

OSCILLATION

THE CHANGING VIEW OF

SELF

Dedicated...

to Jon,

*who understands
that sometimes the answer
is a hug in the parking lot,
and sometimes it's also chocolate...*

you're my lobster;

and to

Alex, Elise, Taysum, and Mary,

*so that some day,
when you're unpacking generational
trauma with your therapist,
at least you can say,
"She did dedicate a museum
exhibition to me one time, though...
so, we're cool."*



OSCILLATION

THE CHANGING VIEW OF

SELF

VIRTUAL EXHIBITION
NORA ECCLES HARRISON
MUSEUM OF ART
SPRING 2023

Curated by
Amanda Mortensen

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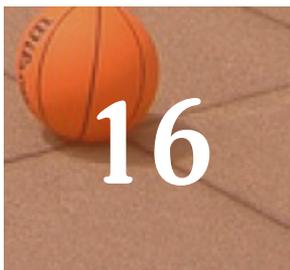
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About the Museum

The Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art was founded in 1982. Since that time, our collection of primarily 20th- and 21st-century art has grown to over 5,000. At NEHMA, we utilize these works of modern and contemporary art to cultivate learning and conversation about ideas that matter to the people of Utah and to Utah State University.

NORA ECCLES HARRISON MUSEUM





About the Curator

Amanda Mortensen is returning student studying art at Utah State University. She has a deep love of learning and unapologetically spends hours exploring historical rabbit-holes. During her travels through Central America, Mortensen developed a deep love of Latin American culture. This exhibit was inspired by her interest in genealogy, ancient cultures, and her personal endeavors to recognize and deconstruct ingrained and systemic colonial narratives still pervasive in today's society.

“I feel myself ever more Brazilian. I want to be the painter of my country. How grateful I am for having spent all my childhood on the farm. The memories of these times have become precious for me. I want, in art, to be the little girl from São Bernardo, playing with straw dolls, like in the last picture I am working on...”

—Tarsila do Amaral



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

OSCILLATION

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OSCILLATION: THE CHANGING VIEW OF SELF

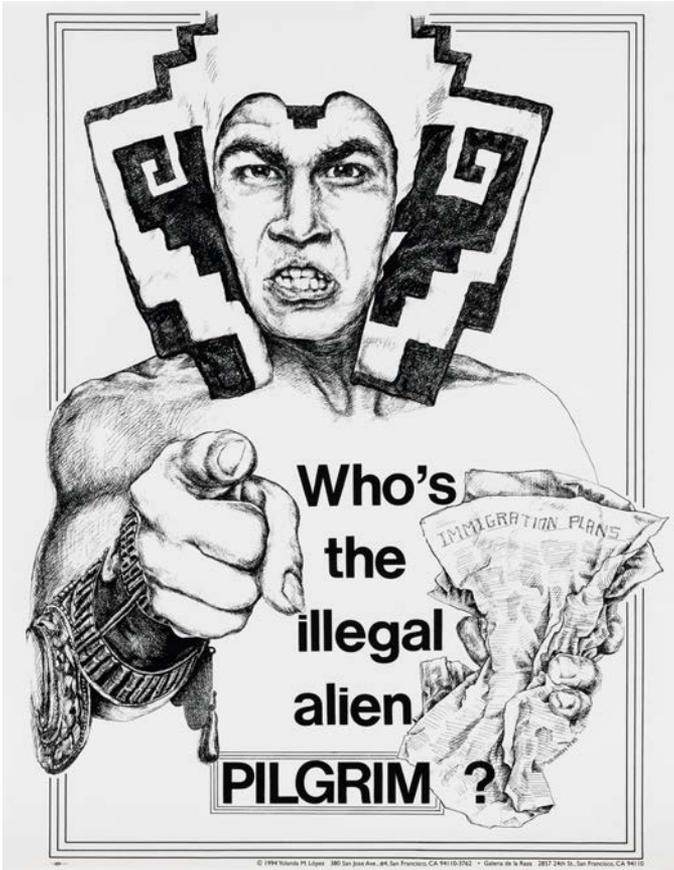
explores the shifts in the way the Indigenous peoples of Latin America viewed themselves from ancient times to the present. Consider for a moment the disconnect many European Americans feel with regard to cultural heritage as a result of the traditions that were given up upon entrance into the United States in order to be accepted into society. How much greater, then, is that disconnect for those whose were deprived of their heritage by conquistadors and tyrants? Additionally, the exhibition examines the impacts of Latin Americans' search for native identity.

—Amanda Mortensen, Curator

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Yolanda López

Who's the illegal alien, PILGRIM?

1978

Offset lithograph on paper

Yolanda López created *Who's the illegal alien, PILGRIM?* in response to then-President Jimmy Carter's Immigration Plan. Her work depicts an Aztec warrior mimics the stylings of James Montgomery Flagg's Army recruitment posters featuring Uncle Sam. In similar fashion, the warrior points a finger and engages in direct eye contact with the viewer, asking,

"Who's the illegal alien, PILGRIM?"

By breaking the fourth wall and engaging directly with the viewer, López implicates them in society's treatment of immigrants. By addressing the audience as "pilgrims," she calls into question their right to call anyone out as "illegal aliens" since the first European settlers to arrive were "illegal aliens" themselves.



Olmec Ruler (Head 5)

1500-900 BCE; San Lorenzo

Basalt

The Olmec Ruler Heads are prominent figures throughout four archeological sites along the Gulf of Mexico. These carvings vary in size from nearly four feet to just over eleven feet tall. Artisans used enormous basalt boulders to sculpt the representations. Each head is very different, which leads scholars to believe they are portraits.

Perhaps it is more accurate to disting-

uish that they are *ruler* portraits. The Olmecs, as well as Latin American civilizations to come, utilized a technique favored by pharaohs and emperors alike throughout history: stylization. The highly stylized sculptures reflect qualities of the leaders. They are depictions of how leaders wished to be perceived which coincide with desirable leadership characteristics of the day.



Luis de Mena
Casta Painting
 1750; Mexico
 Oil on canvas

During the Colonial Period, *casta* paintings were a New World export popular among the European aristocracy. The white Europeans, or *peninsulares*, who settled the New World intermarried with each other and with Indigenous peoples. Naturally, this mixed race of *mestizos* became the largest population. *Casta* paintings served to alleviate anxieties of European aristocrats regarding status in the New World.

These fetishizations manifested in oil

paintings were in no way a reflection of the reality of society in the New World. Wealth and status were not the same as the Old World; plenty of *peninsulares*—individuals born in Spain and settled in the New World—were poor. Similarly, there were *mestizos*—individuals of mixed European and Indigenous descent—and even Indigenous peoples who were wealthy. Having the appearance of wealth and well-being was incredibly desirable among European aristocrats.



Luis de Mena

Simon the Sailor/O Retrato do Intrépido Marinheiro Simão, Carvoeiro do Vapor Pernambucana

1855; Peru

Oil on canvas

Post-revolution, Latin American art was saturated with costumbrismo—precise representations of the appearance and customs of People of Color, particularly Indigenous peoples. These minutely detailed renderings lacked any of the humanity of the subject, leading to Romanticized perceptions of Indigenous peoples and other People of Color. The subject of the painting was little more than a display for the artist’s meticulous portrayal of dress. Works of the day tended toward European features painted with brown skin and clothed in cultural costume.

With *Portrait of the intrepid sailor Simão, collier of the steamboat Pernambuco*, also known as *Intrepid Mariner Simão* or simply *Simon the Sailor*, we can see that Lima was making an attempt to rectify the lack of diversity in the art world, especially concerning representations of Indigenous peoples. Within the art academies, it was the first of its kind. However, it lacks the depth of who Simão was as a person. Despite Lima’s best efforts, he only achieved a costumbrismo portrait of a popular contemporary figure wearing Indigenous dress.



Frida Kahlo

The Two Fridas

1939; Mexico

Oil on canvas

Frida Kahlo's painting *The Two Fridas* is evocative of the dualities of being a modern woman living within traditional society. The painting depicts Kahlo's perception of her two identities: European and *Mestizo*. European Frida wears dress typically associated with Victorian elites. Beside her, holding her hand, *Mestizo* Frida is wears traditional Tehuana costume.

The storm-filled sky behind the figures generates the sensation of agitation indicative of her inner turmoil at the time. Kahlo completed *The Two Fridas* after

ending her tumultuous marriage with Diego Rivera. Her heartbreak is reflected in the visibly torn open heart of European Frida. The visibly whole heart of *Mestizo* Frida may be an acknowledgement of reliance on the heretofore unknown well of strength within stemming from her Latin American heritage.



Marcos Cipac de Aquino *La Virgen de Guadalupe*

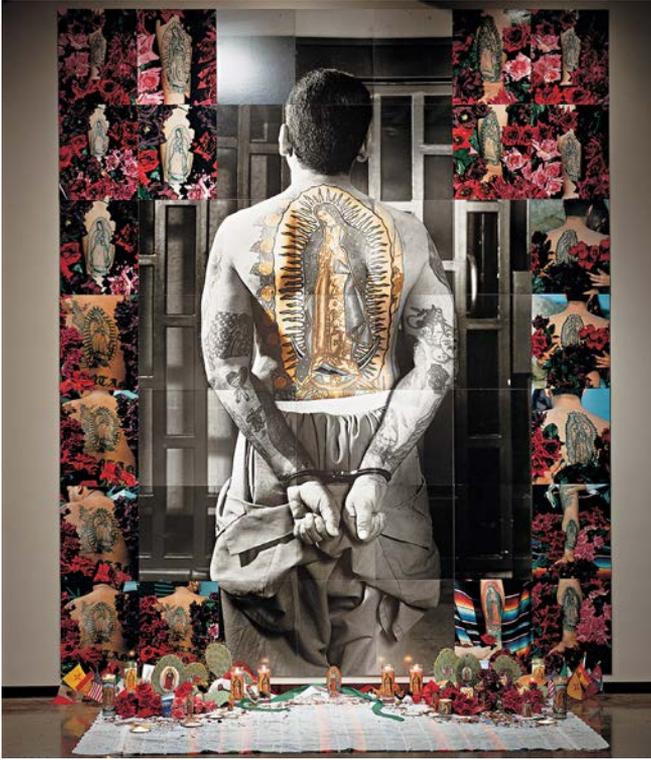
16th century; Mexico

Oil on canvas

The image of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is a paradoxical one. Originating as a miraculous image with a cult following, she was simultaneously utilized by colonizers as a means to exert control. *La Virgen de Guadalupe's* appearance was seen as evidence of God's will to end paganism, thereby providing justification for conquest, subjugation, and brutality as a form of punishment for the natives' idolatrous ways.

In spite of her appropriation by European colonists, however, *La Virgen de*

Guadalupe has been embraced by Latin Americans as a symbol of their culture. She represents the very first time in history an Aztec saw the Virgin Mary with coloring and features like their own. She is even seen as the re-embodiment of Tonantzin, the Aztec goddess of the earth and moon. Her image is believed to provide protection from harm and empowerment in times of conflict.



Delilah Montoya *La Guadalupeana*

1999

Mixed media mural installation

Delilah Montoya was asked to create an installation for the Musée de Beaux-Arts Denys-Puech in Rodez, France that would acknowledge the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe in some way. She pondered the significance of a colonial image being sent into Europe and what that would mean for the people who had been colonized. She decided to utilize the cultural icon as a metaphor for the “captivity, oppression, and servitude” of colonialism.

The subject, Félix Martínez, had been wrongfully incarcerated for a drive-by

shooting in the hopes that he would identify the guilty party. After the photo was taken, Martínez was murdered in his jail cell, likely by members of his own gang. Montoya reflected, “The image effectively channels the sacred and the profane, and transforms the physical space of the prison cell into a sacred space and the body (of Martínez) into an ofrenda or an altar. In this instance, the pairing relationship of saint and sinner has the capacity to transform the viewer before the image into the penitent.”



Gustavo Artigas

Ball Game

2007

Installation

Ball Game is a conceptual installation commissioned by Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. Gustavo Artigas worked in collaboration with the Resurrection Basketball League of Southwest-Side Chicago. Artigas' goal was to give his audience a new perception of the inner-city while avoiding common stereotypes.

Artigas rotated a basketball hoop on its vertical axis, transforming the game into something reminiscent of ancient Aztec tradition. Latino youth from the inner-city worked together in the game to achieve

their goal. Elements of the past and present came together in a representation of positive social change and empowerment in defiance of marginalization.



Tarsila do Amaral

Anthropophagy/Antropofagia

1929; Brazil

Oil on canvas

Tarsila do Amaral was a prominent figure in Brazilian Modernism and nationalistic art. After finding her unique style, she wrote in a letter to her family, “I feel myself ever more Brazilian. I want to be the painter of my country...I want, in art, to be the little girl from São Bernardo, playing with straw dolls....”

Amaral was inspired by husband Oswald de Andrade’s Anthropophagite Manifesto, in which he called for the almost cannibalistic devouring of European influences while embracing Brazil’s culture and

unique style. Her painting, *Anthropophagy*, depicts figures from two of her other celebrated works: the male subject of *Abaporu*, and the female subject of *A Negra*. The two figures sit intertwined amidst a lush tropical landscape.



Enrique Chagoya *Codex Canibalius Insulae* 1994

Mixed media on paper

Before there was the printing press, there was the codex. A codex is an ancient technology developed simultaneously by the Mayans in Mesoamerica and the Romans in Europe. When conquistadors arrived in the New World, they burned many codices as a means of exerting control.

For his *Codex Canibalius Insulae* installation, Enrique Chagoya juxtaposed imagery from Mayan and Aztec civilizations alongside sixteenth-century casta paintings, comics, and his own sketches. It is a visual cacophony coalescing into a commentary on the disparate realities the artist has faced during his life and how those realities inform one another.



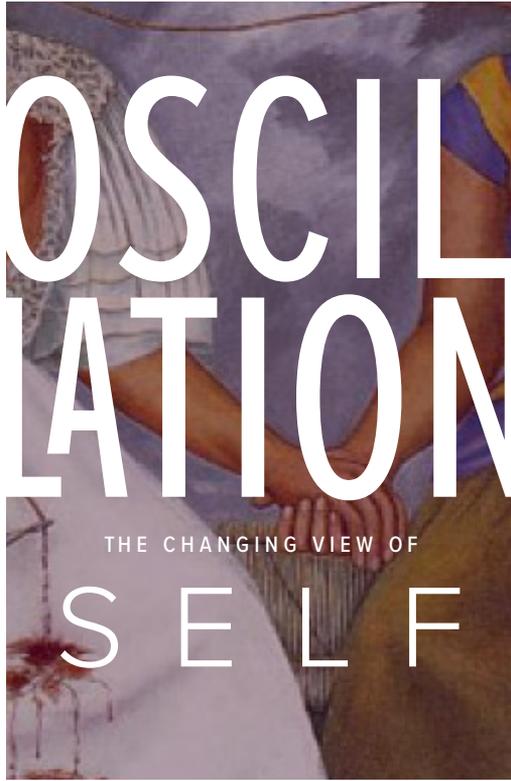
Acknowledgements

Many thanks to NEHMA for their generous support, and for giving me this opportunity to share my exhibition. I appreciate them for providing space for students to have hands-on experience as curators.

I would like to thank Professor Álvaro Ibarra and express my gratitude for his guidance, feedback, and recommendations—and most especially—his kindness and patience throughout the process of curating this exhibition.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Department of Art + Design at Utah State University for creating the culture of knowledge and experience that made this exhibition possible.





Oscillation: the Changing View of Self examines the variety of ways Latin Americans viewed and portrayed themselves by contrasting works of art from Pre-Columbia to the present. This exhibition challenges the viewer to recognize Colonial perspectives that still exist today.

Viewers are invited consider the impacts of lost, abandoned or appropriated culture and to contemplate the similarities as well as the differences between Americans of European descent and Latin Americans regarding loss or recovery of native identity, heritage and ancestral culture.

This virtual exhibition is sponsored by the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art and the Department of Art + Design, Utah State University, Logan Utah.

Virtual Exhibition Hub on display Spring 2023 at NEHMA. Free to the public.