Hispanic Research Center - Día de los Muertos Art Exhibition

JMC 305 Photography Assignment

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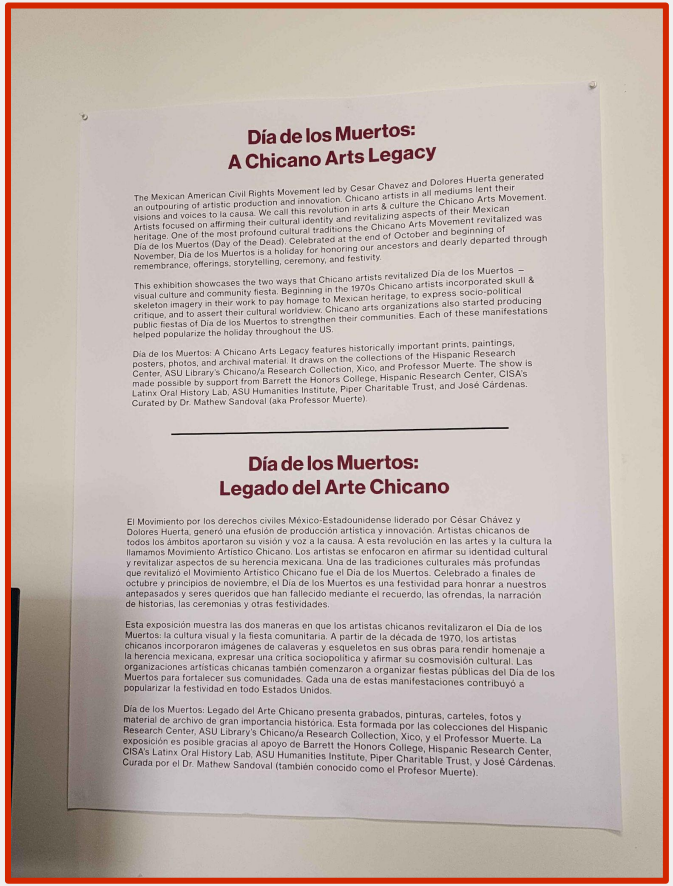
Background

Organized by Dr. Mathew Sandoval of the Barrett Honors College and Arizona State University's Hispanic Research Center, "Día de los Muertos: A Chicano Arts Legacy" is an art exhibition running from Oct. 7 to Dec. 5, focusing on the unique relationship between both Chicano/a/x artists and the broader Chicano political movement with Día de los Muertos, the Mexican holiday celebrating the lives of deceased family and friends.





Set up on the entrance table alongside a wreath of marigolds is the HRC's LittleFreeLibrary book storage, which has been decorated with papeles picados and other traditional designs.



Día de los Muertos:
A Chicano Arts Legacy

The Mexican American Civil Rights Movement led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta generated an outpouring of artistic production and innovation. Chicano artists in all mediums lent their visions and voices to la causa. We call this revolution in arts & culture the Chicano Arts Movement. Artists focused on affirming their cultural identity and revitalizing aspects of their Mexican heritage. One of the most profound cultural traditions the Chicano Arts Movement revitalized was Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). Celebrated at the end of October and beginning of November, Día de los Muertos is a holiday for honoring our ancestors and dearly departed through remembrance, offerings, storytelling, ceremony, and festivity.

This exhibition showcases the two ways that Chicano artists revitalized Día de los Muertos — visual culture and community fiesta. Beginning in the 1970s Chicano artists incorporated skull & skeleton imagery in their work to pay homage to Mexican heritage, to express socio-political critique, and to assert their cultural worldview. Chicano arts organizations also started producing public fiestas of Día de los Muertos to strengthen their communities. Each of these manifestations helped popularize the holiday throughout the US.

Día de los Muertos: A Chicano Arts Legacy features historically important prints, paintings, posters, photos, and archival material. It draws on the collections of the Hispanic Research Center, ASU Library's Chicano/a Research Collection, Xico, and Professor Muerte. The show is made possible by support from Barrett the Honors College, Hispanic Research Center, CISA's Latinx Oral History Lab, ASU Humanities Institute, Piper Charitable Trust, and José Cárdenas. Curated by Dr. Mathew Sandoval (aka Professor Muerte).

Día de los Muertos:
Legado del Arte Chicano

El Movimiento por los derechos civiles México-Estadounidense liderado por César Chávez y Dolores Huerta, generó una efusión de producción artística y innovación. Artistas chicanos de todos los ámbitos aportaron su visión y voz a la causa. A esta revolución en las artes y la cultura la llamamos Movimiento Artístico Chicano. Los artistas se enfocaron en afirmar su identidad cultural y revitalizar aspectos de su herencia mexicana. Una de las tradiciones culturales más profundas que revitalizó el Movimiento Artístico Chicano fue el Día de los Muertos. Celebrado a finales de octubre y principios de noviembre, el Día de los Muertos es una festividad para honrar a nuestros antepasados y seres queridos que han fallecido mediante el recuerdo, las ofrendas, la narración de historias, las ceremonias y otras festividades.

Esta exposición muestra las dos maneras en que los artistas chicanos revitalizaron el Día de los Muertos: la cultura visual y la fiesta comunitaria. A partir de la década de 1970, los artistas chicanos incorporaron imágenes de calaveras y esqueletos en sus obras para rendir homenaje a la herencia mexicana, expresar una crítica sociopolítica y afirmar su cosmovisión cultural. Las organizaciones artísticas chicanas también comenzaron a organizar fiestas públicas del Día de los Muertos para fortalecer sus comunidades. Cada una de estas manifestaciones contribuyó a popularizar la festividad en todo Estados Unidos.

Día de los Muertos: Legado del Arte Chicano presenta grabados, pinturas, carteles, fotos y material de archivo de gran importancia histórica. Esta formada por las colecciones del Hispanic Research Center, ASU Library's Chicano/a Research Collection, Xico, y el Professor Muerte. La exposición es posible gracias al apoyo de Barrett the Honors College, Hispanic Research Center, CISA's Latinx Oral History Lab, ASU Humanities Institute, Piper Charitable Trust, y José Cárdenas. Curada por el Dr. Mathew Sandoval (también conocido como el Profesor Muerte).

Located right at the entrance next to a collection of works centering around the UFWA, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta is a placard in both English and Spanish, detailing the purpose of the exhibition and the themes involved.



The early-20th century works of J.G. Posada were of particular interest among Chicano artists. Posada was known for printing “broadsides,” a type of cheap, mass-produced print designed to capture attention. Posada’s works were often satirical in nature, mocking both Mexican culture at the time and major political figures, such as his works *Calavera Madero* and *Calavera Garbancera.*



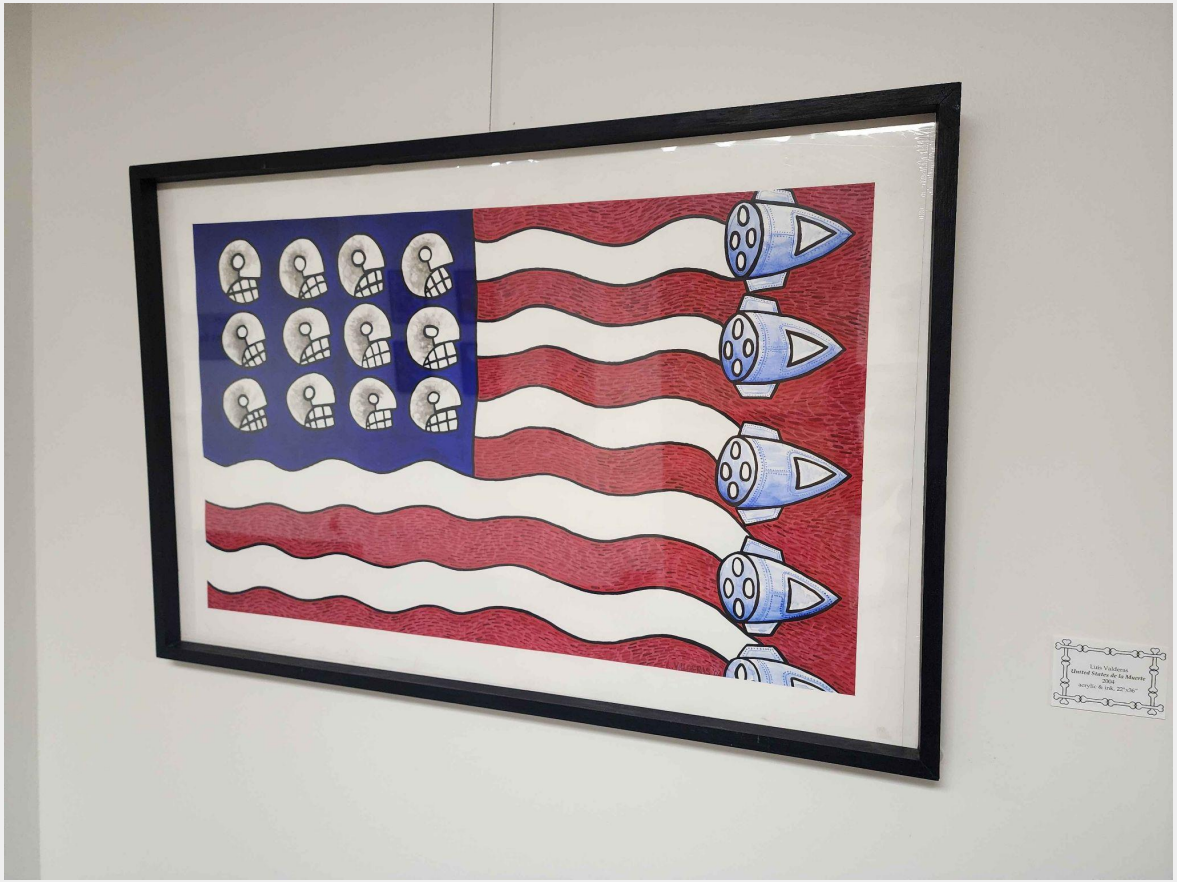
Created in response to U.S. farmers' usage of industrial pesticides, famed Chicana artist Ester Hernandez created *Sun Mad* as a warning to Americans. Having lived as a farm laborer in Central California in her youth, Hernandez and her family suffered lifelong health issues as a result of industrial chemical use on these farms.



La Pistola y El Corazon by George Yepes became one of the most famous pieces of Chicano artwork when it was used as the album art for rock group Los Lobos' album of the same name. The piece later inspired Mexican filmmaker Robert Rodriguez as well in his creation of the Mariachi Trilogy of films.



La Causa by Joe Lopez depicts two Chicano calaveras carrying a crucifix, one wearing a denim jacket embroidered with the design of the National Farm Workers Association. The work criticizes the harsh, gruelling conditions many Chicano workers were subjected to in the agricultural fields of the Southwestern United States.



Chicano artist Luis Valderas created his piece *United States de la Muerte* in the early 2000s, at the height of U.S. interventionism in the Middle East. The Chicano movement has often been anti-war in nature, with many Chicano activists throughout history playing roles in pacifistic demonstrations against wars that the United States participated in.



Printed in response to The Walt Disney Co.'s attempts at trademarking Día de los Muertos in anticipation of their movie *Coco*, Chicano artist Lalo Alcaraz created artworks such as *Muerto Mouse* which mocked Disney's legal claims. The artwork went viral almost immediately, resulting in major public backlash and playing a part in Disney's withdrawal of their claims.