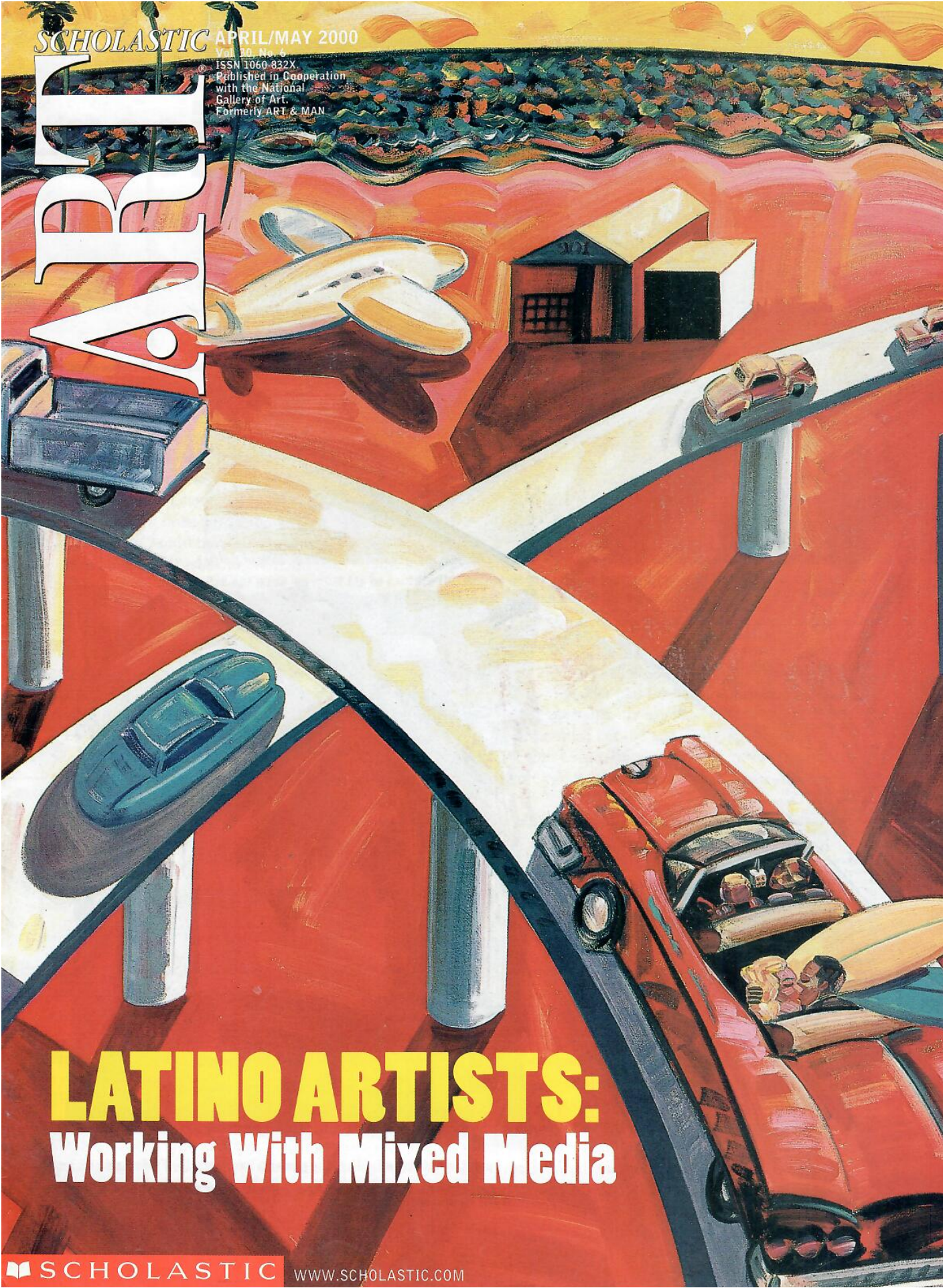


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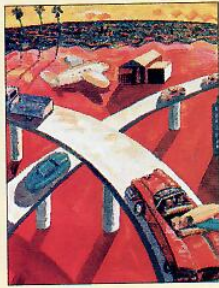
Vol. 10, No. 6  
ISSN 1060-832X  
Published in Cooperation  
with the National  
Gallery of Art.  
Formerly ART & MAN

# ART



## LATINO ARTISTS: Working With Mixed Media





**COVER:** Frank Romero, b. 1941.  
*Crossroads* (detail), mixed media on canvas,  
72" x 96". Private Collection.

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**POSTAL INFORMATION**

Scholastic Art® (ISSN 1060-832X; in Canada, 2-c no. 9360) is  
published six times during the school year, Sept./Oct., Nov.,  
Dec./Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr./May, by Scholastic Inc. Office of  
Publication: 2931 E. McCarty Street, RD. Box 3710, Jefferson  
City, MO 65102-3710. Periodical postage paid at Jefferson City,  
MO 65101 and at additional offices. Postmasters: Send notice of  
address changes to SCHOLASTIC ART, 2931 East McCarty St.  
RD. Box 3710 Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710.

**PUBLISHING INFORMATION**

U.S. prices: \$8.50 each per school year, for 10 or more subscriptions  
to the same address. 1-9 subscriptions, each: \$19.25 student,  
\$34.25 Teacher's Edition, per school year. Single copy: \$5.50 student,  
\$6.50 Teacher's. (For Canadian pricing, write our Canadian  
office, address below.) Subscription communications should be  
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McCarty Street, RD. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710 or  
by calling 1-800-631-1586. Communications relating to  
editorial matter should be addressed to Margaret Howlett,  
SCHOLASTIC ART, 555 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012-3999.  
Art@Scholastic.com. Canadian address: Scholastic-TAB  
Publications, Ltd., 123 Newkirk Rd., Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C  
3G5. Available on microfilm through Xerox University Microfilms,  
Inc. 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Also available on micro-  
fiche through Bell & Howell Micro Photo Division, Old Mansfield Rd.,  
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# Mexican

# PIONEER

As you've seen from our cover, this last issue of the year is on Latino art. Just what is Latino art? What makes it different, and why would people who are not Latino be interested in it?

Like everyone in the United States, people grouped together

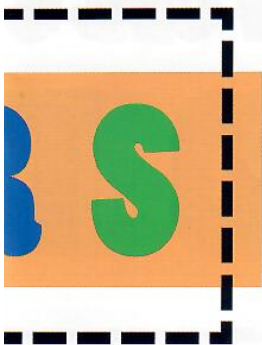
under the category of Latino are all highly individual. Latino could refer to someone of Mexican descent whose family has lived in Texas or California for generations. Or it could mean a person who just recently arrived from Cuba. Usually, the term includes those who have



**"I paint myself because I am the person I know best."—Frida Kahlo**

Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait as a Tehuana (Diego on my Mind)*, 1943. Oil on canvas, 24 3/4" x 32 1/8". Private Collection, Mexico City.





**“In our work we must try to capture the energy of the ancient Indian settlers of our country—the Mayas, the Incas, and the Aztecs.”—David Alfaro Siqueiros**

David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974). *Self-portrait*, 1945. Proxylite on masonite, 36" x 47 5/8". National Art Museum, Mexico City.

come from or are descendants of people who have emigrated from Spanish-speaking countries in the Americas. These countries include Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Central and South America.

The first modern artists from a Hispanic country in

famous for the personal and highly emotional images she was creating. Her paintings, like *Diego on My Mind* (left), a self-portrait with an image of Rivera on her forehead, recorded her life and her tempestuous relationship with Diego. Kahlo is dressed in the ceremonial headdress of a Mexican *tehuana* (te-WAN-na), or bride.

**“For the first time in history, Mexican mural painting has made the people the heroes of great art.”—DIEGO RIVERA**

the Western Hemisphere whose art attracted worldwide attention were the painters known as the *Mexican muralists*. At the beginning of the 20th century, Mexico went through a political and social revolution. In the early 1920s, the new government began to commission a number of huge frescos to celebrate its achievements. The best known of the Mexican muralists, Diego Rivera (1886-1956), filled the walls of public buildings in Mexico and the United States with enormous murals praising social revolution. At the same time Rivera's wife, Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, was becoming

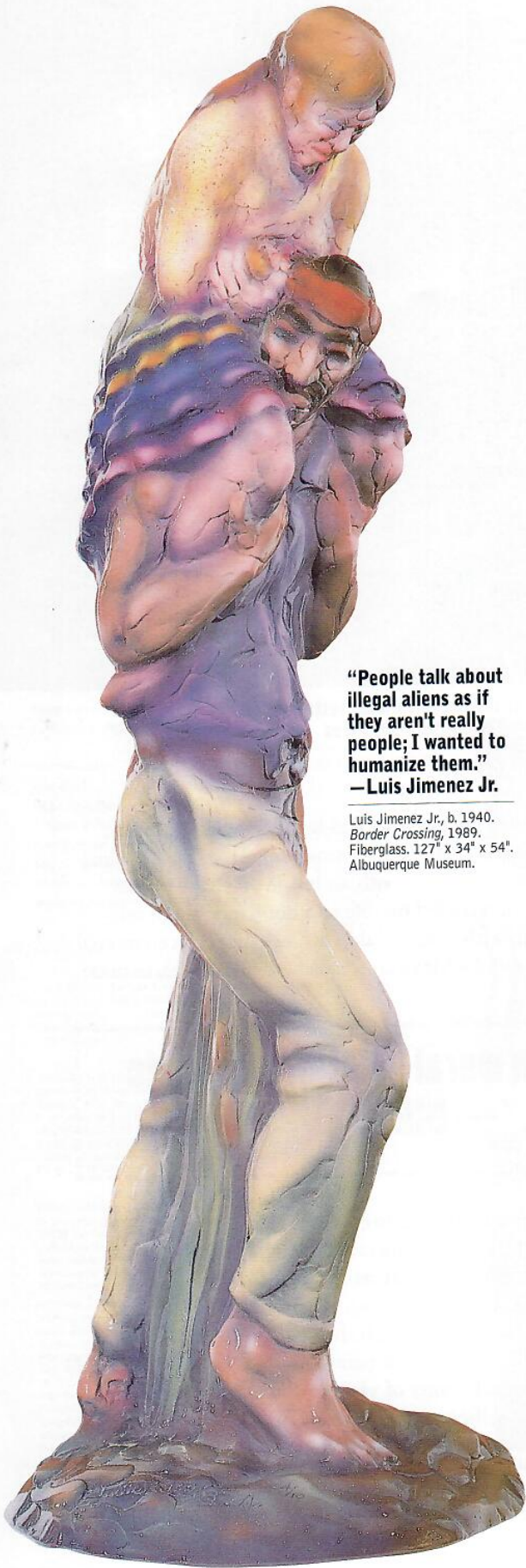
The tendrils growing from the flowers she wears symbolize the artist's connection to the rest of the world.

Another Mexican artist of the period, David Siqueiros (See-KWER-os), also expressed his revolutionary messages through the large political images he painted. He used **thick paint, slashing brushstrokes, and unusual points of view** to produce pictures like the dramatic self-portrait (above). The powerful and emotional images created by these three Mexican artists greatly influenced the art of most of the Latino—or Hispanic—artists who followed.



# Voice

## PROT



**“People talk about illegal aliens as if they aren't really people; I wanted to humanize them.”  
—Luis Jimenez Jr.**

Luis Jimenez Jr., b. 1940.  
*Border Crossing*, 1989.  
Fiberglass. 127" x 34" x 54".  
Albuquerque Museum.

Like Rivera and Siqueiros, many Latino artists today create art for the purpose of bringing about social change. In California in the mid-1960s, Mexican-Americans began a struggle for civil rights. Due to dangerous working conditions, political activist César Chavez organized a farm workers' strike against grape growers. Many artists, like Ester Hernández, created art designed to call attention to this situation. The poster *Sun Mad* (center, right) is a takeoff on *Sun Maid* raisins. The woman on the package has become a skeleton, a victim of the pesticides that affect crop gatherers who are frequently Latino.

Women's rights was another important issue in Hispanic communities. In *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe*

**“Social changes haven't come about because people are willing to go along with the old situation.”**

**—LUIS JIMENEZ JR.**

(top, right), Yolanda López has taken a traditional religious icon and presented her as a contemporary Chicana\* athlete, jogging out of her halo. Like the religious figure on which she is based, she wears a cloak of stars, a sun-ray body halo, and carries a snake which stands for wisdom.

Luis Jimenez Jr. creates sculptures that comment on discrimination. He feels that “Mexicans don't really accept Chicanos. They see us as traitors. And Anglo-Americans don't quite accept Chicanos either. We stand outside of both cultures.” Jimenez was born in Texas, but his parents came from Mexico. His father owned a neon-sign company, so by the time he was a teenager, Jimenez could weld, spray-paint, and blow glass. The enormous, shiny, textured fiberglass sculptures he creates and spray-paints in bright, garish, clashing colors were inspired by the neon signs

\*“A Mexican-American with a non-Anglo self image.”—Journalist Ruben Salazar, 1970



# s of EST

of the western landscape. *Border Crossing* (left) is one of the artist's large public commissions. The sculpture refers to illegal aliens crossing the Rio Bravo (the Mexican name for the river between Texas and Mexico). According to the artist, "This sight was common in El Paso when I was a kid. The men would carry the women and children across the river. When I dedicated this work to my dad, he said, 'You know I was never an illegal alien. I just never had my papers straight.'"

While many Mexican-American artists are protesting injustice on the West Coast of the U.S., other groups of Latino artists are creating their own political art on the East Coast. Juan Sánchez, an African-Puerto Rican artist who lives in New York City, creates powerful statements about Puerto Rico, the U.S. island from which his parents emigrated. He calls his mixed-media pieces "Rican/structions." In them the artist restructures reality by painting it, photographing it, writing about it, then tearing it all up and **rearranging** it. *Mixed Statement* (below) is about violence suffered by Puerto Rican nationalists in the United States. At the top of the work, a Puerto Rican flag is ripped in two; the same flag either protects or smothers the men in the photos at the bottom.

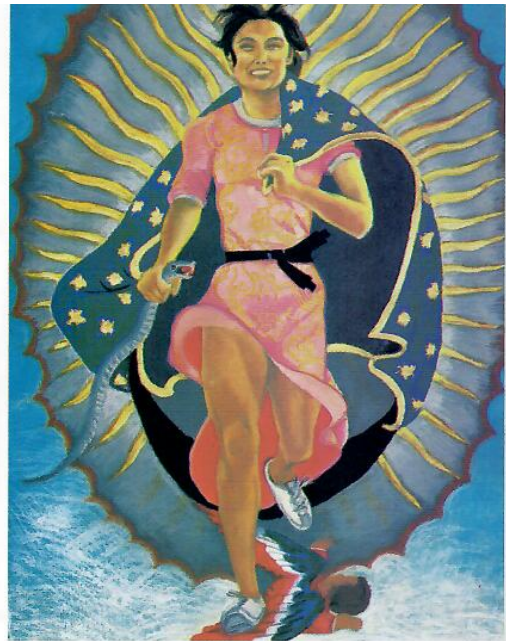
**Juan Sánchez has used paint, photos, graffiti and collage elements to create a statement about the treatment of Puerto Ricans in the U.S.**

Juan Sánchez, *Mixed Statement*, 1984. Mixed-media. Archibald Arts, N.Y., N.Y.



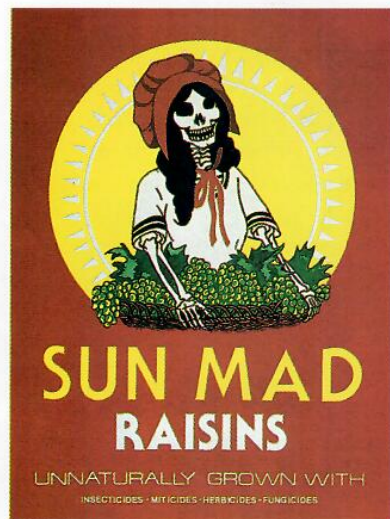
**In this work, Yolanda López uses humor to criticize the ways in which Latino women have been stereotyped.**

Yolanda M. López, *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe*, 1978. Oil pastel, paint on paper. 30" x 24". The Mexican Museum, San Francisco.



**"I made this print after finding out that the water in my hometown had been poisoned by pesticides!"**  
—Ester Hernández

Ester Hernández, *Sun Mad*, 1982. Color print. The Mexican Museum, San Francisco.





# Cross-Cultural

# CONNECTIO

**M**any Latino artists express their social concerns in their work. And nearly all use their heritage to create unique pieces of art. Since the Catholic religion is such an important aspect of Hispanic life, religious images and forms appear in most Latino art.

In many of her sculptures like this one (far right), Texas-born artist Carmen Lomas Garza refers to the Mexican festival called *Days of the Dead*. Despite its name, this holiday celebrates life and honors the memory of loved ones. In their homes, many families set up *ofrendas* (off-REN-das), or “altars,” with flowers, bread, fruit, and candies. Pictures of deceased family members are included.

Skeletons, or *calaveras* (cal-a-VER-as), are important symbols in this celebration. The installation shown here takes the form of an *ofrenda* dedicated to Frida Kahlo (page 2), who inspired Garza and many other Mexican-American women artists.

Garza also documents her memories of the rural Mexican-American culture in which she grew up. The family on pages 8-9 combines symbols of both cultures to celebrate two birthdays or *cumpleaños* (cum-ple-AN-yos). Two American birthday cakes sit on the table, while blindfolded children take turns trying to break a traditional



**“Get out if you can,” is the title of this work by Latino artist Rudy Fernandez.**

Rudy Fernandez, b. 1948. *Sal si Puedes*, 1985. Wood, lead, oil in canvas, 37 1/2" x 29" x 9". Vanier Galleries, Scottsdale.

father, a jewelry designer. When Perez was a teenager, Cuban authorities finally allowed his family to immigrate to the United States. After graduating from the University of Tampa, Florida, the artist moved to New York City. He works in an American tradition, but always includes some specifically Cuban subjects. Many of his mixed-media pieces satirize the religious imagery the artist remembers from his childhood. In *La Esmeralda*, Perez has

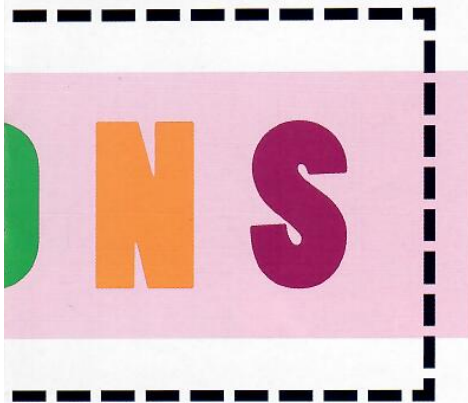
Mexican *piñata* (pin-YA-ta). This is a brightly decorated pottery container filled with toys.

Frank Romero, who did the mixed-media work on the cover, grew up in East Los Angeles in the *barrio* (a Latino neighborhood in a large city). Many of his images, like *Crossroads*, are based on the automobile culture of Southern California. Romero uses **bright colors, thickly textured brushstrokes, and simplified, stylized shapes**. Works like the one on the cover are filled with symbols of modern L.A.—palm trees, criss crossed highways, and customized cars.

Born in Cuba, Pedro Perez, who did the work on the right, learned how to craft his pieces from his







**Carmen Lomas Garza's *ofrenda* honors Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.**

Carmen Lomas Garza, b. 1948. *Día de Los Muertos Ofrenda: Homage to Frida Kahlo*, 1986. Installation. The Mexican Museum, San Francisco.

woven complex **textures** and **patterns** to create a visual **parody** of overdone, gilded cathedral furnishings. The **focal point** of this large golden frame is in the center, where the image of a saint or holy figure might ordinarily appear. Instead, the artist has placed a grinning, cartoonish figure waving a pistol.

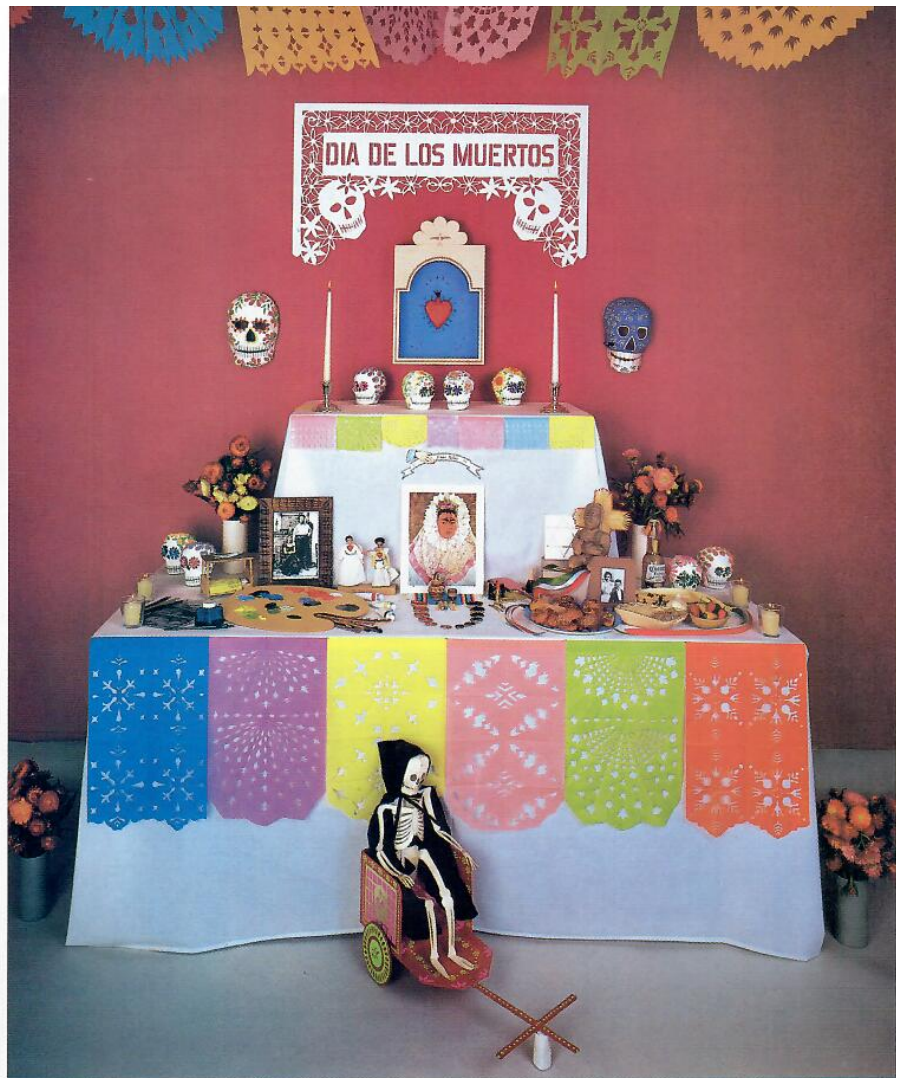
In works like *Sal si Puedes* (left), Rudy Fernandez sends contemporary messages that combine the latest materials with



traditional Mexican formats. This mixed-media piece has a rounded top and bottom, and a niche in the center. Its **shape** resembles that of a Mexican

**"As a child growing up in Cuba, I remember that the celebration called *Carnaval* always ended in gun-fights."**—Pedro Perez

Pedro Perez, b. 1951. *La Esmeralda (Queen who Shoots Birds)*, 1982. Mixed media. 36" x 36" x 5". Private Collection.

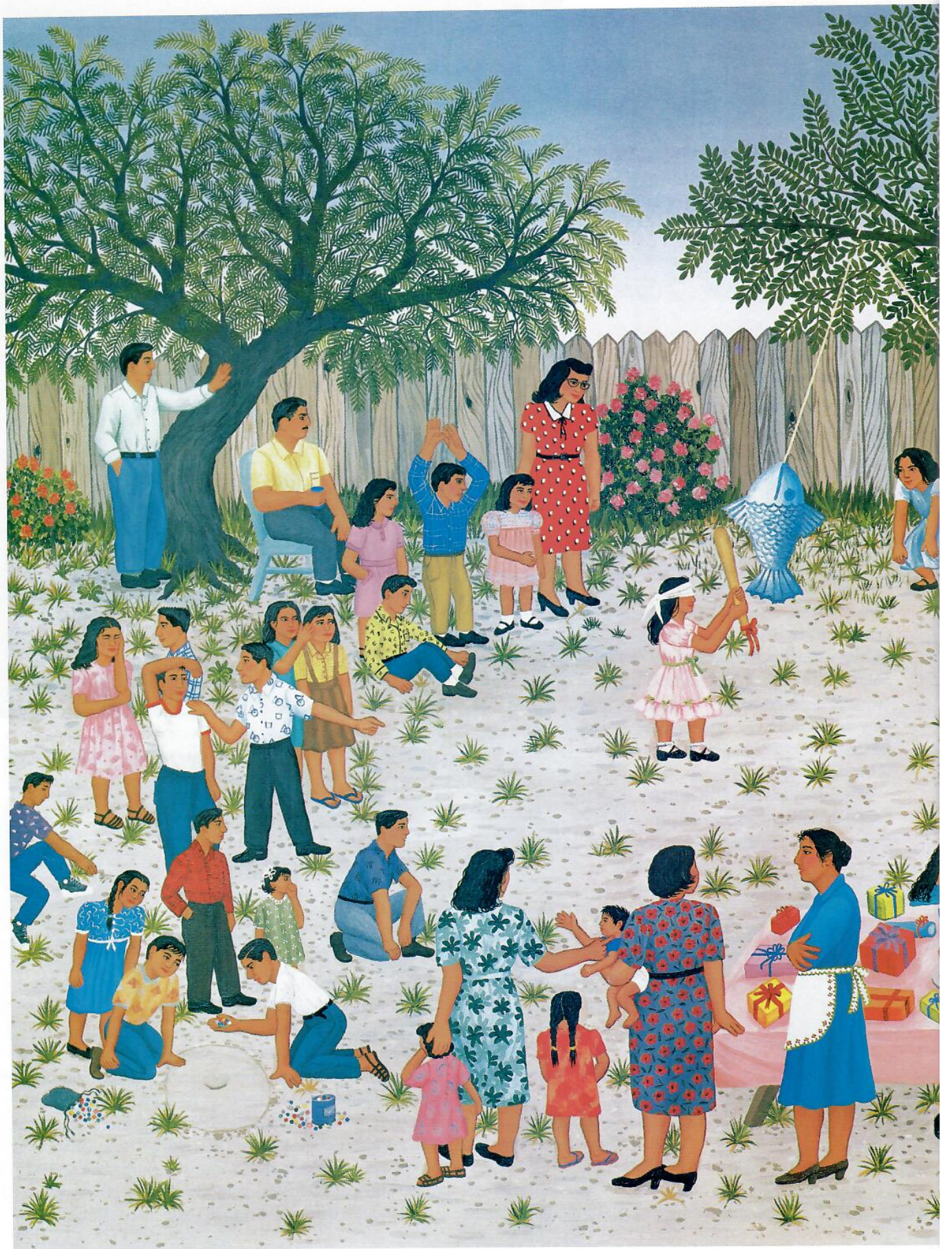


**"Sometimes I feel I'm caught between two cultures, but mostly I think about what will make my work exciting and unique."**

**—PEDRO PEREZ**

*retablo* (re-TAB-lo), a traditional picture of a saint on a shaped wooden panel. As a child, Fernandez moved all over the southwestern U.S. After going to art school, he worked in a fiberglass company where he learned industrial construction techniques. Fernandez creates **stylized, three-dimensional** mixed-media pieces that usually feature **symbols** with special meaning in Chicano culture. Cacti—typical of the landscape—stand for rebirth. The knife and rooster symbolize extreme masculinity, or *machismo*. And the many hearts that appear in the artist's work could relate to both cultures, and to his own personal life.



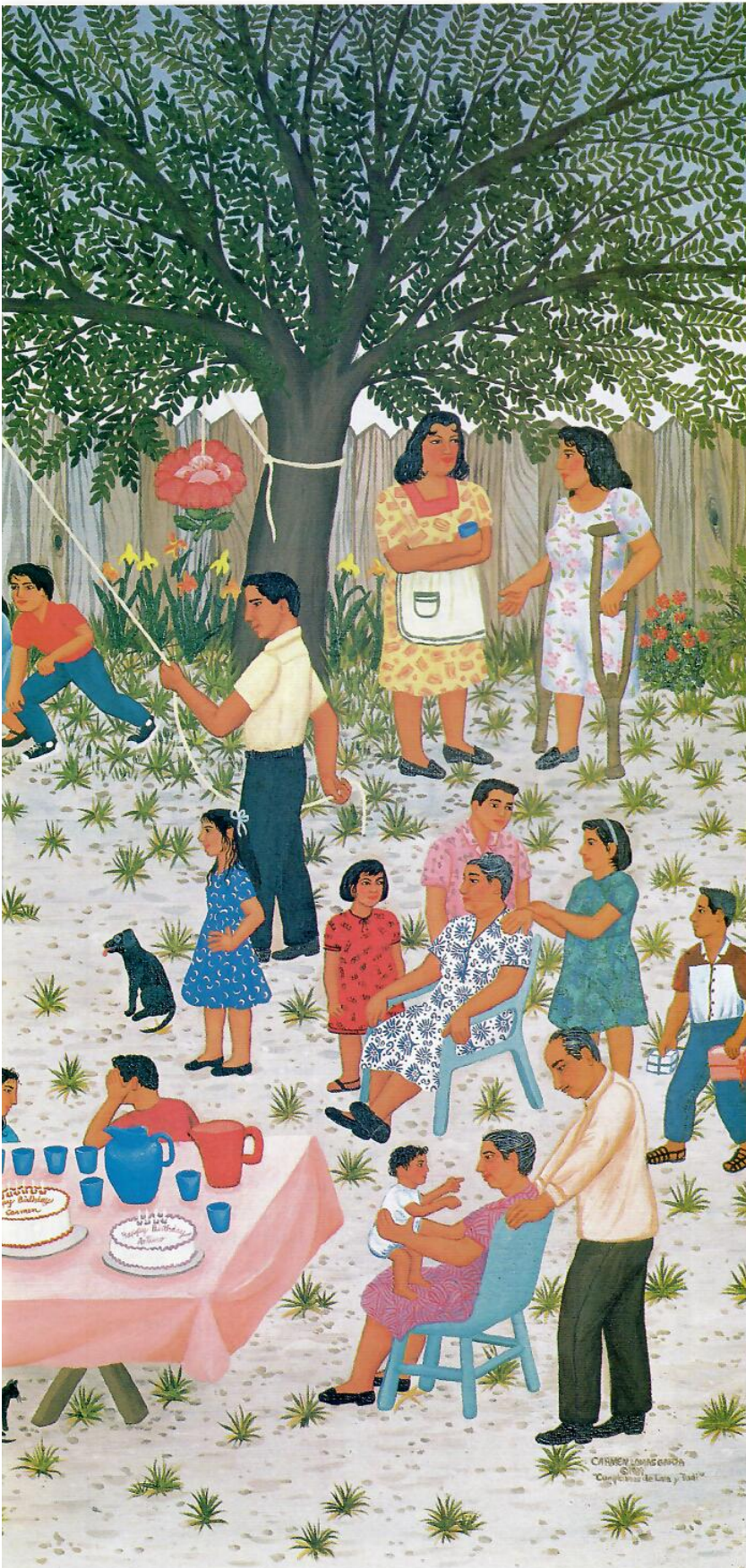




The  
**Birthdays**  
by Carmen Lomas Garza

"I want to depict all  
the things of our culture  
that are important,  
beautiful, and moving."

—Carmen Lomas Garza



Carmen Lomas Garza, b. 1948. *Compleaños De Lala Y Tudi*, 1989. Gouache on Arches paper. 36" x 48". Collection of the artist.

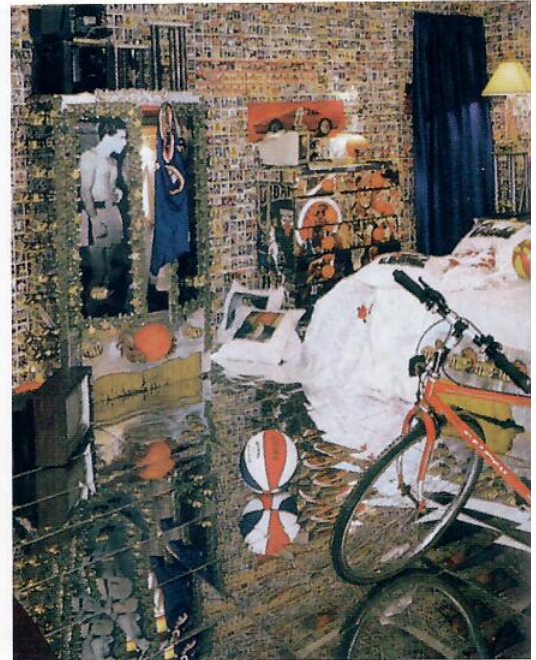


## ART SPOTLIGHT

**P**epón Osorio, who moved from Puerto Rico to New York City when he was 19 years old, was a social worker before he became an artist. And many of the things he saw during that phase of his life have become the subjects of his art. Osorio creates complex, full-scale installations, like *Badge of Honor* (right), that incorporate furniture, music, and sound. The artist's pieces usually deal with racism against and among Latinos. This work is about the way in which crime destroys the relationship between many Latino fathers and sons. The piece is made up of two rooms. One is a boy's room crammed full of objects—kung fu posters, sports equipment, Nike sneakers, photos of older father figures. Salsa music booms throughout the space. Right beside this jam-packed room is a silent, nearly empty jail cell. Taped interviews with a teenager whose father is actually in jail play as the viewer walks through the installation.

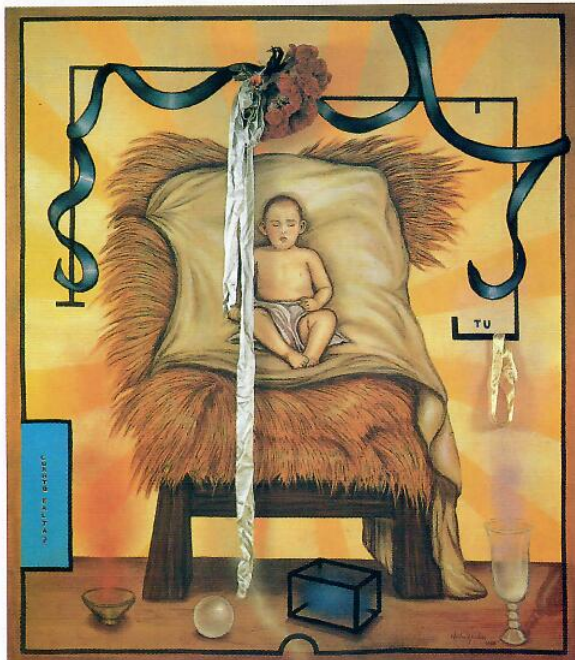
"My art is for people who go to museums. It's also for people who don't go to museums!"

—PEPÓN OSORIO



Pepón Osorio, b. 1955. *The Scene of the Crime*, 1993. Ronald Feldman Gallery.

# LATINO Artists



Julio Galán, b. 1958. *What's Missing?* 1990, collage on canvas. 90" x 78". Annina Nosei Gallery, N.Y., N.Y.

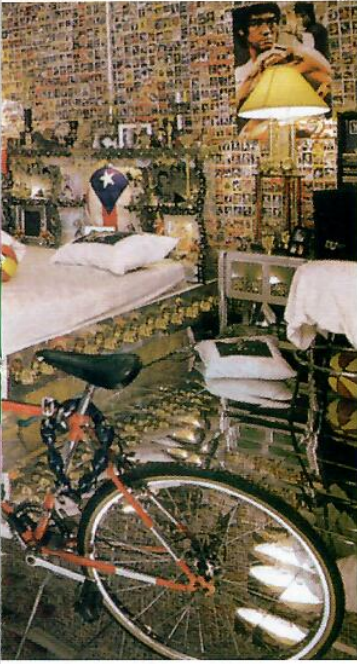
**T**he art of many of today's Latino artists resembles "mainstream" work. But most—like mixed-media artist Julio Galán—continue to draw on their rich Hispanic heritage. Many of Galán's works, like the one on the left, are based on retablo paintings. But the artist's use of collage elements, photos, postcards, and posters link his works to contemporary art styles. Born in Mexico, Galán now lives in New York City. His art reveals his fascination with

"I feel my painting is universal, even though I'm very attached to my Mexican origins."

—JULIO GALÁN

the innocence of childhood. In images like this, the artist appears as a child inside a boxlike space. He combines realistic painting techniques with real objects such as ribbons, jewels, and dried flowers. His compositions are based on the **juxtaposition** of unrelated objects—the free association of dreams and memories with no visual resolution. Even his titles, like *What's Missing?*, suggest secret and unknowable messages.





Amalia Mesa-Bains, *Altar for Dolores del Rio*, 1988. Mixed media. Steinbaum-Krauss Gallery.



# Today

**L**ike Carmen Lomas Garza, Amalia Mesa-Bains creates domestic altars filled with old photographs and objects. But her altar/installations are dedicated to women who have been important to art and culture. In a work like the one on the right, the artist calls attention to the fact that home altars, an important tradition in Mexican-American life, have almost always been made by women. In many cases, these altars were the only acceptable form of art

"Altars can be seen as political statements—the outgrowth of oppression in the home."

—**AMALIA MESA-BAINS**

Hispanic women were allowed to make. *Altar for Dolores del Rio* celebrates the career of the Mexican film actress who broke racial taboos in 1940s Hollywood. A huge satin drapery envelops the altar/dressing table, filled with mirrors, letters, perfume bottles, and tissues with lipstick kisses memorializing this first Hispanic superstar.



# Olga Garcia

## EMOTIONAL IMAGES

Fifteen-year-old Olga Garcia created this award-winning drawing (right) last year in her art class at Kosciuszko Middle School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Born in Mexico, Olga and her family moved to the U.S. when she was 6 years old. Currently in ninth grade, she loves to create art. "I'm in a computer academy now," she says, "so I don't have art in school, but I do it anyway. I spend most of my spare time drawing, but I enjoy doing other things too, like playing saxophone and reading."

### When did you first start to create art?

When I was in elementary school, my teacher entered me in a contest and I won first prize. I seemed to be good at drawing, so I kept at it. In fifth grade I took my first art class; I've been creating art ever since.

### What is it about making art that you enjoy?

I think I love it because I know it's right and nobody can tell me that it's not.

### How do you choose your subject?

It depends on what mood I'm in. If I'm in a happy mood, I choose someone really enjoying themselves. If I'm sad, I choose someone who can relate to how I'm feeling. I have to have some connection with my subjects in order to be able to draw them.

### What is your favorite of the pictures you've done?

It's of a woman swimming through the water feeling good about herself. She has a little smile and shining eyes. It's my favorite because it shows that happiness is not just about having love; it's not about approval com-

ing from somebody else. It's about whether you're proud of yourself or not. No matter what anybody else thinks.

### How did you come to create this piece?

We were assigned to make a piece of art that came from a little detail of a picture of a magazine. I saw a picture of a woman on a farm doing some kind of labor. I liked the image because of the feeling it showed, hot, tired, and not very happy. She was looking at the viewer the way she does here, but I cropped in and added the hat and shirt. She was carrying something, and I took that out too.

### Did the picture remind you of anything?

It made me think of my grandpa on the farm, working the fields. He's a farmer in a small town in central Mexico. It's the town I was born in. He loves working the land, taking care of animals. He's a very natural kind of guy, with sweat on his face. It really

brought me back there, that's probably why I chose that picture. I haven't seen him since the last time I was there, four or five years ago.

### This issue features Latino artists. Do you think your heritage inspires your art in any way?

Definitely. When I create my work I'm usually thinking about the weather, the people, the culture of Mexico. It influences what I choose to draw, and the colors I decide to use.

### So what did you do with the original picture?

I turned it into a whole different subject, one that reflects





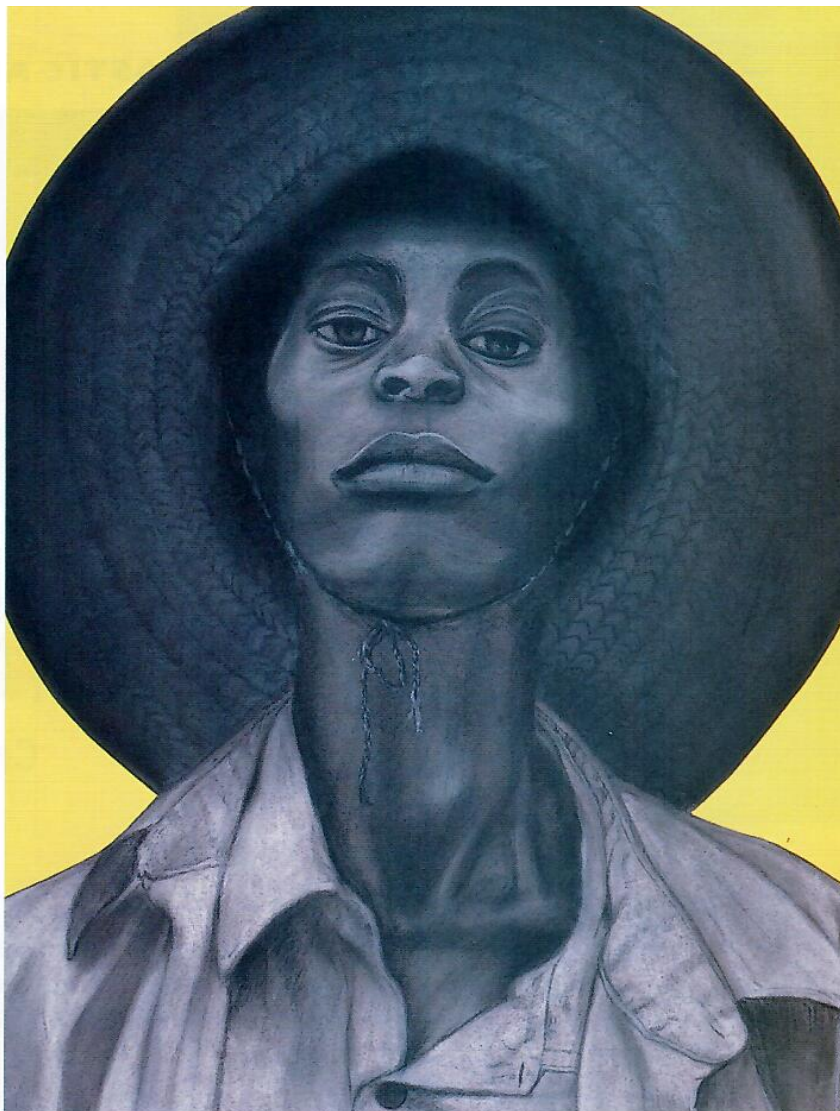
my life now. I was thinking of the summer coming up. I wanted to take the image and turn it into a frustrated feeling—a feeling of being hot in the summer. I titled it *Hot Summer Hat* because I added the hat and made the background bright yellow to represent the sun's reflection.

### How did you create this work?

When I started, I really didn't know where this image was going to take me. I drew the outline in pencil, and used charcoal to put the figure in the hat's shadow. Then I used chalk to make the sun really bright in back. I wanted a dramatic contrast, the way a person would appear with the sun directly behind her. To make the shadows on her face, I used charcoal and blended in a little white. Then I started to bring her face to life. I began doing her eyes mostly. That feature, more than any other, seems to make somebody seem alive.

### And then what did you do?

The last thing I did was the details. Most people wear the kind of hat you see, especially when they work. But there are all these little grooves in the straw. That was the hardest part; it took forever to make all those little lines. It became a challenge. I



“When I create my work I’m usually thinking about the weather, the people, the culture of Mexico. It influences what I choose to draw, and the colors I decide to use.”

wanted to give up because it was taking so much time and work, but my teacher kept telling me not to quit. There was a lot of whining, but in the end, bringing it alive with the details was amazing. It was well worth it.

### Were you satisfied with the results?

At first, I wasn't. The background was white, but that was boring. So I began to think about the summer. I cut out the picture and looked for a bright, yellow sheet of paper. To get the biggest impact, I chose a piece that was almost neon yellow. When I glued the image onto the paper I knew that was it. It took me

almost two months to make this piece. I was amazed when I was done. I couldn't believe I had made something come alive, almost like it was in 3-D.

### Do you have tips for aspiring artists like yourself?

Don't give up. Continue to dream no matter what other people say. Some people won't like your style. But it doesn't matter, because there will always be people who love what you do and can appreciate it. There's nothing right or wrong in art. It's beautiful when you see something you created come alive and see other people enjoying it. It's a great feeling.

Photos © 2000 Bradley Meinz





## SCHOLASTIC ART WORKSHOP



Sculptures by: (left to right) Jason M. Decker; Emily K. Frederick; Brandi N. Styles; Janelle R. Kieser; Susan J. Kaufman; Casey Joe Tiesman.

# Mixed-Media

Create an expressionistic figure  
some of your favorite

While all the work you've seen in this issue was made by artists who have a common heritage, each piece expresses its creator's own unique point of view. And most of these works are the result of the inventive combination of many mediums and materials.

In this workshop, you'll combine found objects to make a colorful sculpture expressing an aspect of your personality.

### MATERIALS

- Variety of small found objects (*jewelry, beads, nails, tacks, carpet, lace, yarn, action figures, metal objects, keys, dolls, doll furniture, blocks, model planes/trains, Barbie dolls/clothes, ribbon, wigs, wood pieces, buttons, leaves, glitter, twigs, string, plastic flowers, colored tile pieces, shells, wire, washers, screws/nuts/bolts, toy cars/trucks/tractors, plastic animals, thread spools, colored Easter egg grass, feathers*)
- Hot glue gun
- Elmer's Glue-All
- Small hammer, screw driver, small nails or tacks
- Needle nose and regular pliers
- Wood scraps
- X-Acto knife
- Primary, secondary, black, white, brown acrylic or tempera paint
- Painting supplies (*variety of round, acrylic brushes; divided container for paint—old muffin tins, margarine containers, aluminum cupcake papers*); palette (*old dinner plate*); water container; paper towels and plastic wrap

### STEP 1

Collect small discarded objects and develop a method for sorting through, categorizing, and storing objects. If you did last month's workshop, you should already have a number of items from which to choose. This month, you'll be using many of the same objects to create a small figure sculpture. Like the work you've seen in this issue, your figure can make an ironic or humorous statement regarding social or political trends of which you disapprove. Or you may wish to express feelings about your own unique background. Consider visualizing differing ideas about gender roles, generational or cultural clashes you've experienced in your own family. If you can't think



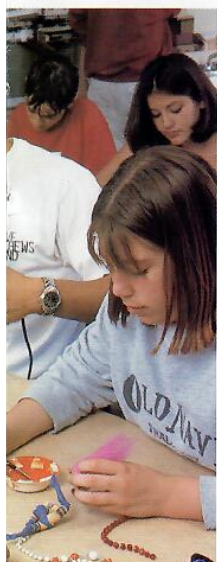
Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr., Art Instructor, Morrison (IL) High School. Assisted by Andrea D. Beveroth, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL. Photos by Larry Gregory





# Expressions

sculpture by combining found objects.



of a theme, begin by selecting objects that interest you. Eventually a theme will emerge.

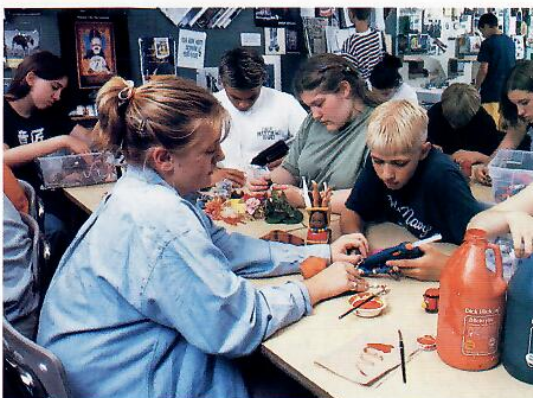
## STEP 2

You don't necessarily have to create a full figure. You can combine **fragments** or **substitute** other items to suggest or represent a figure. Try to select

objects with strong expressionistic overtones or objects that become expressive when placed next to one another. Employ **contrast** in **meaning, color, shape, size, texture, natural** versus **mechanical** objects. Collect objects, plan your piece, eliminate objects you will not use, but do not permanently assemble your sculpture at this point.

## STEP 3

Consult with instructor and practice joining test pieces together before actually beginning final construction. Try out various glues, glue guns, nails, wire, and screws to see what will work best with various objects and materials. When instructor has approved and you have determined which method is most appropriate, begin carefully fastening objects together. View sculpture from every side to make sure **composition** is **balanced**. Painting some areas will enhance the expressionistic feeling.



**Color and surface treatment** should directly relate to the sculpture. Determine whether your work will need a **base** or will be **free-standing**.

## SOME SOLUTIONS

Your figure can be a **three dimensional sculpture**, a small **environment**, or a flat **bas-relief** in which 3-D objects are incorporated. Will your **composition** be **vertical/horizontal, symmetrical/asymmetrical**? Try to establish a **center of interest**. **Scale changes** within the figure can have a startling effect. You can use

**recognizable objects** or fragments in unusual ways or catch the viewer's attention by **juxtaposing unrelated items**. Try **contrasting bright, clashing colors and textures**—smooth/shaggy; soft/hard; shiny/dull. Use of **type** can make a point. Shapes can **repeat, overlap, touch, or contain other shapes inside**.



# HISPANIC Expressions

All these images created by Latino artists have appeared somewhere in this issue.



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**D**o you recognize each of the details shown above? Can you remember what the image means? And do you recall the Spanish term the artist might use to describe his or her work?

Next to each description, name, or word, write the letter of the visual you feel most closely corresponds. (Hint: each letter should be written twice only.)

- |                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| ___ 1. a bride                   | ___ 11. Chicana        |
| ___ 2. a domestic altar          | ___ 12. cumpleaños     |
| ___ 3. used in Mexican festivals | ___ 13. retablo        |
| ___ 4. Diego Rivera              | ___ 14. piñata         |
| ___ 5. a Cuban celebration       | ___ 15. Rican/strucion |
| ___ 6. a Mexican painting        | ___ 16. ofrenda        |
| ___ 7. birthdays                 | ___ 17. muralist       |
| ___ 8. Puerto Rican              | ___ 18. calavera       |
| ___ 9. a Latino woman            | ___ 19. Carnaval       |
| ___ 10. a broken container       | ___ 20. tehuana        |