

Isaiah Mitchell

Humanities

Kryczka

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Visual Analysis of The Chicano Mind (1973)

There are many things that come to mind when analyzing *The Chicano Mind* (1973) by Guillermo Martinez. I first saw it in the hallways last semester when going to a few of my classes, however I only ever looked at it on a surface level. When our humanities class went to go see it, I really started to understand and analyze the meaning behind the artwork. When observing the art I see a colorful man that appears as being crucified or locked with fists of all different colors. Surrounding the man are the faces of many different types of people. For example, there are women, men, different hair colors, hats, beard styles, and colors of the face. In the background are red and white stripes, and different types of chicano patterns. These patterns include different shades of colors ranging from green to purple, and blue or brown.

My interpretations for this work consists of what both Martinez wanted to portray, and what I believe its portrayal to be. Starting with the man in the center of the art, he represents a Chicano man in my eyes that is bound down by both his ancestors and through political and cultural limitations. I believe the faces of many different types of people are represented in these hands, with the artist using different colors like blue or green, however they still represent the diverse realistic group of skin tones that humans have all over the world. To better explain it, it means society as a whole helps in the cultural and political bounding of Chicano people. For example, there are specifically the faces of conquistadors and army men. Culturally conquistadors and their conquest helped disorganize and displace both the religion and culture of

chicano people. More specifically, the Spanish conquest of the Americas and Mexico is what comes to mind. Another interpretation is the red and white stripes that are highlighted in the background. I interpret these stripes as a representation of the United States, and it's part in culturally and politically "tying" down Chicanos through mass deportations, relocations of land, and through both religion and culture. The circle shaped americanized mural above the head of the Chicano man also stood out to me. It is almost as if the man is looking up towards it while he is being chained down through the hands of ultimelety society. Especially in today's American political climate, and with the current administration the art aged well in its depiction of how the American government uses and casts out Chicano people in this country, even though the United States was created with colonization and the stealing of land. Another aspect that stood out to me was at the top of the painting where there is a chicano skull wrapped in stripes and stars. This reinforces the concepts I interpreted with the red and white strips, while also showcasing how American culture can take over the chicano culture rooted in this land. Also, it affects chicano people in the United States by showing how Chicano culture can be undermined and unrepresented by mass media and the majority of the population.

Ultimately, this work impacts me as both a student and viewer in different ways. When analyzing this art it made me think about how Chicano people are affected by society both culturally and politically. A real life example it made me think about was the East Los Angeles Walkouts and how important chicano representation and equality is. I am part Mexican, and the majority of my family on my moms side identifies as Chicano, so looking at this art helped me remember not only where my family comes from, but how they are impacted as citizens of the United States. More specifically it made me think about chicano representation and awareness as a whole. I am glad a piece of art can be showcased to thousands of students daily at a place like

PCC, however there are still places where something like this would not be allowed. With this current administration it is definitely a possibility that we will see less of chicano representation accepted, but it still important to recognize arts of work like *The Chicano Mind* (1973) to keep and push forward progress in our society.