrived at diagonally, adjacently, or in perspective. This potential depends on the arts' aptitude for condensation, suggestion, and insinuation, as well as artists' propensity to suggest unfixed, evolving, even uncertain meanings, concepts I have derived from thinking about the scholarship of Stephen Best and Néstor García Canclini.[27] The latter describes this as imminence, an impending revelation, a way of saying things without pronouncing them fully. Imminence has political potential: "Literature and art give more resonance to voices that come from diverse places in society, listening to those voices in ways that others don't, turning them into something that political, sociological, or religious discourses can't. . . ."[28]

Building on these ideas, I ask: How can the visual arts envision new, more just futures? How can they and have they offered the possibility of reparations and community healing? How can and do and did visual artists articulate decolonial love and imagine a decolonial world?

Examples from Chicana/o art provide compelling case studies to answer these questions. Chicana/o artists easily fit into the model of Maldonado-Torres's embodied political subject, having been subjected to double colonization—the colonization and land theft of Mexico by Spain in the colonial era (1521–1821), followed by the colonization and land theft that resulted in what is now

https://edition.cnn.com/2022/07/13/us/reparations-state-local-commission-reaj/index.html. For the UK controversy, see Kenneth Mohammed, "Sorrow and Regret Are Not Enough. Britain Must Finally Pay Reparations for Slavery," *The Guardian*, March 29, 2022, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/29/sorrow-and-regret-are-not-enough-britain-must-finally-pay-reparations-for-slavery.

18. Christina Noriega, "Colombia Truth Commission Presents Final Report on Civil Conflict," Al Jazeera News, June 29, 2022, www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/29/colombia-truth-commission-presents-final-report-on-civil-conflict#:~:text=The%20commission%20was%20set%20up,to%20persist%20for%20so%20long.

19. Figueroa, "Reparation as Transformation," 43.

20. Figueroa, 46.

21. Figueroa, 43.

22. Figueroa, 56.

23. Figueroa, 46–47.

24. Maldonado-Torres, "Metaphysical Catastrophe," 256.

25. Maldonado-Torres, 256.

26. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre practices y discursos descolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2010). Her terms are "sociología de la imagen" on p. 5 and "las palabras no designan, sino encubren," on p. 19.

27. Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Aesthetics, History, and the Crisis of Meaning," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 2, no. 2 (July 2020): 4–11.

28. Stephen Best, *None like Us: Blackness, Belonging, Aesthetic Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 22–23, 59–61; Néstor García Canclini, *Art beyond Itself: Anthropology for a Society without a Story Line* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 16, quotation on 26.

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the United States after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848.[29] Chicana/os today continue to experience the coloniality of power. And understanding how the coloniality of power manifests in the art world comes clearly into focus from the viewpoint of Chicana/o artists and art historians, as from the perspectives of US Black and Indigenous creatives and scholars. Such considerations oblige us to consider what reparations might look like from these points of view.

How might greater visibility and the empowerment of artists, curators, and scholars of color change the arts world? What kind of reparations are necessary? Some of this work of change is already in progress, as we conduct research, challenge the canon of US American art, and put together new exhibitions that bring underrepresented artists to visibility. It takes place daily, as we strive to diversify the ranks of art historians and curators, as we serve on hiring committees, write job descriptions, and convince our colleagues to think differently about art and Eurocentrism. This work also manifests in our classrooms, as we adapt what we teach, and as we serve on admissions committees and offer funding to student applicants. While some of these changes are material, measurable, and quantifiable, others align with Figueroa's concept of immaterial reparations that work "toward a philosophy of decolonial love." Indeed, as we move beyond Eurocentric epistemological models and strive to increase educational access, we recognize the injustices of the past in order to offer hope and healing on individual, community, and institutional levels. As Angela Davis reminded us in 2014, "You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time."[30]

As I suggested at the beginning of this essay with my analysis of Antonio Bernal's Del Rey mural, Chicana/o artists have been engaged in this important work from the beginning of the Chicano civil rights movement in the sixties—creating art that repairs us and our community, fighting back against injustice, bringing historical wrongs to light, and envisioning more just futures. Given the nature of Chicana/o art—created as a crucial part of El Movimiento Chicano, created for and in and with our communities, and fashioned to bring injustice to light as it envisions new futures—it is not surprising that it is an art that expresses decolonial love. Frequently, artists associated with the movement worked without material gain, without recognition, without museum or gallery representation. This was an art created to better our community, not one designed to uphold mainstream arts institutions or to bring financial gain.

As my first example suggested, muralism played a central role. Chicana/o muralists took it upon themselves to visualize and present the injustices of the past and teach our histories, both of these extremely important given how the Mexican American experience has been (and continues to be) erased from the official US historical record. To paint our history, to represent our community, to make visible our politics in public murals—these were radical acts. Such murals also reclaimed our communities, asserted our rights to space, and worked to fashion the United States into our homeland.[31] Thus, Chicanx murals represented an alternative history, an alternate version of standard US histories that wrote BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) out and served to justify white supremacy and settler colonialism. *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* (1976–84), by famed Chicana muralist Judith Baca, provides a perfect example of how art tells an alternative history, in this case the history of Los Angeles and of the city's varied ethnic groups and their experiences. She highlights events from Mexican American history, such as the Zoot Suit Riots, but also shines a light on the history of Jews, Asians, Blacks, and Native Americans in the city. Murals also helped decolonize art history by valorizing artistic traditions beyond Europe, specifically the ancient Mesoamerican past, or the works of *los tres grandes*, the three great Mexican muralists, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros.[32] These visual strategies asserted the centrality

29. On the embodied subject, see Maldonado-Torres, "Metaphysical Catastrophe"; and Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience," 46–48, especially the discussion of Waman Puma de Ayala and Ottabah Cugoano (also known as John Stuart) and their texts, *Nueva Coronica y Buen Gobierno* (New Chronicle and Good Government, 1616) and *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (1787), respectively, which offer us the voices and experiences of the colonized, Fanon's *damné*. On Chicana/o history, see Michael Soldatenko, *Chicano Studies: The Genesis of a Discipline* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009).

30. Angela Davis, lecture, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, February 13, 2014, https://feministquotes.tumblr.com/post/95083679660/you-have-to-act-as-if-it-were-possible-to.

31. This is one of the most important contributions of Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008). The issue of Chicana/o claims to space or land necessarily brings up settler colonialism, a topic that merits further discussion.

32. Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*.

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FIGURE 3. Judithe Hernández with Carlos Almaraz, *Homenaje a las mujeres de Aztlán*, 1977 (restored 2016), mural, acrylic, 16 x 26 feet (4.9 x 7.9 m). Ramona Gardens, East Los Angeles (photograph provided by the artist)

of indigeneity to Chicanx identity, as we saw in the example of Bernal's mural.

Other murals commemorated the historical past, such as Judithe Hernández's *Homenaje a las mujeres de Aztlán*, created in 1977 at Ramona Gardens in East Los Angeles (fig. 3).[33] Here Hernández brings to view women's roles in the Mexican Revolution, in ancient Aztec culture, in the colonial era, in the farmworkers' movement, and in the Chicano movement. The mural's text, in Spanish and English, pays homage to the daughters, mothers, and grandmothers of Aztlan, probably the first time that the concepts of the Chicano homeland and Chicana/Mexicana/Aztec women were brought together.[34] In a related vein, David Botello's *Dreams of Flight* (1973–74, restored in 1996) in Boyle Heights envisioned a happy future for our community's children, in a mural intended as inspiration for the families of Estrada Courts, the public housing project where it is located (fig. 4).[35] The central focus is a child gliding on a tire swing. In 1996, in response to feminist critiques of the Chicano movement, Botello amended the mural, remaking the main figure of a boy into a girl. The title at the bottom, "Dreams of Flight," as well as the varied depictions of flight throughout the mural, point to hope for the community: dreams for our children's futures.

FIGURE 4. David Botello, *Dreams of Flight* (detail), 1973–74, revised and restored 1996, mural, acrylic, approx. 24 x 32 feet (7 x 10 m). Estrada Courts, East Los Angeles (photograph courtesy of Richard Puchalsky)

A number of murals focused on current and ongoing injustices. An early example dating from 1974, *The Sacrifice Wall*, was created by Charles "Cat" Felix with young men from the Varrio Nueva Estrada (VNE) gang at

33. Holly Barnet-Sanchez and Tim Drescher, *Give Me Life: Iconography and Identity in East LA Murals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 168–73.

34. Barnet-Sanchez and Drescher, *Give Me Life*.

35. Barnet-Sanchez and Drescher, 92–98.

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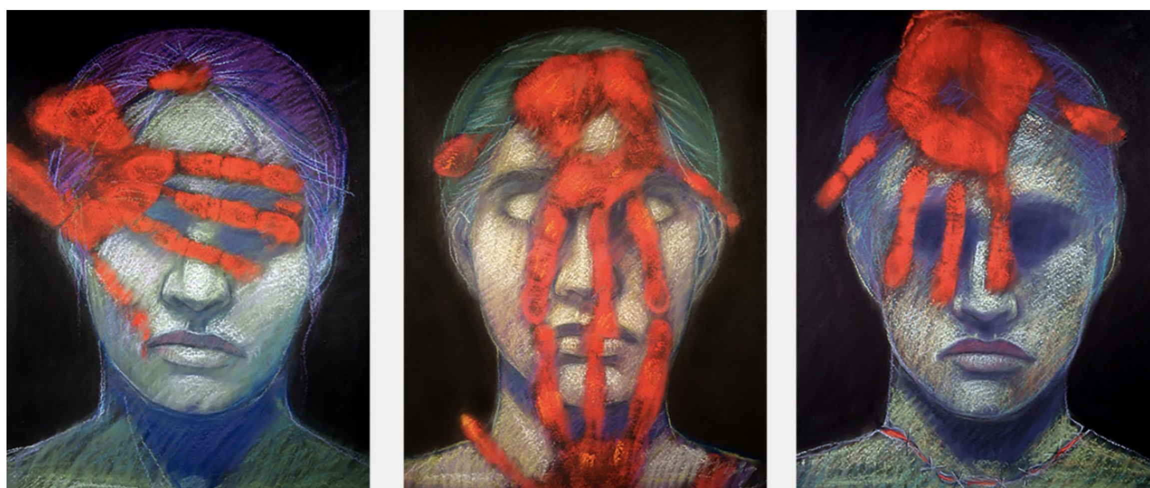

FIGURE 5. Judithe Hernández, *The Weight of Silence*, 2008, pastel mixed media on paper, 30 x 44 in. (76.2 x 111.8 cm) (photograph provided by the artist)

Estrada Courts. Based on ancient Mesoamerican imagery in a ball-court relief sculpture from El Tajín, Veracruz, the mural paid homage to ancient Indigenous warriors as it reflected on violence in the neighborhood at the time: the disproportionate number of young Chicano men dying in the Vietnam War, deaths due to gang violence, and the reality of police harassment.[36] Also located at Estrada Courts, on Olympic Boulevard, *The Black and White Mural* (also known as the *Moratorium Mural*, 1973–78), created by Willie Herrón and Gronk, painted the tensions and conflicts between the Chicano community and the police. Executed in black and white in a filmic composition, the mural represents police violence in response to Chicano movement activism, highlighting the 1968 Blowouts and the Chicano Moratorium March against the Vietnam War of August 29, 1970. Scenes of armed soldiers, chaos, police brutality, a close-up of a screaming face—all bring the experience of the Chicanx community into visibility.

Other artists have focused on the violent past, boldly rendering censored histories. Judithe Hernández's series on the murders of women in Juárez (1993 to the present) comes to mind (fig. 5). These stunning pastels commemorate and honor the women victims of feminicide (*feminicidio*) along the US-Mexico border of Juárez and El Paso.[37] They were created in response to the lack of local news coverage of these events. Hernández's works

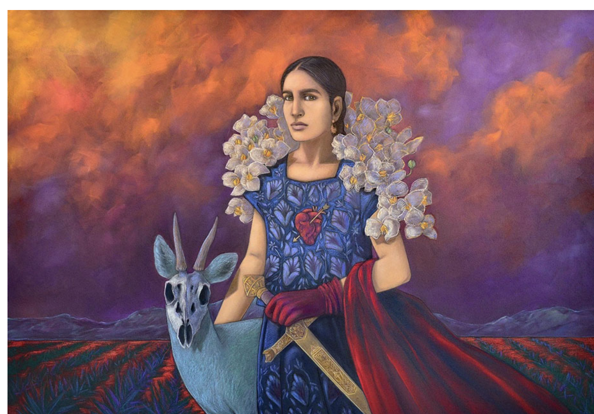

FIGURE 6. Judithe Hernández, *Unconquered*, 2021, pastel on paper, 30 x 44 in. (76.2 x 111.8 cm) (photograph provided by the artist)

contextualize the violence, suggesting that it results from dehumanizing attitudes toward women imposed by Spanish colonizers along with European racism toward Indigenous women. Her most recent series of work, begun in 2021, is focused on women and colonization in Mexico, another important but invisibilized history. The first image she created in the series is entitled *Unconquered* (2021) (fig. 6). About this new work, she writes, "As an artist, it offers me the opportunity to visually examine the political and philosophical issues of this catastrophic event and the repercussions of the savage expropriation of the Western Hemisphere that continue to impact the descendants of indigenous people to the present day."[38]

36. Barnet-Sanchez and Drescher, 60–77.

37. For the series, see the artist's website: www.judithehernandez.com/juarez-series.

38. For the series and the quote from the artist, see www.judithehernandez.com/colonization-series.

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This is a decolonial act and one that enables art to articulate decolonial love, reparations, and hope for the future.

In a related vein, Chicana *indígena* artist Linda Vallejo challenges Eurocentric beauty standards and the Western canon of art history in recent works from her *Make 'Em All Mexican* series (*MEAM*, 2010–19). Here, Vallejo appropriates various cultural and art historical icons, including the Mona Lisa, Venus, Marilyn Monroe, Caravaggio's painting of *Bacchus*, and Grant Wood's *American Gothic* painting of 1930, and renders the characters as Brown, Chicana/o, or Latina/o.[39] In the process, she reveals structural racism in the West as she proposes a new, more just, inclusive, and representative future for Latina/os and Chicana/os in the United States.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This brief commentary introduces some of my thoughts on the potential of art as decolonial love to change the world. Inspired by important theorists as well as art historians engaged in the work of decolonizing art history,[40] I attempted here to center the significance and particular potential of the visual arts in this project, focus our attention on the radical and transformative capacity of love, and outline the ways in which I believe Chicana/o artists and other artists of color were and already are engaged in this work. Through my opening example of the first Chicano mural in 1968, I demonstrated how art from the earliest years of the Chicano movement suggested the importance of cooperative activism, centered cultural pride, and promoted gender equality—strategies that visualized effective paths forward to a better future for our communities.[41] Bernal's mural thus represents an early formulation of decolonial love in Chicanx art. As my various other examples have suggested, Chicana/o artists have continued to foreground the importance of activism as a strategy to ensure more just futures. By visualizing the Chicanx community's dreams and aspirations, their works offered hope and reparation to communities struggling against current coloniality. My thoughts here, even though preliminary, are intended to inspire dialogue. These conversations can help us rethink, theorize further, and support the goals of decolonizing our world as we acknowledge the role of the arts in visualizing new futures. En lucha.

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39. For the series, see https://lindavallejo.com/artworks/mixed-media/make-em-all-mexican/.

40. See, for example, Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*; Guisela Latorre, "Icons of Love and Devotion: Alma López's Art," *Feminist Studies* 34, nos. 1–2 (Spring-Summer 2008): 131–50; Kency Cornejo, "Decolonial Futurisms: Ancestral Border Crossers, Time Machines, and Space Travel in Salvadoran Art," in *Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas*, exh. cat. (Riverside: UCR ARTSblock, University of California, 2017), 20–31; Tatiana Flores, "'Latinidad Is Cancelled': Confronting an Anti-Black Construct," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 3, no. 3 (2021): 58–79; and Ananda Cohen-Aponte, "Decolonizing the Global Renaissance: A View from the Andes," in *The Globalization of Renaissance Art: A Critical Review*, ed. Daniel Savoy (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 67–94.

41. UCLA doctoral student Gabriela Rodríguez-Gómez has written on the importance of futurity in Chicano muralism, employing the concept of Xicana Futurism, based on Catherine S. Ramírez, "Deus ex Machina: Tradition, Technology and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martínez," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 77–78. See Gabriela Rodríguez-Gómez, "Chican@ Time Warp: The Enduring Legacies of Chicano Muralism Displayed in Guillermo "Yermo" Aranda's and Los Toltecas en Aztlán's *La Dualidad* (The Duality) Mural" (master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2019).

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