

Education Guide

Voces Latinas: Works on Paper from 1921 — present

Written by
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Voces Latinas:

Works on Paper from 1921 — present

Voces Latinas (which translates to Latino Voices) showcases artworks by seventeen artists who represent the diverse range of creative voices within the Latino community. Drawn primarily from the Nevada Museum of Art permanent collection, it highlights works on paper from the earliest years of the twentieth century to the present and touches on complex subjects and issues that continue to inspire dialogue and debate within—as well as beyond—the Latino community.

Although it is impossible to thoroughly survey the history of Latino art in a single exhibition, the artists in *Voces Latinas* explore a range of themes that have long been important within Latino culture. The exhibition provides a glimpse into early prints by Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco that stress the traditional importance of religion and the family. Also included are commentaries on the 1960s Chicano movement by such artists as Frank Romero, and works by contemporary artists who draw on the rich traditions of Modernism, Symbolism, and Magical Realism. The exhibition celebrates the varied mosaic of individual voices within a community that continues to redefine itself.

In an effort to fulfill its mission to provide a forum for the presentation of creative ideas and to serve as a cultural resource for every member of our community, the Nevada Museum of Art continues to develop and expand its permanent collection by adding artworks by Latino artists. *Voces Latinas* features works by Enrique Chagoya, Camille Rose Garcia, Carmen Lomas Garza, Elizabeth Gómez, Sergio Gonzalez-Tornero, Gronk, Luis Jiménez, Jr., José Chávez Morado, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, Gustavo Ramos Rivera, Tino Rodríguez, Frank Romero, Rufino Tamayo, and Patssi Valdez.

Voces Latinas: Works on Paper from 1921 – present is curated by the Nevada Museum of Art and presented as part of the Nevada Touring Initiative—a program of the Nevada Arts Council, made possible by the American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Genius, an Initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Family & Religion

The importance of family and religious traditions are central to many Latino cultures. Many of the early prints in this exhibition are presented in the straightforward style of realism and feature women as central figures, reflecting the matriarchal social organization common to many Latino cultures. For example, the women depicted in prints by Diego Rivera and José Chávez Morado appear to be undertaking different types of work, while the female in Morado's print wears a traditional head covering, indicating that she may be preparing to participate in a religious service.

The Influence of Modernism

There is an established record of cross-fertilization between artists working in Latin American countries and modern artists working in Europe and America during the early twentieth century. It is not surprising, then, to see many Latino artists influenced by the Modernist trends emanating from European countries. For example, Rufino Tamayo's print shows the influence of European Cubist painters such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, while Sergio Gonzalez-Tornero studied directly with modern abstract artist Stanley Hayter at his studio *Atelier 17* in Paris, France. More recently, Mexican-American painter Gustavo Ramos Rivera's colorful abstract canvases have been compared to those of Paul Klee, and Cy Twombly, yet he employs a mode of abstraction that is uniquely his own.

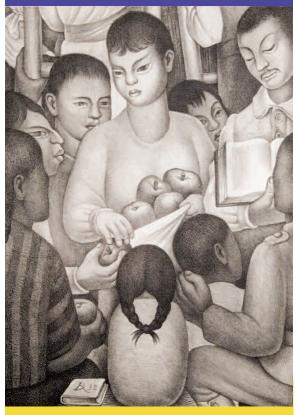
Political Activism

Art is often employed by artists to raise important political issues or to spread awareness about current events that directly impact their communities. For example, Frank Romero's panoramic landscape *The History of the Chicano Movement* depicts symbolic imagery, events, and developments of the Chicano movement generally and Chicano history in Los Angeles in particular. For Mexican-American artist Enrique Chagoya, art is a way to challenge viewers to think about the complex political and social histories that have shaped people's ways of looking at the world around them. For example, he explains that "A current theme in my work is issues of immigration, and I'm playing with the ideas of invisibility and borders—cultural, ethnic, geographic—and the cultural collisions that borders create."

In the Realm of the Imaginary

Many of the artists in this exhibition are inspired by imaginary stories and mythical tales that are deeply rooted in their respective cultures or personal family histories. Elizabeth Gómez's intricate painting *Moth Prayer* draws on fanciful sources similar to those employed by Mexican surrealist artists such as Frida Kahlo and Leonora Carrington, while Tino Rodríguez looks to a variety of traditions including ancient mythology, classical art, and world religions. Patssi Valdez looks to her personal past to depict colorful, dreamlike living rooms swirling with colors, which recall traditional Mexican homes painted in eye-awakening hues and adorned with family mementos; Camille Rose Garcia explores the power of dreams and the human subconscious to process the horrors of our everyday lives. Together, the artists in this section encourage viewers to step out of the strictures of their daily lives to enter the realm of the imaginary.

Fruits of Labor, 1932 Lithograph, 17 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches Collection of Nevada Museum of Art Bequest of Charles F. Cutts



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> Why do you think Diego Rivera depicted farmers and laborers in his artwork, including in Fruits of Labor?
- >> What sense of communal identity or values do you take from looking at an image such as Fruits of Labor?
- >> In what ways are the children in this image like the "fruits" of Fruits of Labor?

diegoRIVERA (1886-1957)

Diego Rivera's artworks, including not only the famous murals for which he is well-known but also his lesserknown lithographic prints such as Fruits of Labor, meld the practices of modern European art with the values and ideals of twentieth-century Mexico and imagery of pre-Colombian Mexican culture. After extended visits to Europe, where Rivera studied with Pablo Picasso and Paul Cézanne, he returned to Mexico in 1921, where he began to explore ideas about Mexico's people and history in his art. Rivera formed a coalition among his contemporaries, including David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, who later became known as Los Tres Grandes, to promote their revolutionary ideas that art should serve the working classes in Mexico. As William H. Robinson has written, Rivera "aspired to create not merely public art, but truly populist art possessing the visual and rhetorical power to change the world."

In *Fruits of Labor*, the central female figure passes out apples—traditional symbols of knowledge—to seated children, while a male figure holds open a book in what is presumably an educational lesson occurring in or near the field where their labor is taking place. The female figure also personifies the bounty of Mexican labor, its metaphorical fruit. Thus, a play of words in the title becomes apparent: the apples are picked with human labor, and the "fruits" of labor are also the working class peoples' contribution to the health and stability of the economy.

Fruits of Labor is from a small series of lithographs which Rivera created to more easily disseminate his art widely among the people. In his efforts to share his work broadly among economic classes, we can see that his purposes are not unlike the purposes of his other important work, the great public murals of Mexico, in which he aimed to provide an artistic expression that would unify the diverse ethnic and cultural populations of Mexico. The female figure in Fruits of Labor becomes clearly connected to Rivera's central preoccupation in art: that the economic health and cultural growth of a nation lies in its working classes, not in its economic, cultural, or political elites.

ARTIST STATEMENT

An artist is above all a human being, profoundly human to the core. If the artist can't feel everything that humanity feels, if the artist isn't capable of loving until he forgets himself and sacrifices himself if necessary, if he won't put down his magic brush and head the fight against the oppressor, then he isn't a great artist.



Mujer Mexicana (Mexican Woman), 1929 Lithograph, 13 7/8 x 9 7/8 inches Collection of Nevada Museum of Art Gift of Martha Lauritzen in Memory of Frederick L. Lauritzen



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> Orozco's portrait is a profile of a woman. What role do the elements of pose, setting, and subject play in this portrait?
- >> What ideas about personal, cultural, or social identity do portraits give us?
- >> Compare Mujer Mexicana with Diego Rivera's Fruits of Labor or José Chávez Morado's Duermevela and Mujeres con Cantaros. How are the works similar or different? How do these works affect you in similar or different ways?

joséCLEMENTE OROZCO (1883 – 1949)

Iconic Mexican muralist José Clemente Orozco painted with great moral conviction, challenging the collective social consciousness by melding realism and symbolism to passionately depict the human condition. He possessed a unique understanding of the individual, and depicted the people in his murals with this delicate perspective. In the portrait *Mujer Mexicana*, the details portrayed are minimal but deliberate. The head of the woman pictured is covered by both hair and a scarf, perhaps referring to the role of religion and the tradition in Mexican Catholicism for women to cover their heads when entering a church. This image also shows the profile of a woman, keeping her identity anonymous, but addressing the important role of women in Mexican culture.

Orozco was born in Jalisco, Mexico, on November 23, 1883. In the 1890s his family relocated to Mexico City where Orozco began to study with the political and satirical artist José Posada. As a result of Posada's influence, Orozco became inspired to study and work in art and enrolled at the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City—the same academy that trained Diego Rivera. After working as a political cartoonist Orozco became heavily involved in mural painting—depicting scenes of struggle and revolution. In the late 1920s and early 1930s Orozco moved to New York where his murals became even more focused on the struggle of the human condition in urban life and the Mexican Revolution. While he labored throughout his entire artistic career, Orozco ultimately succeeded and became an influential painter known for the symbolic and direct social commentary that his work conveyed.



Mujeres con Cantaros (Women with Jugs), 1985 Lithograph, 20 1/4 x 25 5/8 inches Collection of Nevada Museum of Art Gift of Eliza and Art Anderson, Arteliza Galleries





Duermevela (Twilight), 1974 Lithograph, 19 3/4 x 25 5/8 inches Collection of Nevada Museum of Art Gift of Eliza and Art Anderson, Arteliza Galleries

joséCHÁVEZ MORADO (1909-2002)

Echoing the style of Diego Rivera—his inspirational predecessor—José Chávez Morado embraced the tradition of utilizing essential, universalized imagery in his art. Characterized by dramatic, bold lines and classically Mexican scenes, Morado's work attempted to rejuvenate the roots of Mexican culture through a modern lens. In Mujeres con Cantaros, multiple generations of women work alongside one another, unified by their labor. Clad in stylized, traditional dresses and cloaks, the groups of women cannot be placed within a particular era based on their attire. Dominating both the foreground and background of the composition—as well as moving across the scene in both directions—Morado's women are engaged and active. Though Duermevela captures figures at rest, it is apparent that the men have just finished a long day of labor as well. Morado uses a blunt line passing across the men's sleeping bodies to indicate the transition from afternoon to evening, and from light to shadow. As the men shift from labor to rest, daylight accompanies them.

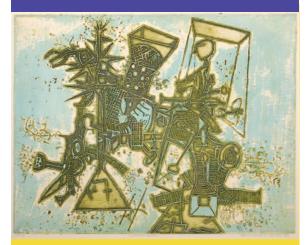
Morado worked as a fruit-picker in California before eventually pursuing artistic training. After graduating from high school in his hometown of Guanajuato, Mexico, he traveled to the United States in search of work. After only a few menial jobs, Morado realized he belonged in art school and he enrolled in the Chouinard School of Art in Los Angeles (now the California Institute of the Arts) in 1925. Soon thereafter, the artist returned to Mexico City, where he studied at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plasticas (School of Plastic Arts). Only a year later, in 1933, Morado was appointed Chief of the Graphic Arts Department of the Ministry of Education. Dedicated to social activism, Morado joined the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (abbreviated as L.E.A.R. in Spanish), a group dedicated to the fusion of art and politics. Upholding the tradition of his muralista mentors, Morado was most well known for his murals, which still hang in public centers throughout Mexico City. Today, many of his smaller works, along with his extensive collection of pre-Hispanic artifacts, can be viewed at his home in Guanajuato, which his wife established as a museum after his death in 2002.

Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> If you knew nothing about Morado's prints, when would you think they were made? Do they look like recent artwork to you?
- >> How significant do you think it is that Morado chose to portray only women in Women with Jugs and only men in Duermevela? Do you attribute this separation to historical reality—men and women worked separately from one another—or could the artist have had other reasons for dividing them on paper?
- >> In *Duermevela*, Morado uses dramatic formal elements such as light, shadow, and shape to enhance the effect of his image. Discuss how the artist's specific use of each of these elements influences the overall composition.



L'Appareil Celeste (Celestial Apparatus), 1963 Aquatint etching, 16 x 20 inches Collection of Nevada Museum of Art Gift of Marcia and Charles Growdon



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> What do you see in this image?
- What kinds of historical ideas might be conveyed by a horse and rider?
- What do you think the artist might have meant by referring to the "celestial" in his title?
- >> Can you imagine a story that this print might be representing? What happens in the story?

sergioGONZALES-TORNERO (born 1927)

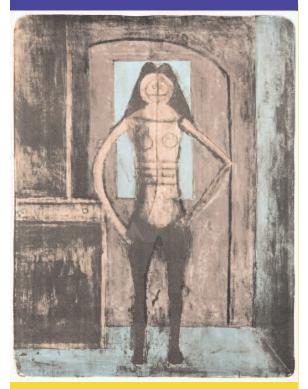
Gonzalez-Tornero's print included in this exhibition is at once abstract and representational, and strangely bizarre. While not "realistic" in any sense, the picture suggests recognizable imagery: a peculiar horse and rider, perhaps, or a mechanical toy or machine. The rider, almost skeletal in form, appears knight-like upon the back of a large, mechanical horse. The "animal-machine" appears to be emitting strange, dust-like substances from its hooves and joints, powered by some unknown energy poured or placed into the hopper-like form on the creature's back. Adding to the mysteriousness is the artwork's French title, *L'Appareil Celeste*, which translates roughly to "celestial apparatus."

Born in Santiago, Chile, in 1927, Sergio Gonzalez-Tornero studied under the famous printmaker Stanley William Hayter in Paris, France at the now well-known printmaking studio *Atelier 17* (Studio 17). Gonzalez-Tornero is today among the most important printmakers to have come from South America. He has worked as a printmaker for nearly fifty years, first in his home country of Chile, then later in his studies in Brazil, England and France. He now resides in New York. In nearly fifty years of work, Gonzalez-Tornero's etchings and aquatints have appeared in more than forty solo exhibitions throughout Europe and the Americas. He has received more than twenty prestigious awards, including the Unesco Prize at the 1966 International Biennial, and First Prize at the Tenth Biennial of Prints from Latin America and the Caribbean, in 1993.

This particular example of Gonzalez-Tornero's print-making comes from a series of prints he undertook a decade after studying at the *Atelier 17* with Hayter, who later credited Gonzalez-Tornero with the development of the raw, unrefined style of etching exemplified in this print.



Femme au Collant Noir (Woman with Black Stockings), 1969 Lithograph, 28 1/2 x 21 3/4 inches Collection of Nevada Museum of Art Gift of Martha Lauritzen in Memory of Frederick L. Lauritzen



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> Do you associate the figure in Tamayo's print with any specific culture or time period? If not, why not?
- >> Tamayo often used colors that he associated directly with the earth. How do you think colors affect this print? Imagine how it would look if the tones were much brighter.
- >> Do you think it is possible to show a figure alone, yet still address universal aspects of humanity? Consider how you feel Tamayo attempted to achieve this goal.

rufinoTAMAYO (1899-1991)

At once ancient and futuristic, Rufino Tamayo's figures—or "personages," as he called them—are suspended in a timeless space of earthen hues and angled lines. The artist said he wanted his artwork to defend "the Mexican tradition," which he traced to pre-Hispanic artifacts and folk arts. Yet, even as his art celebrated Mexico's rich history, Tamayo actively opposed using art as political currency—a practice central to the ideologically-charged murals of his contemporaries, *Los Tres Grandes* (Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco). Tamayo focused primarily on the aesthetic and pictorial qualities of his compositions, sometimes creating entirely abstract artwork. Formally, he was influenced a great deal by European Cubist painters such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque.

In Femme au Collant Noir, the figure and her background are extremely geometrical—broken down into jagged planes and lines. Such an emphasis on formal elements universalizes the subject of the print; the woman is reduced to her basic parts and therefore elevated to her human essence. But even amidst such universal images, Tamayo's figures are almost always depicted alone. Tamayo believed that solitude was fundamental to spiritual peace—and therefore basic to community and cultural well being.

From the beginning of his life, Tamayo was surrounded by a strong cultural heritage; the artist was born in 1899 in Oaxaca, Mexico—a region known for its intricate and colorful crafts—to indigenous Zapotec parents. He displayed artistic leanings as a very young boy and, at the age of eighteen, defied his family to study art at the Academy of San Carlos. Immediately after graduating, Tamayo was appointed Chief of Ethnographic Drawing at the National Museum of Archaeology in Mexico City. He went on to teach at the National School of Fine Arts in Mexico City, where he claims to have acquired an appreciation for his pupils' elemental, "primitive" compositions. Even at a young age, Tamayo gained international acclaim, exhibiting throughout the United States and Europe and winning prestigious awards. He lived for long periods of time in New York City, where he was invited to mount many solo exhibitions. His work is considered seminal to the Mexican artistic legacy.



Untitled (29), not dated Monoprint, 34 1/2 x 23 1/4 inches Loan courtesy of Trillium Press



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> What emotional qualities does this print convey?
- >> How do the colors in the print help to shape your thoughts or feelings about Ramos Rivera's work?
- >> While this image is an abstraction, is it suggestive of something in the "real" world as well?

gustavoRAMOS RIVERA (born 1940)

Gustavo Ramos Rivera's abstract paintings and prints have infused the San Francisco Bay Area art scene with vivid color and bold form for more than twenty-five years. His artwork is widely recognized for its visual and emotional impact, and has been compared to the work of Paul Klee, Joan Miró, and Cy Twombly. However, unlike the social realistic art of such artists as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco (see some of these artists' works in this exhibition), who depicted the people and places of working class Mexico, Rivera's brightly colored work is abstract, highly personal, and visually intense. He explores internal emotional life in an introspective and expressive way, yet the work is almost analytical given the formal qualities of his abstraction. Rivera's paintings and prints, including the piece in this exhibition, combine imaginative collage and design elements with bright bursts of color. The colors reference the traditions of his Mexican past, while also formally growing out of the style of the first wave of Bay Area Abstract Expressionist artists such as Frank Lobdell and Richard Diebenkorn.

In his monoprints such as *Untitled* (29), Rivera creates multiple, translucent layers of color that lend an atmospheric quality to the image, and create dark, linear elements that suggest an almost aerial view of land. The image is also deeply personal, the marks on the paper suggesting a kind of personal hieroglyphic language.

Born in Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila, Mexico, in 1940, Rivera immigrated to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1969. His work has been exhibited widely in Europe, Mexico, and the United States, and a number of significant public art projects are on display throughout the Bay Area, including works in the San Francisco International Airport and the Moscone Convention Center. A retrospective exhibition of Ramos Rivera's paintings and works on paper was held at the *Ex-Convento del Carmen* in Guadalajara, Mexico in 2005. His place in the history of Chicano art is unique for his dedication to abstraction.



History of the Chicano Movement, 2002 Digital pigment print, 16 x 50 3/8 inches Loan Courtesy of Patricia Correia Gallery

Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> Which visual elements in this image suggest the history of Chicano people in this country? Which visual elements suggest the reality of contemporary life?
- >> What does this print suggest about the importance of social consciousness in contemporary life? In art?
- >> What do you think this print is saying about the history of the Chicano movement in this country?

frankROMERO (born 1941)

Beginning in the early 1970s, Frank Romero began painting murals and bringing Chicano art to Los Angeles. Working with three other artists—Gilberto Luján, Roberto de la Rocha, and Carlos Almaraz (see Almaraz's work also in this exhibition)—he co-founded *Los Four*, a Chicano art collective that was instrumental in bringing public attention to Chicano street art in Los Angeles.

Inspired by the Civil Rights movement, the Chicano-led labor movement, and the art and philosophies of Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco (*Los Tres Grandes*), Romero and *Los Four* continued the tradition of public art made famous by the great Mexican muralists. When the University of California, Irvine, and then the Los Angeles County Museum of Art exhibited the work of *Los Four* in 1974, the mainstream art world paid attention to Chicano art for the first time, and helped bring the movement official status in the larger art community.

History of the Chicano Movement depicts in bold color, expressive brushstrokes and symbolic imagery events and developments of the Chicano movement generally and Chicano

history in Los Angeles in particular. Incorporating historical and contemporary events in the experiences of Chicanos—from the condemnation of homes where Dodger Stadium was built in Los Angeles, to the significance of the automobile and the endless freeways crisscrossing southern California, to the importance of the Chicano labor movement and the United Farm Workers Union in Chicano culture—Romero defines a kind of collective memory for Chicanos. He also promotes a new awareness of the Chicano cultural notion of *La Raza*, which literally means "the race" or "the people," but denotes Latinos who share the cultural and political legacies of Spanish colonialism, including the Spanish language and Roman Catholicism.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I do very serious paintings about pain and suffering, but they are done with a Latino sensibility, where we laugh at death.





War of the Worlds, 1993 Lithograph, 26 1/8 x 22 1/2 inches Loan courtesy of Hamilton Press



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> Gronk incorporated many images and symbols into his work. Which symbols do you see represented in War of the Worlds, and what do you think he intended for them to mean?
- How do you think this image fits into the entire body of Gronk's work as an artist addressing issues of Chicano culture and traditions?
- >> What different artists, artistic styles and cultural influences do you see represented in War of the Worlds?

GRONK (born 1954)

A legendary muralist, printmaker, performance artist, and painter, Gronk first carved a niche for himself in the underground culture of East Los Angeles during the 1970s. As a founding member of the avant-garde art collective Asco (Spanish for "nausea"), Gronk helped to communicate the political message and activist spirit of the Chicano movement to the wider public. On the surface, Gronk's paintings combine the bold graphic style of street graffiti with the passion of abstract expressionism. These characteristics, combined with Gronk's complex vocabulary of symbols and images reveal his commitment to an art that is both daring and distinctive. Inspired by his childhood awe of television shows depicting futuristic visions of the planet and humanity, War of the Worlds is full of such symbolic language, and is rich in bold imagery and color that pops from its surface.

Gronk was born Glugio Bronk Nicandro in 1954 in East Los Angeles and grew up in poverty with his single mother who had given him the name Gronk—meaning "to fly" in an indigenous Brazilian language. Gronk attended Garfield High School in East Los Angeles during the late 1960s, which at the time was a hotbed for political and social activism. At sixteen he dropped out of school and founded Asco along with classmates Patssi Valdez, Harry Gamboa Jr., and Willie Herrón. Together they organized art exhibitions, staged street performances, created videos, and performed live theater, all in response to the turmoil of urban Los

Angeles life. Asco also completed a series of collaborative mural projects that addressed the violence on the streets of East Los Angeles. Often created quickly, in busy public spaces, the murals were widely viewed throughout the community. Although their work was undertaken in the spirit of renowned Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco (*Los Tres Grandes*), it also incorporated contemporary influences ranging from pop culture to graffiti to surrealism.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Drawing was an escape for me—from poverty, from my environment. It was a way of creating new worlds for myself. I like to create worlds for other people to enter...places where they can encounter their own imagination. I didn't go to galleries or museums. They weren't a part of my childhood. But all I had to do was walk outside my front door to see visual images all around me. Graffiti was everywhere and it helped develop a sense for what I wanted to do.



The Big Little Book Series, 1996 Monoprint, 25 3/4 x 19 1/2 inches Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> Does the figure in this print remind you of anything?
- >> What histories of people in this country, or in others, haven't been told because they have been subject to colonization, war, or loss?
- >> Does this image suggest a sense of humor? Why?
- >> How does this image affect your thoughts or perceptions about ancient Mexican cultures?

enriqueCHAGOYA (born 1953)

In his paintings, drawings, and prints, Enrique Chagoya combines images taken from popular culture and the mass media, Mexican folk art, Western history, and religious traditions to create richly visual social commentaries. His work is often satirical, and challenges viewers to consider why and how history has traditionally been written by the winners of wars and the colonizers of new lands, thus leaving out the histories that would be told by the colonized peoples and the losers of wars.

This print comes from Chagoya's 1996 *The Big Little Book Series*, the title of which is taken from a 1930s small-format comic book in which the protagonist is a border patrol agent full of stereotypes about indigenous and Mexican people. In this print, the central figure stands, arms and legs outstretched, in front of a built form resembling the Pyramid of the Sun near Teotihuacán, Mexico. The figure seems marked by, and perhaps torn between, both indigenous cultural tradition—in the form of marks that resemble a headdress—and western religion, as can be seen in a cruciform shape across the figure's head.

Chagoya was born in Mexico, but immigrated to the United States in 1977. He earned degrees in Economics at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* in 1975, followed by a BFA at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1984, and MA and MFA degrees from the University of California, Berkeley in the late 1980s. Chagoya currently teaches in the Art Department of Stanford University.

ARTIST STATEMENT

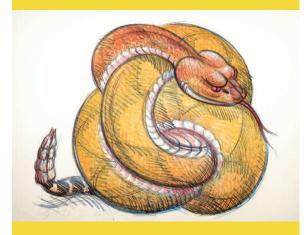
My artwork is a conceptual fusion of opposite cultural realities that I have experienced in my lifetime. I integrate diverse elements: from pre-Columbian mythology, western religious iconography and American popular culture. The art becomes a product of collisions between historical visions, ancient and modern, marginal and dominant paradigms—a thesis and an anti-thesis that end in a synthesis in the mind of the viewer. Often, the result is a non-linear narrative with many possible interpretations.

A current theme in my work is issues of immigration, and I'm playing with the ideas of invisibility and borders—cultural, ethnic, geographic—and the cultural collisions that borders create. But cultural conflicts produce beneficial change as well, and hybrids are occurring in the midst of cultural conflicts in many places...The figure in *The Big Little Book Series* is a shamanistic figure, as opposed to "savage," and I'm trying to move away from stereotypes of the ancient Mexican cultures as "savage" or "bloodthirsty."



Chula, 1987 Lithograph, 20 1/4 x 30 inches Loan courtesy of Segura Publishing





Ball Rattlesnake, 1987 Lithograph, 25 x 34 1/4 inches Loan courtesy of Segura Publishing

luisJIMÉNEZ JR. (1940-2006)

Luis Jiménez, Jr. considers his primary audience to be the Chicano working class, and he intentionally evokes the stereotypes and popular imagery of this culture to elevate everyday people and events to heroic proportions. Jiménez began producing artwork during the late 1960s, at the same time that the Chicano civil rights movement began to gain speed. He combines the influences of Mexican and Mexican-American traditions, Chicano cultural icons, and Western popular culture, and blends them into a distinctive style that expresses the Chicano aesthetic and reflects Jiménez's Southwestern roots.

Chula and Ball Rattlesnake, both lithographs created during the late 1980s, were created with this same spirit. Chula, the Spanish word for sweetie or cutie (and also the name of Jiménez's pet bird), creates a visual paradox. The name of the image does not prepare the viewer for the appearance of the menacing looking creature depicted: a raven common to Mexico and South America. Ball Rattlesnake represents Jiménez's relationship with la frontera, the United States-Mexico border, and alludes to his cross-cultural roots and influences. A subtle, but typical feature of Jiménez's work, each print is sprinkled with a fine layer of glitter, demonstrating the artist's popular cultural influences, which encourages the viewer to consider these works from a humorous as well as historical perspective.

Born in El Paso, Texas, to a Mexican immigrant and a Texan-born Chicana, Jiménez carried this cross-border legacy throughout his career. He studied art at the University of Texas, and graduated in 1964, before heading south to spend time in Mexico City studying the rich tradition of the Mexican muralists. His work demonstrates the tremendous influence this exposure had on his development, both technically and socially. In 1966, Jiménez moved to New York, and later had his first solo show at Graham Gallery. Feeling that the gallery system in the United States

reached only a limited audience, Jiménez returned to the Southwest in 1972 to pursue his dream of making public art. His sculpture and drawings employ a social conscience, and speak to audiences who do not always feel comfortable in museums or galleries. Jimenez was tragically killed while working on a public sculpture in 2006.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Animals in the wild reveal truths about ourselves. They remind us about a part of ourselves that we often try to hide or have forgotten. We must create our own heroes to make us feel good about ourselves. Artists can provide these images. My main concern is creating an American art using symbols and icons. I'm making high art out of low art material. I feel I am a traditional artist working with images and materials that are of my time.

Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> What impact do you think that the glitter has on these prints? What change does it have on your perception of the works, and how do you think they would be different without it?
- >>> Why do you think that Jiménez chose to represent these two creatures against a solid white background?
- What other animals could be used to create similar types of artwork? What would they mean to you?
 Do you think they might have other meanings in different cultures?

Sandia (Watermelon), 1997 Lithograph, 22 1/8 x 31 inches Loan courtesy of the artist



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> Many artists who address issues of race tend to focus on difference in order to illuminate inequalities. Garza, however, focuses mainly on similarity in order to support Mexican-Americans' natural role in the cultural fabric of the United States. How effective do you think her method of artistic activism is?
- >> Does this image make you remember any similar scenes in your life? Do you identify with the family?

carmenLOMAS GARZA (born 1948)

Growing up Mexican-American in rural Texas, Carmen Lomas Garza experienced a great deal of racial discrimination. Yet her art attempts to subvert—and, more importantly, reverse—such sentiments through positive affirmations of her culture. While Garza's imagery might be interpreted as nostalgic recollections of her Mexican-American heritage, she also celebrates familial and communal values that are commonly shared by many cultures. *Sandia* is, in many ways, a classic "American" scene: baseball, the family dog, watermelon on a hot summer evening—all are elements of an idealized family gathering. The piece, in fact, commemorates Garza's specific memory of eating watermelon on her family's porch one evening as a child.

Garza taught herself to draw at a very young age as a way to process and record her experiences. She initially received a BS from Texas Arts and Industry University and went on to get a MA degree in Education from Juarez-Lincoln/Antioch Graduate School in 1973. Eight years later, Garza pursued formal art training, receiving a MFA degree from San Francisco State University. She has been a successfully working artist ever since, exhibiting at institutions such as the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the Whitney Museum of American Art. As she continues to produce artwork, Garza strives to uphold her cultural heritage and personal identity while at the same time appealing to all cultures and races.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The Chicano Movement of the late 1960s inspired the dedication of my creativity to the depiction of special and everyday events in the lives of Mexican-Americans based on my memories and experiences in South Texas. I saw the need to create images that would elicit recognition and appreciation among Mexican-Americans, both adults and children, while at the same time serve as a source of education for others not familiar with our culture. It has been my objective since 1969 to make paintings, prints, installations for Day of the Dead, paper and metal cutouts that instill pride in our history and culture in American society.



Mom's Living Room, 2003 Digital pigment print, 22 1/4 x 30 1/4 inches Loan courtesy of Patricia Correia Gallery



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> How does Valdez use color to portray or accentuate the mood of the piece?
- >> For Valdez, rooms represent their human inhabitants. Does Mom's Living Room look empty to you? Or can you imagine the artist's mother and guests within its walls?
- >> Valdez often uses everyday objects to symbolize personal memories or ideas. What are some objects that you could use as visual metaphors for parts of your life?

patssiVALDEZ (born 1953)

Composed of energetic swirls of color, Patssi Valdez's interior spaces are slightly off-kilter and jarring, yet irresistibly dynamic and alluring. The title of her 1999 retrospective exhibition, A Precarious Comfort, fittingly describes this balanced intensity. The artist describes her paintings as a way to process her personal history—to express the past and hope for the future. Though Valdez began her career as a portrait photographer, she now composes scenes that typically lack human figures. In Mom's Living Room, for example, the audience does not see a mother or her children yet we are made aware of the artist's personal attachments to this space. Valdez describes her life as an ambivalent mixture of the trials and triumphs she associates with racial and gender identity struggles. Many of the rooms she depicts recall traditional Mexican homes—painted with eye-awakening color and adorned with family mementos. Yet the spaces are not entirely representative, but more symbolic. To Valdez, the objects in her paintings often serve as metaphors: a watermelon may denote a heart, an umbrella may represent the person who used it. The room becomes a manifestation of Valdez's identity and self-expression.

As a young Chicana born and raised in East Los Angeles, Valdez was exposed to a wide range of social and political art. While still in high school, she joined Harry Gamboa, Willie Herrón, and Gronk to found Asco ("nausea" in Spanish), an experimental art group that challenged boundaries and helped to re-define Chicano art. Valdez

eventually received her BFA from Otis/Parsons School of Art and Design in Los Angeles and went on to study at Parsons School of Design in New York City. Since then, she has successfully exhibited nation-wide and received a National Endowment for the Arts Artist-in-Residence grant to produce work in Oaxaca, Mexico.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My intension early on was I was trying to paint my emotions so the best way I could do it was with color. I will paint things how they feel, not how they look. Like the room's white right now. But if it feels warm to me, I'll paint it orange...I work a lot with warm and cool. That's sort of how I view it. And then I like juxtaposing colors against each other...like compliments so that they can vibrate.

I started to paint my own childhood. Memories of ...the kitchen, the home, the things that took place in these rooms. The feelings that were in these rooms. That's why chairs and...people are absent and just the energy, the energetic...the feeling of the person that left their energy on that chair. And the memories. *Mom's Living Room* was inspired by the home in which I grew up (in the barrio of East Los Angeles) as a young woman. Mom's living room always felt warm and inviting and it felt like mom, so I was inspired to try and capture the essence and beauty of this room in a painting.



Moth Prayer, 2001 30 x 22 inches, Mixed media on paper Loan courtesy of the artist



Look, Imagine & Discover

- Sómez depicts a world in which fantasy can act as reality. The scene in Moth Prayer is clearly not real—yet it is still appealingly possible. Do you like to see fantastical art or movies or read fantasy novels because they present an escape from the real world? Why or why not?
- >> What is the influence of pattern and decoration in *Moth Prayer*? What do they do to the surface of the image?
- >> What do you think the connection is between the woman and the moth? How are you, as the viewer, drawn into their relationship?

elizabethGÓMEZ

Fantastical yet familiar, Elizabeth Gómez's vividly colored, intricately patterned images focus on women interacting with their environments. This interplay between humans and nature is rooted in a process of transformation and growth. Gómez is fascinated by the concept of hierarchy and the developments and defeats hierarchical roles create: girls become women, people exert power over animals, and animals, in turn, captivate their human counterparts. Gómez writes that the "women in these paintings identify with the animals and vice versa. Both are used as metaphors for one another." In Moth Prayer, the woman and the moth engage in a certain understanding, or a bonded dialogue. The artist's use of contrasting colors enhances the vibrant effect of the scene. Gómez's love for Indian and Persian miniatures is made apparent in the detailed floral patterning and delicately starry sky.

Magical, decorated worlds have always been central to Gómez's life; as a child, she spent hours reading the work of magical realist authors such as Gabriel García Márquez and visiting Frida Kahlo's blue house in Mexico City. Gómez studied extensively throughout the world, receiving her first BA degree at Trent University in Ontario, Canada, completing a year at Mexico City's Escuela Nacional de Artes Plasticas (School of Plastic Arts) and then returning to the United States to receive a BFA degree from the San Francisco Art Institute and a MFA degree from San Jose State University.

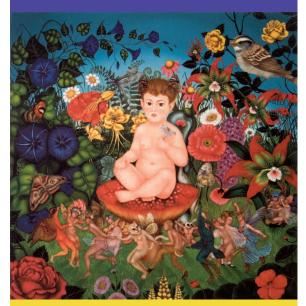
ARTIST STATEMENT

With my art I try to negotiate the complex mix of the personal, the traditional and the contemporary that make me who I am. All my pieces present women interacting with animals, in a juxtaposition that depicts my feelings towards nature and culture. In the natural world the strongest hunts the weaker which in turn hunts the weakest in a strict predator/prey hierarchy. It is a cruel world but one that supports an ongoing balance. The young girls in my work are portrayed at the moment of loss of innocence as they understand that in this world something or someone must die to give way to other life. They come to terms with their natural self.

My work is influenced by artists of the Latin American Magic Realist movement who explore reality through fantastical transformations and by Mexican popular art which is a blend of traditions, myths and humor with Baroque, colonial and Catholic roots. I constantly strive for work that has the honesty of hand-made crafts. My women are portrayed in a frontal iconic manner, similar to that of the *retablos* (small devotional paintings on tin) of popular Mexican Catholicism. Popular arts around the world share characteristics such as over-decoration, use of space-flattening pattern or attention to detail that are also present in the crafts traditionally made by women and in my work. With my art I want to attain a deeper understanding and control of my self in the environment. I am in a constant search for my ecological-self.



Unravel, 2003 Iris print, 17 x 17 inches Loan courtesy of Trillium Press



Look, Imagine & Discover

- >> Rodríguez has said that his work addresses complex dualities, going beyond the simplistic Western-defined balances between good and evil, spirit and body, and heaven and earth. How do you think he represents this in Unrayel?
- >> Morning glories and columbine are two of the plant species that are very realistically depicted in *Unravel*. How many other examples of real flora and fauna can you find?
- >> The garden is used in art as a symbol of transformation or metamorphosis. What other symbols do you see represented within Unravel that also refer to the changing nature of our world, and why do you think that Rodríguez chooses to focus on this theme?

tinoRODRÍGUEZ

Tino Rodríguez weaves reality and fantasy into a rich and mysterious tapestry. His work defies simple categorization, and addresses the depths of the human psyche alongside the whimsical and provocative allure of nature. Referential to ancient mythology, classical art and world religion, Rodríguez's paintings are narratives that delve into the human subconscious and the artist's own personal history and experience. In *Unravel*, Rodríguez creates a fantastical garden realm which is simultaneously alluring and mystifying.

A native of Guadalajara, Mexico, Rodríguez was exposed to a variety of art at a very young age. He visited the Catholic churches in his mother's hometown of Jalisco, and was awed by the ornate angels, saints, and virgins that adorned the sanctuaries and inspired their devotees. Of particular interest were the *retablos*—small devotional paintings on tin—that decorated the church, and expanded his growing fascination with art. Rodríguez went on to study at the Sorbonne in Paris and later moved to California and enrolled at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1991. Before this training, Rodríguez had received very little formal instruction, and was primarily self-taught. He meticulously studied the work of Renaissance, Baroque, and Flemish masters he had seen during museum trips over the course of his adolescent life, and immersed himself in the study of religion and poetry. Rodríguez was one of nine children, and his work is informed by his own explorations into human nature and sexuality.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The Victorians desperately wanted to believe in fairies because they represented one of the ways they could escape the intolerable reality of living in an unromantic, materialistic and scientific age. Likewise we are experiencing a wave of Puritanism, an unromantic and highly materialistic age; my painting Unravel describes a group of multiracial hybrids, unspecific tribes and ethnicities, dancing in a circle. The main figure that I identified as Puck when I started it but by the end didn't quite fit the literary model, sits quietly more in a state of meditation than in debauchery, so I think of him more closely related to a Yogi than the mischievous Puck. I wanted to address issues of becoming childlike again, examining a world of microscopic beauty in which nothing gets lost in the abundance and exuberance of nature. We are always so busy and running around that we hardly have time to stop in front of a garden and smell and admire the perfect shape of a rose, or the deep blue-violet color of morning glories or the long and winding stems of an orange poppy swaying with the wind. So I painted this painting as a stop sign so that people might be able to see it and maybe think "the natural world is magical and beautiful, I want to experience it more often" and who knows maybe if you clap your belief of fairies from your childhood days will come back, if only for a moment (I clap as I finish writing this!!!).



Who's Afraid of the Peppermint Man, 2002 Giclee, 8 7/8 x 36 1/2 inches Loan Courtesy of Merry Karnowsky Gallery

Look, Imagine & Discover

- Sarcia has sprinkled parts of the surface of this print with black glitter. Why do you think she does this, and what kind of an effect does it have when you view her work?
- >> Strips of floral wallpaper are used by the artist throughout the image. How does the placement of these strips impact your reading of the image? Does it make you feel more or less a part of the scene?
- >> Why do you think that Garcia and her work are so popular among gothic, outsider, and underground subcultures?
- >> What in Garcia's artwork defines her as an artist of Mexican descent? How do you think her cultural background impacts her voice as an artist?

camilleROSE GARCIA (born 1970)

Fictional plots inspired by real political and social events, but always with a sarcastic and ironic twist, make up the subject matter of Garcia's inventive paintings. Through her work, she explores the power of dreams and the human subconscious to process the horrors of our everyday lives. Garcia's paintings are critical commentaries on natural and man-made disasters, war, disease, poverty, greed, violence and terror, and the political control, manipulation and upheaval associated with capitalism, economic development and over consumption. Ironically, as an emerging artist, Garcia's work has become widely known through its mass produced products such as dolls and t-shirts.

Garcia was born in Southern California and raised in the suburbs near Disneyland, which paradoxically led to the title of her book *The Saddest Place on Earth*, parodying Disneyland's slogan "The Happiest Place on Earth." Her parents were both practicing artists, and politically active; clearly inspiring her own work. She attended Otis Art Institute and the University of California, Davis, where she received her formal art training. Originally employed as a graphic artist in the magazine industry, she became disillusioned with the commercial aspect of her work and went on to develop her own original art.

Her fantastical landscapes, á la Dr. Seuss or Willy Wonka, are full of cupcake people, candy plants and dripping skies. The macabre angle of her work harnesses the same themes found in myths and classic fairy tales, and the story of the Peppermint Man is no exception. He deals with the problem of overpopulation by cooking up children and serving them in his chain of buffet-style restaurants. Who's Afraid of the Peppermint Man depicts a cavernous underground environment with four distinct scenes. Garcia is interested in the concept of "broken narrative," a technique adopted from writer William Burroughs, in which the space of a painting is broken up and abstracted. By juxtaposing real and imaginary space, she creates a fantasy-like landscape, which leads to a less literal reading of the work and infuses the painting with multiple layers to unravel and enjoy.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I have always been horrified by the fake promises of capitalism and by all of the greedy, awful things that corporations and the government do to support our hedonistic lifestyle. The challenge is to depict these everyday horrors in a way that is likeable and agonizingly cute.

This...was made right after 9/11. A lot of people began to believe all the fear propaganda generated by the Republican War Machine. [The work is based on a] short story in which the main character undergoes a traumatic event, then creates a parallel universe in his mind in which everything works out fine. I thought this was a really good metaphor for what people were going through at the time, with everyone creating their own safe little parallel universes.





NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART STAFF

BIOGRAPHIES

KELLY BRIDEGUM

Kelly Bridegum became Curatorial Assistant at the Nevada Museum of Art while studying for her BA degree in Photography and Philosophy at the University of Nevada, Reno. In early 2005, Kelly worked as co-founder and curator of Fireplace Gallery, a venue dedicated exclusively to photographic excellence. Kelly is committed to visual and photographic literacy, involving her in numerous art education roles at the museum and local schools.

When not working at the Nevada Museum of Art, she can be found toiling in her photography lab, reading female-authored literature, writing furiously, or out and about rock climbing.

RACHEL HARTSOUGH

Rachel is Curator of Education at the Nevada Museum of Art. She was a founding member of the Sage Ridge School faculty, and taught Visual Arts and Digital Media to K-12 students in Reno, Nevada for seven years. Rachel was a member of the Nevada Academic Standards Development Team; a body created by the *Department of Education* to write the state's Visual Arts Standards for grades K-12. She is active in the Nevada community as a member of the City of Reno Arts and Culture Commission. Rachel received BA degrees in Art History and Religious Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and she earned her MS in Information Technology in Education through the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Nevada, Reno.

When she is not at work, she loves to play with her daughter and husband, cook and eat, work in her garden, explore local mountain ranges, and go on road trips with her family. Rachel welcomes any excuse for an adventure to any corner of the globe.

COLIN ROBERTSON

Colin is Associate Curator of Education at the Nevada Museum of Art. He previously lectured in English composition and literature at the University of Nevada, Reno, and has written a number of essays on the teaching of composition, American literature, and modern American art. He earned his BA in English with a minor concentration in studio art from Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, and his MA in Literature and Environment from the University of Nevada, Reno.

When he's not working, Colin can frequently be found cooking, hiking, reading, and enjoying life with his wife in Reno. He enjoys photography and printmaking, conversation and general merriment.

MIRIAM STANTON

Miriam became Curatorial Assistant at the Nevada Museum of Art after graduating from Grinnell College with a BA degree in Art History. Born and raised in Portola, CA (population 2000), Miriam is dedicated to bringing the arts to rural areas. While at Grinnell, Miriam worked on campus as a docent and intern at Faulconer Gallery. She also facilitated Visual Thinking Strategies (V.T.S.) sessions with students in local elementary schools. During the summer of 2003, Miriam developed and facilitated an art workshop program with guests at mountain resorts in Northern California.

When she isn't working at the Nevada Museum of Art, Miriam enjoys romping and reveling in the mountains, writing, and creating bizarre projects to send to friends in faraway places.

ANN M. WOLFE

Ann is the Curator of Exhibitions and Collections at the Nevada Museum of Art. From 2002 to 2005, Wolfe served as Assistant Curator at the San Jose Museum of Art in San Jose, CA, where she curated Suburban Escape: The Art of California Sprawl, the first exhibition to survey the work of over 50 artists who have devoted their careers to examining issues related to suburban development, tract home architecture, and land use. Wolfe also authored the book Suburban Escape: The Art of California Sprawl, with an introduction by cultural critic Lucy R. Lippard, published by The Center for American Places and distributed by the University of Chicago Press. Additional exhibitions curated and coordinated by Wolfe include Sandow Birk's Divine Comedy (2005), Yoshitomo Nara: Nothing Ever Happens (2004), Art of Zines 04 (2004), and Surf Culture: The Art History of Surfing (2003). She has also published numerous essays. Prior to 2002, Wolfe served in various curatorial capacities at the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; the de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara, CA; and the Fisher Gallery/USC Museum in Los Angeles, CA. Wolfe received her MA in Art History and Museum Studies from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA and her B.A. in Art History from Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, CA.

Web Resources

JOSÉ CHÁVEZ MORADO

http://www.graphicwitness.org/group/tgpchavezm.htm http://www.artnet.com/library/01/0161/T016197.asp

JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO

http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtorozco.html http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/travel/rpomade/rp3muralists.html

ENRIQUE CHAGOYA

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http://www.stanford.edu/dept/news/stanfordtoday/ed/9701/9701fea501.shtml

ELIZABETH GÓMEZ

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http://www.elizabethgomezart.com

SERGIO GONZOLEZ-TORNERO

http://www.gac.culture.gov.uk/search/Artist.asp?maker_id=127066

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GRONK

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LUIS JIMÉNEZ JR.

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CARMEN LOMAS GARZA

http://www.carmenlomasgarza.com

https://archivesofamericanart.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/lomas97.htm

GUSTAVO RAMOS RIVERA

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http://www.sjmusart.org/content/exhibitions/exhibition_info.phtml?itemID=270

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DIEGO RIVERA

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TINO RODRÍGUEZ

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FRANK ROMERO

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http://www.doublevisionarts.com/images/Romero/The%20Story%20of%20a%20City%20and%20a%20Life.htm

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CAMILLE ROSE GARCIA

http://www.camillerosegarcia.com/Pages/bio.html

http://www.mkgallery.com/artists/garcia/garcia.html

http://www.grandcentralartcenter.com/gcacPages/Artists/Garcia.html

RUFINO TAMAYO

http://www.latinamericanmasters.com/english/artist_tamayo_essay.html

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