

To Marisela Martinez-Cola

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Mestizaje:

Latin American Art and the Development of Identity

Virtual Exhibition

Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art

January to May 2023

Curated by Samantha Castro

Thank you Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art for sponsoring this exhibition.



Please scan the QR code for a link to the virtual exhibition.

Mestizaje: Latin American Art and the Development of Identity



Samantha Castro is a student of Art+Design at Utah State University. She hopes to earn her Bachelor's degree with an emphasis in Drawing and Painting and a minor in Sociology. Her work primarily focuses on Chicano experiences. Her recent research into Latin America has inspired her virtual exhibition on identity as an ever-changing construct.

This exhibition follows the development of identity across numerous Latin American cultures by presenting works with themes of identity in self-labeling or metaphor. The colonization of Latin America in the 16th century led to much of the population being considered "mixed-race." Because of this broad grouping, more distinct labels for one's identity would arise. Like the colonial era's mestizo, the post-independence era's national terms, and the postmodern Chicano or Latinx, these labels all encompass identities that may be claimed by not just the artists featured but by numerous people with ties to Latin America today.

In analyzing the selected works, the viewers will notice that overlap and inconsistencies can and will be present. This ties in with the idea that social identities, as they relate to race, ethnicity, and nationality in this case, are fluid and constructed. Moreover, the artists will display or claim fluid identities if they feel they represent them best. Not only will the works address the indigenous roots of many of these identities (influenced either by historical fetishization or erasure), but they will also push visitors to analyze the European settlers' recognition of previous identities in the post-colonial period, and explore how these labels have influenced Latin Americans that claim an exclusively European descent, those same that claim national identity before race.

Head of King Pakal

Unknown

stucco

c. 650-83



Found in his tomb, this portrait depicts the Maya king K'inch Janaab' Pakal, who ruled over the city-state of Palenque during its peak. He has exaggerated features like his oval face, high cheekbones, and long nose. His hair resembles corn silk, associating him with the Maya maize god. It was thought that after his death, the tomb was open for worship. This portrait is a display of ideals tied to a ruler who was idolized and a role model, increasing pride in a Palenque and Maya identity. This is further stressed in being represented through the ruler, "Pakal the Great."

"Casta Painting"

Luis de Mena

Oil on canvas

1750



This *casta* painting, a genre of art depicting the New World's racial diversity and hierarchy, displays, in descending order, two registers made up of racially mixed families. Unique to this work is the added element of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the top center, as *casta* paintings were largely secular. This inclusion is thought to have pushed the idea that even the most divine figure in the New World celebrates her mixed children, communicating a sense of pride, while still maintaining social order based on how racial identity was understood.

Portrait of Simon Bolivar

Jose Gil de Castro

Oil on canvas

1830



This work depicts the military general, Simon Bolívar, who led a revolt against Spain for Peru's independence. The top red banner reads, "Peru recalls the heroic deeds revered to its Liberator." The word "liberator" is included in the bottom left inscription as well, and the inclusion of the globe in the background communicates Bolívar's worldly ambition. In possibly depicting the New World-born Spaniard with darker skin, this heroic portrait presents the idea that even a mixed man should have pride in being a liberator for his nation.

The Martyr Olaya

Jose Gil de Castro

Oil on canvas

1823



This is a portrait of José Silverio Olaya Balandra, who became a secret messenger for the Patriots in the Peruvian War of Independence against Spain. Olaya is placed in a setting mixing the Andes' Peruvian region and Olaya's hometown, as is seen by the cliffs. The red banner above him reads, "The patriot Don José Olaya served his country gloriously and honored his birthplace," while the bottom left description shares his sacrifice to the viewer. Gil de Castro is communicating that the heroic sacrifice of this mixed-race common man is one all Peruvians can find pride in.

America

Pedro Patino Ixtolinque

Marble

1830



America is an allegorical personification of the Western Hemisphere, represented as a midwife wearing a Tupinambá headdress, a belt decorated with the Aztec sun deity Tonatiuh, a Greek chiton with a band of valuable Aztec green stone, and a cloak with the frieze of the Oaxaca palace of Mithila. In personifying America as a European woman with indigenous elements in her attire, Ixtolinque aimed to represent a land with a large mixed population as a prideful identity to the Old World. But because it was viewed as *costumbrismo*, the documentation of everyday Hispanic customs, it was devoid of its original intent.

Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru

Francisco Laso

Oil on canvas

1855



This work, displayed at the 1855 World's Fair in Paris shows an Indian man facing the viewer and holding a Mochica ceramic portrait jar in his hands. The ceramic figure's hands are tied behind his back, and a rope is tied around his neck. The work touches on the identity of indigenous Peruvians. However, French critics saw the ceramic piece as made by the subject. The idea of identity was crucial for the work to be understood, but European society failed to acknowledge the existence of indigenous people and their culture, resulting in the erasure of an identity affected by colonial oppression.

The Jungle

Wilfredo Lam

Gouache on paper

1943



Lam was a Cuban artist of mixed Chinese, European, Indian, and African descent who painted this work of a tropical terrain with stems resembling sugarcane. There are four figures with mixed human and animal elements resembling African masks or Chinese motifs, and the far right figure holds a tool for harvesting. In making the connection between African people, and possibly Chinese laborers, to enslavement, Lam includes elements of himself regarding the oppression of his multicultural identity through the trapping terrain.

Indian Theme: Flagellation II

Oswaldo Guayasamin

Oil on canvas

1948



This painting shows a figural representation of a kneeling black figure with red slashes on his back next to two weeping women on both his sides against a red background. The government-funded series this work was a part of strove to represent a unified national identity. But in paralleling Christianity's Passion of Christ, in which Jesus Christ was tied to a column while being flayed with a whip, Guayasamin dove into the acknowledgment of indigenous oppression, stating "Our continent's power, and especially that of Ecuador, comes from the Indian, who continues to be the cement, the structure of our nationality."

Ball Game

Gustavo Artigas

Conceptual

2007



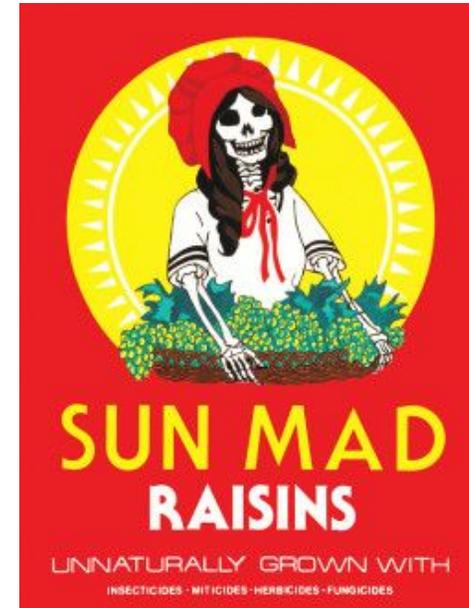
In this work, a basketball hoop's net is removed, and the hoop is secured vertically onto a wall or sports ground. When playing, one cannot use their hands like in basketball, taking inspiration from an ancient Maya ball game. To form a community, this work was placed in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood in Chicago, offering an exchange between Latin American and US-American cultures. It displays identity as fluid, and as a result, intersectional, as many Latin Americans may claim a country through culture, despite being born elsewhere.

Sun Mad

Ester Hernandez

Screenprint

1982



This poster closely resembles the packaging of Sun-Maid Raisins, sporting its bright red background and yellow disk. In the place of the maiden is a skeleton wearing her bonnet. The text is also changed, stating that the product has been grown with toxic and harmful chemicals like insecticides, miticides, herbicides, and fungicides. The Chicano movement was politically, culturally, and socially driven alongside the fight for fair treatment in labor, education, politics, and housing. This work was considered necessary in its art movement, as it not only embodied protest but also covered a matter familiar to Chicanos fighting for safety and equal opportunity workplace.