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Agency in Transition: Exploring the Photographic Artworks of Patssi Valdez in the 1980s

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Abstract

Patssi Valdez, a contemporary Chicana artist, has been the subject of limited scholarship that places her artistic production within a national, binary narrative. Positioned as either a traveling member of the avant-garde East Los Angeles art collective "Aficio" or the transition to a solo career as a painter, this dialogue seeks to re-evaluate the level of agency Valdez has exercised throughout her career or the range of artistic production she has explored. This project uses five photographic works produced by Valdez in the decade of the 1980s to bridge a dialogue of artistic subjectivity, the East LA youth music scene, the concept of self-fashioning, a following of critical and popular press, and a history of working-class and working women's labor. This project aims to explore the level of production and understanding of agency in transition, a form of analysis of the photographic work that situates Valdez in the context of Chicana art, where Valdez is the heroine of Chicana artistic production. This project explores Valdez's artistic production to help create a more comprehensive dialogue of the wide range of practices and aesthetics of Chicana photographers. This project also contributes to the wider efforts of diversifying the art historical canon.



Patssi Valdez (1981), *Color Photography*

Methods

Valdez's photographic works will be approached through a Chicana Feminist lens to analyze the lived/historical experiences of Valdez and contribute to the broader framework of Chicana art. This project incorporates the different photographic works created by Valdez in the 1980s.

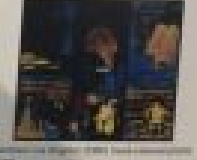
- The *Portrait of Sylvia Delgado* was exhibited in the 2007 exhibition *Art, Music, Queer Networks* as part of the 2007 Getty Initiative PAF, LANA.
- *Portrait of Don Juanita, Judith Hernandez and Patssi Valdez*, part of the 2017 Getty Initiative PAF, LANA.
- *Self-Portrait* was a part of the 2011 exhibition *Asian Film of the Division: A Retrospective 1957-1967*.
- *Section* was part of the 2011-2012 exhibition *Chicana: The Mexican American and Culture in Los Angeles, 1941-1980*.
- *Section* was also a part of the 2011-2012 exhibition *Chicana: The Mexican American and Culture in Los Angeles, 1941-1980*.

Discussion

While the scope of Chicana visual production limited work has been dedicated to studying photography, the use of a Chicana feminist lens is vital to understanding the context of the artistic work and acknowledging systemic bias within historical and academic practices. Valdez's photographic oeuvre the transition into a new media and an interdisciplinary use of color, two components that have marked her career as a painter. Valdez's photographic production consistently demonstrates her talent and independence as both subject and artist. Valdez's photographs reflect different modes by which contemporary Chicana subjectivity can be understood and re-crafted. The process of self-fashioning and personal presentation that Valdez as the subject of agency manifested and re-visited in photography. It is through modes of self-fashioning that work Valdez with a dynamic of photography, style, reflecting Chicana subjectivity in a new light.



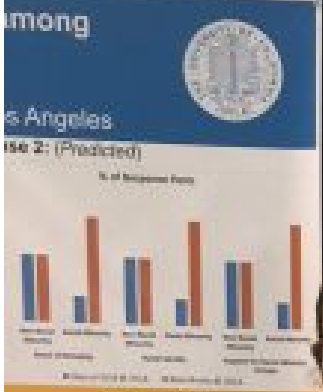
Sylvia Delgado (1981), *Portrait of Sylvia Delgado*



Judith Hernandez (1981), *Portrait of Judith Hernandez*

Acknowledgments

This project would not be possible without the generous support of Dr. Christine Houtzoffer Black. The research project was also conducted as part of the Undergraduate Research Fellow Program funded by the Undergraduate Research Center for Humanities, Arts, and Culture in Los Angeles. I would like to thank you to the UCLA Office of Undergraduate Research for sponsoring the printing of this poster.



Implications

This framework provides insights for institutions such as educational settings in offering belonging among racial minority students. This present research aligns with and extends past research on culturally-relevant environments, suggesting that:

- Virtual culturally-relevant spaces offer different psychological benefits for minority students compared to virtual spaces.
- Race-specific social media can be a means for belonging for minority students.

Future research should explore the role of social media in social media communities and unique racial climates.

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The photo that Black shared on Facebook. ugeducation.ucla.edu/2018/07/19/art-gallery-publishes-ucla-undergraduates-research-on-artist-patssi-valdez/