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2021

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Materiality in Mexico's Arte Popular: Amate as a Case Study

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

Estefania Sanchez

September 2021

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Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to my advisor and chair of my committee, Dr. Aleca Le Blanc, for her patience, advice, and understanding during this pandemic year. She always knew what questions and comments to provide in order to challenge me and my writing. It was those challenging moments that led to the current version of my thesis, one that I can say I am proud of. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the members of my committee, Dr. Jason Weems and artist Gerald Clarke for their time, comments, and support, and not just for this project, but also their guidance and support on the projects I undertook in their classes. When it comes to professors and classes, I must extend my utmost gratitude to Dr. Savannah Esquivel, who through her seminar Landscapes of Survivance, provided pivotal readings that ended shaping my thesis into this final version.

There are also many others who I want to acknowledge for taking the time to speak with me, whether it was in their office, through zoom or a phone call. Every single conversation I had provided new sources, new questions, and reignited the passion for my research when I felt it dwindling. Thank you to: Dr. Fatima Quraishi, Professor of Islamic Art at UCR, Dr. Ngarino Ellis, Associate Professor at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, Dr. Gabriela Germana, visiting instructor in Contemporary Art History at the University of South Florida, Emelie Gevalt, Curator of Folk Art at the American Folk Art Museum, Dr. Amy Groleau, Curator of Latin American Collections at the Museum of International Folk Art, Dr. Rick Lopez, Professor of History and Environmental Studies

at Amherst College, Dr. Nancy Marie Mithlo, Professor of Gender Studies at UCLA, and Ana Paula Fuentes, a full-time guide and consultant for Traditions Mexico.

A special thank you to Sonja Sekely-Rowland, Curator of Visual Resources Collection at UCR, for all their help with image copyright, and Leslie Paprocki, Graduate Coordinator of the Art History department at UCR, for her help in submitting all the necessary paperwork needed to ensure the processing of the thesis and degree was completed.

I would like to acknowledge the amazing ladies in my cohort who kept me company during this journey and who allowed me to keep them company on theirs: Rebekkah Hart, Chloe Millhauser, Jennifer Vanegas Rocha. They kept me sane, on task, looked at my drafts, and cheered me on at every step.

Thank you to Ashley McNelis and Carla Villacis for editing my drafts. Thank you to my emotional support system who checked on me, made me laugh, and lend a listening ear every step of the way, the best of friends I could ask for, Dan, Carla, Hana, Malissa, and Preeti. Last but not least, I must acknowledge and thank my family for putting up with my stressed and anxious person the last two years. When I forgot to eat, I could always count on them knocking on my door to bring me food. Thank you.

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Introduction:

A New Look at Arte Popular

In the winter of 2019, I read, women studies scholar Eli Bartra's book, *Women in Mexican Folk Art: Of Promises, Betrayals, Monsters, and Celebrities*, as a starting point in finding a possible master's thesis idea. In her introduction, Bartra states, "I make use of the concept of 'folk art', but at the same time I believe it should be questioned and reviewed," which sparked my curiosity: which part of the concept needed to be reviewed and questioned?¹ The 1997 *Oxford Dictionary of Art* defines folk art as "a term describing objects and decorations made in a traditional fashion by craftsmen without formal training, either for daily use and ornament or for special occasions such as weddings and funerals."² Meanwhile, the Museum of International Folk Art (MoIFA) prefaces their definition with the following, "there are many different ways to think about folk art. In fact, there is no one definition of folk art. In collecting and displaying folk art, the museum considers various concepts."³ Their definition states that folk art can be decorative but also utilitarian, everyday use or ceremonial, and it continues with either/or characteristics that gives it a wide enough berth to include many objects but does not help define what folk art is. The museum does not narrow the definition in the way that the Oxford Dictionary of Art does. On one side we have too wide of a definition and on the

¹ Eli Bartra, *Women in Mexican Folk Art: Of Promises, Betrayals, Monsters and Celebrities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 4.

² Chilvers, Ian., Harold Osborne, and Dennis Farr. *The Oxford Dictionary of Art* New ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 202. See Appendix A for a list.

³ "What is Folk Art," Museum of International Folk Art, accessed on February 2020, <http://www.internationalfolkart.org/learn/what-is-folk-art.html>.

other we have a narrowed definition, which verified Bartra's statement that the term of folk art needed to be reviewed. Furthermore, folk art is an English term, which begs the question: what is the term that a country like México uses?

According to Dr. Janet Brody Esser, one of the first art historians in the United States to research Mexico's folk art, the translation of folk art is *arte popular*, art of the people.⁴ The term *arte popular*, however, is plagued by the same varied traits as folk art in the United States.⁵ Historian and author of *Enciclopedia de México*, Jose Rogelio Alvarez defined *arte popular* as: local, have a communal identity, individualistic design but anonymous in its production.⁶ Scholar and known promoter of *arte popular* Porfirio Martinez Peñaloza emphasized raw materials as an essential aspect of *arte popular*.⁷ In the inaugural publication of Mexico City's, Museo de Arte Popular (MAP) catalogue *Arte del Pueblo: Manos de Dios* (2005), historian José N. Iturriaga provides five characteristics that are the most "notorious" aspects of *arte popular*: 1. Traditional, passed from generation to generation, 2. Community based, 3. Generally anonymous, 4. Utilitarian or everyday objects, and last but not least, 5. materials are determined by the environment.⁸ Although this definition still lacks clarity when it comes to specific attributes, its use in the catalogue of MAP, a nationally-funded institution, affirmed it as

⁴ Janet Brody Esser, "The Persistent Memory: New Directions in Folk Art Studies," In *Arte Vivo: Living Traditions in Mexican Folk Art*, ed. by James R. Ramsey (Memphis: Memphis State University, 1984), 91.

⁵ I will be using the term, *arte popular*, for the rest of the thesis and will therefore not italicize the term as I move forward.

⁶ Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, *Arte Popular Mexicano: Cinco Siglos* (Ciudad de México: Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, 1996) 78.

⁷ Martínez Peñaloza, Porfirio. "Arte Popular Mexicano" in *Arte Popular Mexicano*, 9-34 (Mexico City: Editorial Herrero, 1975), 21.

⁸ Museo de Arte Popular, *Arte Del Pueblo, Manos de Dios: Colección del Museo de Arte Popular* (México, D.F: Landucci, 2005) 97.

the foundation upon which I began to think about the objects categorized as arte popular in Mexico.

To get a broad sense of what kind of objects were considered arte popular, I perused the pages of the catalogue *Arte Popular de México* by Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de Artesanías (FONART). With its 125 pages it was easier to wield than the *Arte del Pueblo: Manos de Dios* catalogue with its 300 plus pages. *Arte Popular de México* by FONART included photographs of different kinds of art, ranging from blue ceramic plates with painted orange and yellow flowers to brown ones with engraved flowers, to vibrant green trees made from clay, to white cotton blouses decorated with bands of red flowers. However, it was a magenta candle (Figure 1) that piqued my interest due to its intricate decoration despite being made completely out of wax.

The image of the candle takes up the whole page, the base of it almost reaching the bottom edge. The top section of the candle, as depicted on the photograph, shows the glare of the light upon the reflexive surface of the wax. The short description accompanying the photograph confirmed that the object is made of wax. The biggest part of the candle's decoration consists of three slender concentric wreaths: the one in the outer edges is made up of magenta leaves with a buttercup flower, the second wreath is made up of purple leaves with purple buttercup flowers, and the last and innermost wreath is made up of bright orange marigolds. Every flower that makes up the wreaths is made from wax, and the flowers at the top half of the wreaths share the glare from the waxy surface. The description informed me that this object was made by Graciela

Ramirez López, from Santa Cruz Meyehualco, Iztapalapa.⁹ As mentioned earlier, one of the defining characteristics of arte popular given by Iturriaga is anonymity, but here is a name attached to an object. It is not the only object with the name of the artists attached to them. According to Marta Turok, the subdirector of FONART (at the time of the catalogue's publishing in 2006) one of the organization's objectives is to fight the idea of anonymity and provide both a name and face to the arte popular objects being created.¹⁰

Since FONART's creation in 1974, the organization has worked with the creators of arte popular to sell the objects they make. The aid they provide includes helping artists buy materials, advice on how to work the market, and the creation of contests to stimulate creativity.¹¹ Here is an organization that is fighting one of the traits that define arte popular, the definition is being altered. In one of the essays in the FONART catalogue, Carlos Mordo, anthropologist specializing in arte popular from Latin America, provides a brief history that starts with the mixing of ancient Mesoamerican cultures with the Spanish. He moves on to discuss how arte popular came from Indigenous traditions and artists after the Mexican Revolution began to look at arte popular as the foundation of Mexico's identity. Mordo moves into the present, stating how "more than sixty indigenous communities, distributed across the many regions of Mexico, unfold their wisdom and art on objects that have ancient traditions..."¹² Even in the present time, the

⁹ Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanía, *Arte Popular de México: 30 años de reconocimiento al Arte Popular Mexicano*, (México City: Impresora y Encuadernadora Progreso, S.A. de C.V. (IEPSA), 2006), 110.

¹⁰ Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanía, *Arte Popular de México*, 21-22.

¹¹ Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanía, *Arte Popular de México*, 19.

¹² Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanía, *Arte Popular de México*, 29. My translation of the Spanish sentence, "más de sesenta pueblos indígenas distribuidos a lo largo y ancho del país despliegan hoy su sabiduría y su arte en objetos de tradición milenaria..."

Indigenous communities are an important aspect of arte popular, yet they were not part of arte popular's definition. Although Bartra touches on Indigenous communities in Mexico by discussing the history of folk art as being seen as "low art" because it was thought of as "primitive art", the discussion does not dive into the issues of racial and ethnic identities. The realization hit that there was a lack of contextualizing arte popular within its connection and relationship to Indigenous communities. This paper discusses this absence focusing on the way that arte popular has appropriated Indigenous culture, as well as providing a case study for one possible way of approaching arte popular that focuses on Indigenous communities as opposed to a Mexican national identity.

Race in Mexico: Indigenous Invisibility

Throughout the catalogues, there are sporadic mentions of Indigenous communities, but there are so few and far in between, without any real substance to their inclusion that it does not lead to acknowledgement of contemporary communities. It is not only that the definition of arte popular does not mention Indigenous communities, but that when it comes to describing objects and providing context, the scholarship within the catalogues tend to minimize the history and connection of objects to Indigenous communities. Looking at the rest of Mordo's essay, moving beyond the history and into his explanation of different objects, his description of Indigenous communities is brief. He mentions that certain embroidery is found on the blouses of the Zapotecas of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, and of the Otomies, Mazahuas, Huastecas, Tepehuas, Totonacas and Nahuas.¹³ Beyond the briefest of descriptive measures, there is no real connection

¹³ Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanía, *Arte Popular de México*, 34.

made between the objects to their communities. What is repeated, however, is how much the arte popular (Mordo uses the word *artesanía*) is an expression of México.¹⁴ In *Manos de Dios*, scholar Alfonso Soto Soria in his essay “Artesanías indígenas y artesanías mestizas” distinguishes Indigenous art from the mestizo art, by calling the Indigenous art as not having innovative techniques and materials, as well as using primitive concepts that focus on rituals.¹⁵ The small amount of context that is provided ends up describing the objects of Indigenous communities as static, relics of the past. Iturriaga does not mention the Indigenous connection as one of the five “notorious” characteristics listed earlier, but it does state that arte popular is mostly mestizo, and that the re-evaluation of arte popular is hindered by Mexico’s discrimination of Indigenous communities.

The lack of mentioning Indigenous communities could be seen as inclusive as it does not differentiate between communities; however, this lack of differentiation can also aid in keeping the Indigenous communities marginalized. Arte popular ends up being automatically assumed to have Indigenous authorship due to the Mexican identity’s connection to Indigenous culture as well as having no Indigenous authorship because Indigeneity is not an accepted identity. This can be attributed to the combination of white as default, also known as white normativity, and Mexico’s *mestizaje*.¹⁶ White as default is the idea that whiteness is the norm, thus when there is no specificity as to communities

¹⁴The difference between what is considered artesanía and arte popular can be a separate paper in itself. However, for this paper I will be using the term arte popular to encompass artesanías.

¹⁵ Museo de Arte Popular, *Arte Del Pueblo, Manos de Dios*, 128.

¹⁶Mestizaje is translated to miscegenation however I will be using the term mestizaje in order to refer to Mexico’s specific complex history. I will also not italicize it moving forward because it will be used throughout the paper.

and individuals, society will tend to assume the authorship belongs to a white person.¹⁷

Without direct mentions to Indigenous communities, the definitions of arte popular – and descriptions attached to objects – end up guiding people into ignoring connections to contemporary Indigenous communities because people are not used to acknowledging them.¹⁸ However, because race is complicated by mestizaje in Mexico, the white normativity concept is less about people identifying as racially white and more about people not identifying as Indigenous.

Mexico's idea of mestizaje is simply speaking, the mixing of Spanish and Indigenous people, however identity in Mexico is more complicated than everyone being mestizo or being solely of Spanish blood or Indigenous blood.¹⁹ In colonial times, although society was categorized into different castes as depicted by casta paintings (Figure 2), identity remained fluid. A person's identity would be based on their associations and respectability, with clothing and ways of life being used to determine

¹⁷ White as a default can be applied to statements like "I see no color" which might sound inclusive but ends up denying the different experiences of individuals. Michael Morris in his Book Review "Standard White: Dismantling White Normativity" defines white normativity as "white people are people, and the members of other racial groups are people to the extent they resemble white people." Michael Morris, "Standard White: Dismantling White Normativity," *California Law Review* 104, no. 4 (August 2016): 952.

¹⁸ México is not used to discussing the racism problem within its borders. After actor Tenoch Huerta tweeted that after México was finished supporting the U.S.A. anti-racist movements, could it talk about its own racism? This started a tweet thread with people sharing the discrimination they experienced in México because of their skin color. A study shared by journalist Marcos Gonzalez Diaz from El Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación, about 54.8% of the population confirms that they are insulted because of the color of their skin.

Marcos, "Racismo en México: como la muerte de Geroge Floyd desato en el país un debate 'del que nadie quiere hablar'," *BBC News*. June 5, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-52931479>.

¹⁹ Mestizaje focuses on Europeans and Indigenous, ignoring any of the other races and ethnicities that make up the population of México.

one's caste.²⁰ The term mestizo at that time was not always applied to the children of a Spanish and Indigenous couple, according to Dominican priest Gregorio García in 1607, they were considered fully Spanish. In the *Casta painting* (figure 2), the top row depicts the lineage of a Spaniard and an Indigenous woman, whose descendants marry into Spanish families until the family becomes fully Spanish by the fourth generation. Which reflects cleric José Gumilla's stance that after a couple of generations a family could be not only fully Spanish but "perfectly white, just like a Frenchwoman, born and raised in Paris."²¹ This idea of mestizaje shifts to focus on culture and education after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). Mestizaje became the way to create a unified nation as well as assimilate the Indigenous populations. This would rid Mexico of its "indigenous problem," and as curator Olivier Debrouse stated, "mestizaje has been applied to social and cultural issues to define Mexico's difference from Western models by validating the destroyed indigenous substrate."²² Instead of designating rural populations as Indigenous, the government identified them as peasants. However, this did not mean that the rural communities did not still identify themselves as culturally Indigenous. They could be both.²³ For example, indigenous organizations formed in the 1950s and 1960s, demanded new schools. In 1975, during the First National Congress of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous communities came together to express their right to self-

²⁰Rebecca Earle, "The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification, and Colonialism." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 73, no. 3 (July 2016): 433.

²¹Rebecca Earle, "The Pleasures of Taxonomy," 445.

²² Olivier Debrouse, "Mexican Art on Display," In *Effects of the Nation: Mexican Art in Age of Globalization* ed. by Carl Good and John V. Waldron (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001) 21.

²³Rebecca Overmyer-Velazquez, "The Anti-Quincentenary Campaign in Guerrero, Mexico: Indigenous Identity and the Dismantling of the Myth of the Revolution," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol 46, Race and Ethnicity: in a global context (2002): 89.

determination.²⁴ Over recent decades, Mexico's mestizaje has been and continues to be criticized as more and more Indigenous communities organize and clearly voice their multiple identities.

However, the process of removing mestizaje as the sole unified Mexican identity is slow, and it is this continued idea that rural communities are more peasant rather than Indigenous, that causes arte popular to be discussed in purely rural peasant terms and ignoring its Indigenous context. In addition, there is also the romanticization of Indigenous communities through which communities are pictured as "traditional" and not "modern," and are instead connected to rituals and magic. This affects the way that both Mexican citizens and foreigners' have approached arte popular, that is, as an exotic commodity. This has added to the lack of contextualization and connection of arte popular to Indigenous communities. Seen as a commodity, arte popular has had to navigate between being seen as a tourist trinket or tourist art while also toeing the line of art in a Western-European art historical sense. This paper is not concerned so much with elevating arte popular into the category of fine art as seen in other scholarship around categories like folk art, tourist art, and arte popular; instead this paper is looking at the idea of tourist art as an object that can provide insight into a community.

²⁴Rebecca Overmyer-Velazquez, "The Anti-Quincentenary Campaign in Guerrero, Mexico", 97.

Tourist Art : Authenticity

Authenticity and whether that attribute is tied to an object's intended end use, decorative or utilitarian, is questioned when objects are created for the commercial market rather than for utilitarian purpose. Many of these objects have multiple commercial outlets. FONART's mission is to support artists (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) by marketing their works, and there are also many private markets and vendors who sell arte popular so the commodity aspect of arte popular is prominent. Whether an object is being sold through FONART (or other government organization) or outside markets, the objects are commodified and receive their value from the consumer's need to own this object. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner point out how when it comes to tourist art "consumers [are] motivated both by genuine admiration for the technical expertise and aesthetic sensibility of non-Western artists and, like the anthropologists, by a romantic and nostalgic desire for the 'primitive' induced by the experience of modernization."²⁵ It is this image of a traditional Indigenous community creating traditional objects that the Indigenous communities use to advertise their creations but it is also this reason that, in an art historical context, causes it to be seen as inauthentic and diminishes arte popular's importance as an object of study.

The idea that tourist art is a commodity and therefore not worthy of study can be traced back to the early categorization of "primitive art." According to Larry Shiner, "what art historians call 'authentic' Primitive or Traditional Art is a piece 1) made by a

²⁵ Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," In *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. by Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999) 12.

member of a small-scale society, 2) in the society's traditional style, and 3) intended for a traditional social or religious function" but because tourist art are objects created for sell they are not seen as authentic.²⁶ Although the term "primitive art" is no longer widely used, its history remains still and it is understood to refer to objects created by Indigenous populations. Hugo DeBlock, in his conclusion to his book *Artifak: Cultural Revival, Tourism, and the Recrafting of History in Vanuatu*, writes:

Authenticity is the lens adopted to understand processes of commoditization of self and object in all its varied forms and conceptualized locals as well as outsiders in parallel ways. When local people become aware of their authenticity as a form of symbolic capital, they can use it to assert new kinds of power.²⁷

There are things that can be learned by looking at the way that communities commodify themselves and their objects and perhaps more importantly, we are able to understand the communities as active agents. This is what arte popular is missing, there is not enough discussion on the commodification process nor on the ways that Indigenous communities actively participate in the process.

By not including the Indigenous voices when discussing arte popular, the communities end up looking as if they are passive when in reality, they are active in the market. For example, in 2019, the Mexican government sued Venezuelan designer Carolina Herrera for cultural appropriation.²⁸ In her resort 2020 collection, Carolina

²⁶Larry Shiner, "'Primitive Fakes', 'Tourist Art', and the Ideology of Authenticity." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol 52, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 226.

²⁷Hugo DeBlock. *Artifak: Cultural Revival, Tourism, and the Recrafting of History in Vanuatu*, (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2019) 215.

²⁸ In the essay, "Racial Plagiarism and Fashion", Minh-Ha T. Pham looks at the way that Marc Jacobs Spring/Summer 2017 collection included models in fake dreadlocks. Pham makes a case for moving away from thinking about these issues as cultural appropriation because "cultural appropriation/appreciation blurs crucial dynamics of power that, though they may be linked, are not the same, particularly the difference between the imposition and negation of power (e.g., the difference between

Herrera revealed dresses and coats that had embroidery designs that originated in the community of Tenango de Doria in the state of Hidalgo.²⁹ On one side, there is the Mexican government, who was stepping in for an indigenous community, even though it has a long way to go when it comes to negotiating with Indigenous communities.³⁰ On the other side, there is Carolina Herrera, an outsider to the community of Tenango de Doria, who states she was trying to show her appreciation. Neither of these two entities are from the community of Tenango de Doria. The news articles did not take the opportunity to emphasize the agency of the Tenango de Doria community by bringing in their opinions in the matter or go into deeper discussion. The discussion about commodity and appropriation will be something this paper touches upon as a way to connect arte popular to Indigenous communities.

A Decolonizing Approach

In a broad sense, the purpose of this paper is to provide a space that will aid Indigenous communities in entering the discussions around arte popular. For this reason, I want to discuss the approach I have implemented throughout my research and writing. It

appropriation/appreciation and assimilation) and the difference between racist representation and racial capitalism.” Minh-Ha T Pham, “Racial Plagiarism and Fashion,” *QED: A journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, vol 4, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 73.

²⁹ Friedman, Vanessa. “Homage or Theft? Carolina Herrera Called Out by Mexican Minister.” *The New York Times*. June 13, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/13/fashion/carolina-herrera-mexico-appropriation.html>

³⁰ A report in 2018 by Cultural Survival, an Indigenous led non-profit organization that focuses on international Indigenous rights, states that “Indigenous activists face violence and intimidation from illegally operating companies, drug cartels, and from government and police officials. Crimes against Indigenous Peoples are committed with impunity and the government’s support to the affected communities has been limited.” Cultural Survival. “Observation on the State of Indigenous Human Rights in Mexico.” Prepared for: The 31st Session of Universal Periodic Review Working of the United States. (March 2018) 1.

can be easy to forget the power dynamics and historical context that comes with being a scholar who is not affiliated with a specific Indigenous community and who is non-Indigenous in general. In Linda Tihiwai Smith's (Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou) influential work, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012), she points out that it is through the visage of research that non-Indigenous scholars have transformed Indigenous communities into objects (specimens).³¹ She states that "an object has no life force, no humanity, no spirit of its own, so therefore 'it' cannot make an active contribution" and this approach (whether unconsciously or not) of dehumanizing Indigenous people continues to perpetuate imperialism and colonialism.³² With imperialism and colonialism being the foundation of the Western knowledge taught in academia and implemented in research, I have looked towards decolonizing methodologies to aid me in discussing topics that impact Indigenous communities.

According to Smith, "decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices."³³ One way of being critical of my own research, the research of others, and my discipline, is to position myself within my work. This is

³¹ Linda Tihiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2012), 26.

In *Making History: IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts*, all artists have their tribal affiliations included in parenthesis. Nancy Marie Mithlo in her book *Knowing Native Arts* also includes Indigenous affiliations to artists and scholars. Following their lead, I will be including tribal affiliations.

³² Linda Tihiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 93. According to Linda, "research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized. It is regulated through the formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms, and the institutions that support them (including the state)." Linda Tihiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 27.

³³ Linda Tihiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 70.

something that Smith does in her introduction, “I wrote from a position of being indigenous in an English-speaking world.” Art historian Jessica L. Horton does it as well in her article “All Our Relations’ as an Eco-Art Historical Challenge: Lessons from Standing Bear’s Muslin,” positioning herself within her research as “a white-settler ally, art historian, and being made of water...”³⁴ Following in their footsteps, I am writing as a non-white settler ally in the United States, whose family was born and raised in the settler state of Mexico.

I am also writing as an art historian –a discipline that (like others) owes its beginning and continuous existence to colonialism. Currently, the Western framework tends to be the universal measure through which we understand art, but we “cannot imagine an indigenous aesthetic while using Western cultural standards.”³⁵ This paper is specifically, a critique of art history’s scholarship on arte popular, which has not discussed the depth of cultural appropriation on which arte popular was established. For this reason, chapter one (briefly) maps arte popular’s foundation and moves through the 20th century, showing the different ways that the appropriation manifested itself around arte popular. I look at the development of arte popular as it was used to create a national identity founded in mestizaje and how it branched out into tourist art. By doing this, I am following scholar Scott Lauria Morgensen advice, “by exposing normative knowledge production as being not only non-Indigenous but colonial, [Indigenous methodologies] denaturalize power within settler societies and ground knowledge production in

³⁴ Jessica L Horton, “All Our Relations’ as an Eco-Art Historical Challenge: Lessons from Standing Bear’s Muslin,” *Ecologies, agents, terrains*, c.1, (2018): 75.

³⁵ Nancy Marie Mithlo, *Knowing Native Art*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 56.

decolonization.”³⁶ By pointing out and looking specifically at these complex interactions that founded arte popular, I will be taking a step towards decolonizing art history’s current discussion of arte popular.

In chapter 2, I provide a case study of a possible way to think about arte popular that looks at the complexities of the objects and adds the Indigenous context. One way to approach arte popular, which I employ in chapter 2 is looking at materials. The case study focuses on the bark paper, *amate*, and its relationship, past and present with the Hñāhñu (Otomi) from San Pablito, Pueblo.³⁷ I create a biography of the relationship the Hñāhñu (Otomi) have with amate and how dependent they have become on the material. By doing this, I move away from looking at arte popular as purely tourist art and as purely objects that encompass a Mexican identity. Instead, I chose to look at amate and the Hñāhñu (Otomi) because of their deep history and the current ecological predicament both are facing.

³⁶Scott Laura Morgensen, “Destabilizing the Settler Academy: The Decolonial Effects of Indigenous Methodologies,” *American Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2012): 805.

³⁷ I will use both names in conjunction, hñāhñu (Otomi).

This leads to chapter 3, where I discuss the responsibility of art historical scholarship and its relationship with society. I bring up multiple directions art historians can take that don't reiterate the national identity narrative and instead looks at the effects of arte popular, past and present. For example, what is the responsibility of artists when using materials like amate? Eli Bartra has started the conversation, but there is more to be discussed when it comes to gender in arte popular. These are paths for longer periods of study and far beyond the scope of this thesis but I briefly touch upon them in chapter 3 to help art history move forward and into interdisciplinary studies. Together, these chapters move arte popular beyond its currently stagnant scholarship within Art History.

Chapter 1

History of Arte Popular: Cultural Appropriation

The art historical scholarship about arte popular does not explicitly discuss its cultural appropriation. This is, as I explained in my introduction, a combination of Mexico's complex idea of mestizaje as well as art history's perspective on tourist art. Historian, Rick Lopez's book, *Crafting Mexico* provides a strong foundation for arte popular's development in the first half of the 20th century, which happens to be the basis for this chapter's first section. This paper is not a detailed step by step telling of arte popular's history from the term's first usage to the present.

What this chapter does is provide pieces of arte popular's history and development throughout the 20th century, discussing the mestizaje and tourist art beliefs that affected the spread of arte popular. By doing this, I make cultural appropriation the bedrock of arte popular. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, appropriation can be defined as the "[taking] or [making] use of without authority or right."³⁸ As this chapter shows, Indigenous culture was appropriated and continuous to be, all in the name of Mexico's national unity.

³⁸ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "appropriate," accessed May 26, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/appropriate>.

After the Revolution: Mestizaje

The establishment of arte popular was a reaction to the tumultuous period that led to the Mexican Revolution. This period from 1876 to 1911 is known as the Porfiriato, so named after the dictator who was in control during that period, Porfirio Díaz. Díaz encouraged a European aesthetic to promote Mexico to foreigners as modern, as opposed to ‘savage’ and ‘uncivilized’.³⁹ In the 1889 World Fair hosted in Paris, Mexican geographer Antonio García Cubas argued that “Europeans commanded the country [of Mexico]” because of how much President Díaz worked towards getting Europe’s approval.⁴⁰ The Porfiriato’s visual program included monuments, like the Angel of Independence located in the center of Mexico City, and street design like the Paseo de la Reforma (also located in Mexico City) which took their inspirations from Paris.⁴¹ It was during this time that Mexico saw a boost in population growth widening the disparity between the poor and wealthy. This disparity led to the revolution in 1910, which lasted until 1920, with the election of President Alvaro Obregón. He began to implement programs that would aid in unifying the nation. One key element to this unification was the creation of a new national image, one that would overwrite the European image Díaz had cultivated. Unlike the period of Díaz which focused on the ancient past as a foundation for Mexico, the 1920s saw a movement towards looking at contemporary Indigenous communities.

³⁹ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico : Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010) 4.

⁴⁰ Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 89.

⁴¹ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 4.

This idea of looking towards the Indigenous populations and incorporating them into a national identity had support from anthropologist Manuel Gamio.⁴² In his 1916 book, *Forjando patria*, he wrote that in order for Mexico to become stable, they needed to integrate the Indigenous populations and “[ethnicize] the national identity.”⁴³ What Gamio meant by this was for the Indigenous communities to be brought into modernity by “incorporating them with the European type, which is more advanced and efficient.”⁴⁴ When it came to objects that the Indigenous communities created, like pottery and embroidery, Gamio praised them but he saw their production process as backwards and wanted to modernize it, and this would create art that was solely Mexican.⁴⁵ This look towards modernizing the Indigenous culture would be something picked up by artists later in the 1920s in the name of national unity. It is in 1921, the term *arte popular* is first used and established, along with the first objects that will come to make up that category.

In September 1921, the centennial of Mexico’s independence, the government hosted a huge festival made up of two different sections: *Noche Mexicana*, a garden celebration with performances and dances, and an exhibition of *arte popular*, aptly name, *Exhibición de Arte Popular* (Exhibition of Popular Art). Mexican painter Adolfo Best Maugard planned *Noche Mexicana*, uniting “cosmopolitan modernism, romantic primitivism, and postrevolutionary nationalism” to provide México a new aesthetic that

⁴²Manuel Gamio was a student of anthropologist Franz Boas and is known as the father of Mexican anthropology. Natasha Varner, *La Raza Cosmética : Beauty, Identity, and Settler Colonialism in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020) 33.

⁴³ Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 8-9.

⁴⁴ Natasha Varner, *La Raza Cosmética*, 34.

⁴⁵ Olivier Debrouse, “Mexican Art on Display,” 23.

was solely “Mexican”.⁴⁶ The *mexicanidad* (Mexicanness) presented in this festival stemmed from the combination of Indigenous culture, like “exotic” Yaqui dancers, and national figures, like charros.⁴⁷ Without the inclusion of this romantic and curated version of Indigenous culture the national identity would have remained a copy of European aesthetic which the Mexico government did not want.

The festival was mostly a hit, with negative reviews coming from the elite, who did not think the performances were praiseworthy. Francisco Zamora, a critic, came to its defense, writing that people were confused when they read Ballet Folklórico as one of the performances in Noche Mexicana, for they were thinking of the European ballet, whereas these dances were traditional to Mexico. What México needed to do, according to Zamora, is have professional Mexican artists incorporate these traditions into their art and elevate these forms into actual art.⁴⁸ This was a similar sentiment to Gamio, who saw that the Indigenous production of art needed to be aided and that artists should be inspired by the Indigenous cultures because that was their heritage.⁴⁹ This would also make the art a mix between European and Indigenous culture, enforcing a unified identity. At the same time, there were people who believed that the objects the Indigenous communities were creating had to remain authentic. It was these authentic objects that made up the *Exhibición de Arte Popular*.

⁴⁶Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 69.

⁴⁷ Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 69-71.

⁴⁸ Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 73.

⁴⁹ Olivier Debrouse, “Mexican Art on Display,” 23.

Emerging artists Jorge Enciso and Roberto Montenegro, as well as the already well-known artist at the time, Doctor Atl, came together to plan *the Exhibición de Arte Popular*. Unlike Best Maugard who looked at the Indigenous cultures as the foundation upon which to build and evolve into an “authentic” Mexico, Enciso, Montenegro, and Dr. Atl regarded the objects created by the Indigenous communities as art and worthy of praise, as long as they were authentic. As Enciso and Montenegro proceeded to plan the exhibition, there were three objectives, “first, they wanted to bring together popular art from every part of the republic so as to discern a common aesthetic” and fit all the works into one category.⁵⁰ Their second objective was “to display examples of high-quality popular art.”⁵¹ However, because there was not enough time for Enciso and Montenegro to travel across the nation to pick the objects, they asked state officials to collect objects and send them to Mexico City. The state officials were confused because they did not consider those objects as worth anything, but despite this hiccup, Enciso and Montenegro were able to amass enough objects for the exhibition. The objects that were chosen to be displayed were arranged haphazardly on shelves, resembling curio shops and market stalls.

This is where their third objective came in to “encourage urban middle- and upper-class visitors to admire, and then seek to possess, these markers of *mexicanidad*.”⁵² Their hope was that the creation of a market for arte popular would help the marginalized communities in gaining more income. Both the exhibit and the catalogue

⁵⁰ Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 79.

⁵¹ Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 79.

⁵² Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 79.

published with it, emphasized that “artisans created these crafts not as commodities but out of a native impulse toward artistic creation and to fill their daily needs.”⁵³ (Figure 3) The objects that Dr. Atl included in the catalogue had to be “authentic” and the more “Indian” the object was, the more “Mexican” it was. For this reason, he did not include talavera pottery from Puebla in the catalogue, as it was “not Indian in character”, but he included metalwork adapted from the Spanish, as it carried “the stamp and vigor of the Indian races.”⁵⁴ Enciso, Montenegro and Dr. Atl set the standard for authentic arte popular as well as the beginning of its tourist art category. I have not come upon clear evidence as to what role if any the Indigenous communities had when it came to the exhibition, but it could be presumed that they willingly sent the objects to be part of the exhibit, perhaps thinking about the possible income. There were also artisans who took drawing classes at the San Carlos Academy during the 19th century. It is unclear if the artisans were Indigenous but it is a possibility which would hint at communities being active participants in some way during this amalgamation of objects. I would say there is a difference between selling the objects and using them to create a national identity. This exhibit set the terms of authenticity for tourists, both local and foreign, but as authentic arte popular began to spread outside of Mexico, other artists wanted to spread a modern, or universal, kind of arte popular.⁵⁵

⁵³ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 85.

⁵⁴ Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 89.

⁵⁵ Olivier Debrouse, “Mexican Art on Display,” 29.

An Indigenous Modernity

Throughout the rest of the 1920s, Mexico used the idea of an “Indigenous aesthetic” established by arte popular to continue forming a national identity; however, it was an aesthetic that had different renditions depending on who was adopting it. Government and artists worked together, whether it was through commissions or running institutions, on establishing Mexico’s national identity. In this section I look at a very small pool of artists and artistic movements as they developed in the early 20th century and their implementation of an “Indigenous aesthetic” as a way to push a Mexican identity.

First and foremost, when it comes to a Mexican aesthetic, we must talk about José Vasconcelos, the director of the Ministry of Education who was responsible for a short piece of writing that influenced mestizaje. In 1925, Vasconcelos published *La raza cósmica*, which spoke about all the races coming together into one cosmic race where all the terrible traits of the other races would be erased by being mixed with Europeans. This became an added layer to the idea of mestizaje and it was beautifully represented by Diego Rivera in a mural titled *Creation* at the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso in Mexico City (Figure 4). Vasconcelos’ commissions of murals influenced Mexico’s muralism, which became widely known thanks to the involvement of the Tres Grandes, as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, who helped cement Mexico’s national identity outside of México.

For example, one of José Orozco Siqueiro's panels, *The Epic of American Civilization: The Coming of Quetzalcoatl*, from his mural commissioned by Dartmouth College, depicts pyramids sitting upon the horizon, with ancient deities decorating the darkened sky. (Figure 5) In the foreground, geometric shapes create an almost wasteland look as brown colored figures huddle under a rectangular structure. The depiction of the pyramids and deities focuses on Mexico's ancient Indigenous past which would end up influencing the way that students thought about México and the Indigenous communities that lived within its boundaries. Siqueiros was commissioned to paint a mural in Los Angeles, *América Tropical*. (Figure 6) It depicted a Mesoamerican temple in the middle of the jungle with a Christ-like figure in the middle of it, imposed over the temple. Once again, there is this focus on a Mexican identity that reflected on the ancient past. In Rivera's *Pan American Unity* mural (Figure 7) commissioned by San Francisco Community College, the left side depicts Mexico's ancient past and the industrial revolution is seen on the right side, with both coming together in the center. The unity of the past and the present echoed the idea of mestizaje and its wish to bring the "backwardness" of Indigenous communities to the present modernity. Although, these murals were pushing this ancient past and focused on Indigenous bodies and communities, these images would determine how foreigners perceived México. It added to that unified identity that México was striving for and the muralists aided it.

There are many murals in Mexico, but I want to look at muralist Fernando Leal's *The Feast of the Lord of Chalma* (1922-23). (Figure 8) It was commissioned by the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso and painted along a set of stairs. Leal chose to depict contemporary Indigenous culture, "[complicating] received notions of modernity as related to concepts of progress and development" in a way that almost mirrors how Enciso, Montenegro, and Dr. Atl approached arte popular in their Exhibición de Arte Popular.⁵⁶ As the title of the mural suggests, what is being shown is a festival with dancers in brightly colored masks and headdresses. The Lord of Chalma, a black Christ figure whose feast is being depicted, is located at the top of the stairs with pilgrims offering him candles and flowers to him. Although, this mural focuses on the contemporary Indigenous communities, as opposed to looking at the ancient past, it is still part of the creation of Mexico's national identity.

In the same vein as Gamio, there were also artists who implemented education programs to aid communities with their creations. These educational centers provided different strategies on how to teach children to tap into their nascent connection to nature. The art the children produced was considered that much more "authentic" because it was thought to come from their spirit but better because they were being guided to a certain extent by artists. One project was created by artist Best Maugard. He provided children with "seven elements" with which the children used to create a painting.⁵⁷ These seven elements came from arte popular, "primitive arts", which were meant to be the structure

⁵⁶ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 80.

⁵⁷ Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism: Art and Criticisms in 1920s Latin America*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 194.

from which a new culture that was specifically Mexican could rise from.⁵⁸ Once again, we see the idea of an Indigenous aesthetic that Best Mauagard used when planning Noche Mexicana. Another educational project occurring at the time was the creation of open-air schools, championed by Alfredo Ramos Martínez in 1925.⁵⁹ Instead of having the children only use certain elements to create a painting, Ramos Martínez would task the children to paint nature as they saw it. Both, Best Maugard and Ramos Martínez, were thinking about the children and their Indigeneity; specifically, “Best Maugard believed that children could tap into their creative impulses by returning to a set of forms used by their primitive ancestors, while Ramos Martínez sought to foster what was believed to be a children’s closer relationship to nature.”⁶⁰ The paintings created by the children during Maugard and Ramos Martínez tutelage were seen as creating art that came from their spontaneous nature, emphasizing and using the idea of an Indigenous aesthetic to promote the art. The valorization of these children’s paintings came from foreigners, specifically Europeans, who regarded the paintings as exotic. Although México was not trying to imitate European aesthetics to be considered a modern nation, they were still looking to European for acceptance. The framework they were using to judge the works was also a Western-European one. The paintings were reproduced in the Peruvian magazine, *Amauta*, edited by José Carlos Mariátegui and circulated throughout South America and Europe.⁶¹ The moment that Europeans accepted these paintings, the

⁵⁸ Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism*, 194.

⁵⁹ Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism*, 195.

⁶⁰ Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism*, 196.

⁶¹ Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism*, 13.

paintings were accepted in México as well. Although these alternative centers would end up closing, the images they left abroad would continue to impact how arte popular as Indigenous art was perceived.

Rise of Tourism Art

As artists depicted Indigenous bodies and the ancient past, arte popular took off as tourist art. The market of arte popular spread and became global. The *Exhibición de Arte Popular* marketed the objects to both Mexican citizens and foreigners and it quickly took a life of its own. A year after the centennial in 1922, with the help of Texas born Katherine Anne Porter, the first international exhibition of arte popular opened in Los Angeles.⁶² The catalogue that went with the exhibition emphasized, in the same way that Dr. Atl did, how *mexicanidad* “grew in the soul of the native.”⁶³ Porter advocated for the arte popular, marketing it as the heart of Mexico. The emphasis was placed on the objects being authentically Mexican, which meant authentically Indigenous as well.

Meanwhile, U.S. citizen and writer Frances Toor established the magazine, *Mexican Folkways*, in which she published essays by a number of contributors like Manuel Gamia, Diego Rivera, Dr. Atl, Annita Brenner, Adolfo Best Maugard, and many others.⁶⁴ The magazine was printed in both English and Spanish and was circulated in both the United States and Mexico. The essays focused on trying to make Mexico’s middle-class and elites appreciate the Indigenous communities and their creations, while also promoting the aesthetic value to foreigners. The exhibitions in the U.S. and the

⁶² Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 100.

⁶³ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 100.

⁶⁴ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 103.

magazines that circulated information on the artes populares, helped in bolstering a market for arte popular.

With the increased market for arte popular Indigenous communities began to reach out to collectors and shop owners. One collector, Count René d'Harnoncourt – who would later become director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York – worked for Frederick Davis, owner of an antique shop.⁶⁵ D'Harnoncourt was responsible for working with artisans and advising them on their designs and productions. Since he knew the market, he would advise on what would be desirable to costumers and therefore actually sell. This was important for the artisans because selling their art would help them make a living. In an attempt to improve U.S.-Mexico relations in 1929, U.S. ambassador Dwight Morrow proposed a traveling exhibition that would include both “fine and folk art” with an emphasis on the folk art having to be authentically Indigenous in order to represent the spirit of México.⁶⁶ With the help of René d'Harnoncourt, the exhibition opened on October 1930 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City before traveling to other museums around the United States.⁶⁷ This exhibit, in contrast to what other Mexican artists were doing, emphasized arte popular as the foundation of México, both in its art and identity. As opposed to avant-garde coming out of México, it was the arte popular that won foreigners. According to Debroise:

Metropolitan Museum exhibits showed clearly that modern Mexican painting could not be appreciated fully without “didactic” references to traditional origins, to the legendary past of colonial Mexico and the blending of cultures that distinguished it from all others. Modern Mexican paintings apparently could not

⁶⁵ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 110.

⁶⁶ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 119.

⁶⁷ Rick Lopez. *Crafting Mexico*, 119.

stand on their own as the provocative creations of a real avant-garde that defined itself in relation to technical progress (like the futurists) or to political contexts (like the Russian Constructivists).⁶⁸

The traditional aspects of arte popular was what captivated people and helped with establishing México as a nation with a long history. Arte popular also had the lure of being seen as exotic. With the explosion of interest for arte popular, the government realized that if they could standardize the arte popular, they could ship international and sell more. It is this moment that arte popular became known as tourist trinket.

In 1934, the arte popular slipped into an economic enterprise with the creation of the National Cooperative of Mexican Vernacular Industries (later changed to Society for the Promotion of Mexican Vernacular Industries) to focus on making money by selling arte popular. The Cooperative provided loans to artisans through *acaparadores* who were responsible for “depressing prices, pressuring the artisans to adhere to predictable production schedules, and taking charge of quality control,” and which led to artisans being stuck in a cycle of debt.⁶⁹ It was during this period that artisans were forced to use cheaper materials and create objects in an assembly line. As arte popular spread across the globe, Japanese and Chinese knockoffs began to enter the market forcing the Mexican government to push arte popular prices down to compete with the knockoffs. This strong hold on arte popular by the government and *acaparadores* lasted until the 1970s when the Museo Nacional de Artes e Industrias Populares (MNAIP) joined forces with the Banco Nacional de Fomento Cooperativo (Banfoco). Artisans did not need to put collateral to

⁶⁸ Olivier Debroye, “Mexican Art on Display,” 30.

⁶⁹ Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 164.

take a loan with Banfoco, instead it would be up to community artisan cooperatives to keep track of each other. This meant artisans did not need to go to *acaparadores* anymore. However, Banfoco oversaw different kinds of markets, of which arte popular was just one. In 1974, the Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías (FONART) was created by President Echeverría.⁷⁰

Cultural Heritage as Modernity

Despite the government's involvement in arte popular leading these objects to be seen as tourist trinkets, the government still marketed arte popular as authentic Mexican objects and used tourism "to influence and even actively construct national and ethnic images and identities presented in the context of international tourism."⁷¹ The Mexican government targeted tourists by toeing the line between a nation that was in touch with their ancient history but also moving towards a modern world. Especially with the push to be part of the global state at the end of World War II, Mexico began to work on creating a modern image. This push towards creating an image of itself that showed itself as a developed, global nation, however, did not eliminate the usage of the Indigenous cultures. All that México had to do was figure out how to inject modernity into their cultivated Indigenous identity. The world fairs of the late 1950s and early 1960s are examples of the way that México self-exoticize itself with "folkloric demonstrations" like clothing and instruments, while using architecture like "a fully abstract structure of

⁷⁰ Rick Lopez, *Crafting Mexico*, 191.

⁷¹ Latin American cultural tourism Baud, Michiel, and Annelou Ypeij. *Cultural Tourism in Latin America : The Politics of Space and Imagery*, (Leiden: BRILL, 2009) 6.

reinforced concrete clad in steel that included two levels and a mezzanine terrace” to show Mexico’s industrialize modernity.⁷²

This combination of the past and modernity was the aesthetic used for the modern building, National Museum of Anthropology (Museo Nacional de Antropología), which opened in 1964. It curated galleries “according to the region from which they presented artifacts” with the contemporary objects on the second floor, right above the ancient artifacts from which the contemporary objects originated.⁷³ This helped create a continuity between the ancient past and the contemporary lives of Indigenous communities and, consequently, of Mexico as a nation. The dioramas in the galleries depicted everyday life with full-scale models, wearing clothing specific to their region. There were also objects that were commissioned from the communities in certain regions, specifically for the dioramas. Similar to how Enciso and Montenegro called to the different states to send objects for the *Exhibición de Arte Popular* in 1921, the National Museum of Anthropology had objects sent to it to represent the different regional communities.

Museo de Arte Popular (MAP) opened in 2005, and it was during this opening that they published *Arte Del Pueblo, Manos De Dios*, the catalogue of their collection. In the catalogue’s acknowledgements, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Mexico City’s head of government, wrote a short statement emphasizing the national identity found within arte popular and how important it is for the government to preserve and spread

⁷² Luis M. Castañeda, *Spectacular Mexico: Design, Propaganda, and the 1968 Olympics*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 25.

⁷³ Luis M. Castañeda, *Spectacular Mexico*, 77.

Indigenous culture. Repeatedly, throughout the book, over and over again, the words, “nacion”, “pueblo”, “Mexico”, are used to encompass the region. These words are understood to include Indigenous communities as part of the ‘nation’ but only in the way that they are included within mestizaje. These objects are showcased because and marketed as authentic Mexican objects, In a 1996 catalogue of the exhibit at Antigua Colegio de San Ildefonso titled *Arte Popular Mexicano: Cinco Siglos*, Alicia Azuela points out in her essay, “Lo que la grandeza Mexicana debe al arte indígena”, points out how Indigenous art became the center of a Mexican identity but that contemporary Indigenous communities have been forced in a modernization that subjugates them politically and economically.⁷⁴ These museums, whether it is the Nacional Museum of Anthropology or Museo de Arte Popular, have to make value judgements on the objects. According to cultural tourism scholar Michiel Baud and Annelou Ypeij, museums have “various actors [that] try to impose their own ideas on what material or immaterial elements are worth preserving and where their preservation (and often commercialization) should take place. In this way, heritage and culture become spatially contested issues.”⁷⁵ They are part of the discussion of what is considered cultural heritage, what should be preserved and what should not. This affects the way that tourists, both foreign and local, approach Mexico, arte popular, and the creators of arte popular.

⁷⁴ Antigua Colegio de San Ildefonso, *Arte Popular Mexicano: Cinco Siglos*, 103.

⁷⁵ Baud, Michiel, and Annelou Ypeij. *Cultural Tourism in Latin America*, 12.

Education also plays a role in the way that arte popular is approached, that is, whether it is seen as a national symbol or tourist art, or both. It also affects the scholarship that is produced. Looking at the universities in México, University of Guadalajara offers a B.A. in Artesanía Design (Licenciatura de Diseño de Artesanía) and they offer a class on arte populares for their B.A. in Art History. The Universidad Iberoamericana offers a B.A. in Art History, with a class on arte populares shown as being ideally taken during the student's second semester of the program. Universidad Iberoamericana also offers a Ph.D. in Art History, although the classes for the Ph.D. don't specify arte popular. The study plan for UNAM's B.A. in art history does not specify any class specific to arte popular, although this does not mean that it is not taught. The more discussion that occurs around arte popular the more complex scholarship ends up being published.

Conclusion: a Different Look at Arte Popular

Looking at recent scholarship, for example, Rick Lopez's *Crafting Mexico*, does not only provide an in-depth history of the origin of arte popular in his book but it also deals with artisans from Olinale, Guerrero on the second half of the book titled "Alternative Narratives of Metropolitan Intervention." A fitting title for a section that dives into the communities and the people, centering their experiences and opinions in a way that art history's discussion of arte popular has not focused on. Going back to the women's studies scholar that started me on this path, Eli Bartra in her book, *Women in Mexican Folk Art*, looks into the complexities of gender: who are the individuals making the arte popular? Why is that the case? She digs into the gender issues that are found in

the communities that make a living from arte popular. In the end of her introduction, Bartra writes “female participation (as well as that of children of both sexes) in the production of Mexican folk art is often concealed behind the neutrality of the concept of ‘the people’. It is therefore necessary to reveal the presence of women in the creation, distribution and consumption of art.”⁷⁶ Rick Lopez is coming in from the discipline of history while Eli Bartra is looking in through the lens of women’s studies, and both of their books are great instances of interdisciplinary works that weave different disciplines into art history to create a complex social history of arte popular.

Bringing in the voices of the artists and looking at the objects in a way that looks at the decisions being made can shift discussions of arte popular into look at the resilience of communities. For example, Ruth B Phillips’ essay on Huron moose-hair embroidery looks at the way that Mi’kmaq women changed the iconography of moose-hair embroidery to one that depicted their beliefs. This is in opposition to the popular iconography that perpetuated the idea of a noble savage that was being bought by Canadians and Europeans. As opposed to disregarding these moose-hair embroideries as mere tourist trinkets, Phillips’ instead focuses on locating “the narrow but crucial space for negotiation claimed by peoples subjected to colonial domination and capitalist commoditization.”⁷⁷ Phillips looks at the tourist art and sees the negotiating between the French and Indigenous communities that occurred as well as the relationships and history

⁷⁶Eli Bartra, *Women in Mexican Folk Art*, 8.

⁷⁷ Ruth Phillips, “Nuns, Ladies, and the ‘Queen of the Huron’: Appropriating the Save in Nineteenth-Century Huron Tourist Art,” In *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. by Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999) 50.

that surround the objects. This is something that arte popular also needs, to be looked at as objects that are created as a means to negotiate identity and agency, whether it is by Indigenous communities, peasant communities, or peasant Indigenous communities.

There is a complexity in art popular that is not being discussed.

What scholarship on arte popular continues to do is reference the Western structure, which:

When we articulate the dichotomy of the traditional versus the contemporary, we are referencing the center, acknowledging the authority of the ethnographer, the anthropologist, the art historian, the cultural critic, the art collector. We are caught in the grasp of neocolonialism, in the gaze of the connoisseur or consume, forever trapped in a process that divides and conquers.⁷⁸

Instead of looking at arte popular as a broad category and trying to elevate into fine art in the Western-European sense, arte popular should be looked at as individual objects with things to tell us without having to be labeled as fine art. It is for that reason that in the next chapter I look at the material amate and its connection to the Indigenous communities of the Hñähñu (Otomi). Visual historian, Jolene Rickard points out that “it is prudent to discuss tradition, art, and sovereignty based on a specific cultural location, while reserving the right to connect these ideas to a broader discussion of aesthetic practice as a colonial intervention.”⁷⁹ Art history has continuously looked at arte popular in a broad sense as a national aesthetic that I believe it is prudent to start narrowing the scope a bit.

⁷⁸ Loretta Todd, “What More do They Want?” in *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives*, ed. by G. MacMaster and L.A. Martin (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1992) 75.

⁷⁹ Jolene Rickard. “Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors.” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (April 2011): 471-472.

Chapter 2

Material Culture: Reconnecting Amate to the Otomi communities

One of the five traits of arte popular provided by Iturriaga in the catalogue *Manos de Dios*, is that the materials are determined by the environment. However, when it comes to discussing the materials, art history scholarship has been slow in exploring them. Instead, books and catalogues briefly list materials, providing examples of objects and the locations they are made but not going further than that. This continued broad approach to arte popular does not allow for in-depth and nuanced discussions to happen. By focusing on materials, exploring their connections, and moving beyond an inventorial list, scholarship can start changing the way arte popular is discussed.

Yet, it is not enough to turn our focus to materials; we must decide how we should think about the materials as well. In recent years, there has been a rise in what is called New Materialism. This approach embraces bringing in science and thinking about materiality in a way that goes to the foundation of everything, matter. Since everything has matter, New Materialism insists that “humans, including theorists themselves, be recognized as thoroughly immersed within materiality’s productive contingencies.”⁸⁰ As opposed to thinking of objects and their materials as separate from humans, New Materialism looks at the complexity of causation and agency for all material without differentiating between the human and object.

⁸⁰ Diane Coole and Samantha Frost, “Introducing New Materialism,” in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics* ed. By Diane Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010) 7.

Vanessa Watts in her article “Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!)” offers another approach to materiality, one that shares the idea of breaking down the differences between object and human. According to Watts, the Western-European framework creates a hierarchy in which the human is above all the non-humans (nature). This framework (thinking humans are above nature) makes it easy for people to move through the environment, extracting resources without care of the damage.⁸¹ Watts offers a different framework, Place-Thought, which comes from Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe cosmologies.⁸² The idea of Place-Thought “is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts.” In clear contrast from the Western-European framework which denies non-humans agency, Place-Thought not only acknowledges that the non-human has agency but that they also have spirit.⁸³ Discussion of materials should not focus on how humans act upon them, instead they should be looked at as having their own biography, a life that changes and shifts in relation to humans and other non-humans.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, folklorist Henri Glassie approaches materiality through the complex relationships surrounding both objects and humans. When it comes to material culture,

⁸¹ Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!),” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* vol. 2, no. 1 (2013): 20-34.

⁸² Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous place-thought & agency,” 21.

⁸³ Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous place-thought & agency,” 21.

⁸⁴ Ngarino Ellis, “Te Ao Hurihuri O Ngā Taonga Tuku Iho: The Evolving Worlds of Our Ancestral Treasures,” *Biography*, vol. 39, no. 3 (Summer 2016): 444.

the context of the object is important and according to Glassie, “all objects exist in context. There is no such thing as an object out of context,” and he specifies that this does not mean that objects only have one context, they have many.⁸⁵ Depending on what aspect of the object one studies, whether it is its creation, communication, or consumption, the context will differ, but the varied contexts provide the complex biography of not only the object, but also the culture. By looking at material culture, art historians can look at the complex relationships inherent in culture. For this reason, the case study I offer uses material culture. I will provide a biography of the relationship between a material and an Indigenous community, mapping their history and their present relationship.

Amate, I Choose You

On November 4th, 2020, the Instagram account for El Museo Nacional de Cultural Populares in Mexico City, posted a photograph of what looks like an organic material by the brown coloring and roughened texture. At the center of this rough texture is a black humanoid figure, their arms raised upwards, fingers brushing against a vine that seems to burst from out of its head. Vegetation also seems to be sprouting from the figure’s arms and legs. This post was promoting the museum’s new exhibit, *Nzahki. Espiritus de las milpa*, which was showcasing amate paper works from the community of San Pablito. The short description tells the viewer how amate occupies an important part in the community’s rituals, especially the ritual Tibetit which is done to baptize the fields for a good harvest. In the ceremony the *bãdi* (shaman) cuts figures from amate and these

⁸⁵ Henry Glassie, *Material Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 59.

figures represent the harvest spirits. The post finishes with encouraging people to come and visit the exhibition.

A similar description on the amate and the Hñähñu (Otomi) community can be found in the *Arte Populares* book by FONART. Printed upon one full page is a humanoid figure made from a rough-textured paper, its hands raised upwards while vines sprout from its head, arms, elbows, and legs. The large photograph of the amate figure provides the viewer with the chance to see the crevices of the paper's surface, almost resembling veins. On the bottom left of the page, next to the figure's proper-right foot, the description provides the object's provenance, it belongs to the Hñähñu (Otomi) tradition from San Pablito, Pahuatlán, Puebla. This is, according to the book, the community from which the paper, amate comes from. Meanwhile, the book *De Cartones: El carton y el papel en el arte popular mexicano*, published by the paper company SCPM, mentions that the amate is associated with Indigenous culture, but does not specify the Indigenous community that creates the amate. The books that speak specifically about amate, like *Papel ceremonial entre los otomies* by Beatriz Oliver Vega, focus on the creation of the paper and its usage in rituals. Almost all scholarship kept mentioning how the Hñähñu (Otomi) community from San Pablito, Pahuatlán, Puebla was the only community that provided the amate. Despite how prominent amate is as a "Mexican tradition" there has been a lack of looking at the Hñähñu (Otomi) community of San Pablito, Pahuatlán, and its relationship with amate, beyond the Western anthropological focus on rituals and ceremonies.

In this chapter, I provide a case study that focuses on the relationship between the bark paper, amate and the Hñähñu (Otomi) community of San Pablito. Their relationship is complex because it is an important aspect of their private life but also important for their economy. Instead of dismissing the material and objects as mere tourist art or souvenirs, art history can examine this relationship to try and “locate the narrow but crucial space for negotiation claimed by peoples subjected to colonial domination and capitalist commoditization.”⁸⁶ The Hñähñu (Otomi) have had to negotiate spaces for themselves within a nation that has not been helpful to the Indigenous communities. They are active participants in the selling of amate, choosing what forms to create and what knowledge to share with outsiders. The individuals within the community make choices and it is these choices that should be discussed. In the rest of this chapter, I scratch the surface of the Hñähñu (Otomi) and amate relationship by briefly looking at their long history and the ceremonies that give amate its perceived authenticity. I also dive into the different kinds of artworks the community creates, before finally concluding the chapter by looking at the ecological impacts that the amate has in San Pablito, Pahuatlán.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ruth B Phillips, “Nuns, Ladies, and the ‘Queen of the Huro’”: Appropriating the Savage in Nineteenth-Century Huron Tourist Art.” In *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. by Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), 50. Phillips calls souvenirs a medium of visual expression.

⁸⁷ The word amate comes from the Nahuatl word, *amatl*, referring to both paper and the fig tree it came from. It is not the Hñähñu (Otomi) word for the bark paper, but it is the term that I will be using throughout the rest of my thesis because it is the word used in Mexico to refer to the material. I believe it is also important to state that the information on the Hñähñu (Otomi) is taken from other scholars, specifically French anthropologist Galinier. I did not have the honor to visit the community and speak with them personally.

Authenticity Through History

When it comes to learning the exact date that the Hñähñu (Otomi) and other societies in Mesoamerica began to include amate in their lives there is no accurate method since the amate is an organic material. Some scholars place the beginning of amate around 500 CE while other scholars attribute its appearance in the area to the Maya, beginning 300 BCE.⁸⁸ The earliest surviving evidence of amate in Mesoamerica dates to around 74 CE. When it comes to archaeological evidence of an Hñähñu (Otomi) and amate relationship, evidence has been found in Teotihuacán. Archaeologists have found skirts (*quexquemiltl*) and amate in Teotihuacán that points to an Hñähñu (Otomi) or proto-otomi-mazahua culture living within the city during its heyday (Classic Period, 200-600 C.E.).⁸⁹ The findings of amate at Teotihuacán provides us with evidence that the proto-otomi community had knowledge of the amate, what their relationship was we cannot know for sure.

As Teotihuacán began to decline, the Hñähñu (Otomi) moved out of the city, scattering across the valley of México. Between 600-650 C.E., the Hñähñu (Otomi) made their home in the northern part the valley of México, sharing political control with the city of Tula. When Tula declined, the Hñähñu (Otomi) became the principal inhabitants of the Tula area, along with the area of Xilotepec, what are now known as the states of Mexico, Hidalgo, and Queretaro. Between 1220 C.E.-1398 C.E., the Hñähñu (Otomi)

⁸⁸ Citlalli López Binnqüist, Alejandra Quintanar-Isaías, and Marie Vander Meeren. "Mexican Bark Paper: Evidence of History of Tree Species Used and Their Fiber Characteristics." *Economic Botany* 66, no. 2 (June 2012): 139.

⁸⁹ Yolanda Lastra, *Los otomíes: su lengua y su historia*, 80-81.

moved north, establishing Xaltocan and fighting the Mexica as they began to migrate into the valley of Mexico. By 1396 C.E., however, war began to plague the area, leading to the end of the Hñähñu's (Otomi) political control and the beginning of their subjugation by the Triple Alliance⁹⁰. After being defeated by the Mexica, the Hñähñu (Otomi) cities of Xilotepec and Chiapan began to pay tribute to the Mexica.

Although there is not a lot of evidence from the Hñähñu (Otomi) that tells us about their specific uses of the amate, we can see the importance of amate in the area by looking at archaeological evidence from Mexica sites. There has been an important archaeological find of a mask with amate attached to its head, at the Mexica's Templo Mayor's 102nd offering site in the center of Mexico City, within the section dedicated to the deity of rain, Tlaloc. We see amate being offered by the Mexica, showing the high value amate had since it seemed to be an acceptable offering to the gods.⁹¹ The usage of amate for offerings and in religious ceremonies was so prominent that there were specific words used that describe specific amate objects, for example *amacuexpalli*, meant paper being used to imitate hair, and *amacoilli*, meant a cone-shaped head gear made of paper.⁹² The mask that was found in the Templo Mayor could be considered as having either of these two terms since the amate was attached to the top of the mask. These offerings found in the Templo Mayor have been dated to about 500 years ago, probably

⁹⁰ Yolanda Lastra, *Los otomí : su lengua y su historia*, 1. ed. (México, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 2006) 104. The Triple Alliance was established in 1498 and was made up of the cities: Tenochtitlan, Tetzaco, and Tlacopan.

⁹¹ Ximena Chavez Balderas and Leonardo Lopez Lujan, "Al pie del Templo Mayor: excavaciones en busca de los soberanos mexicas." In *Moctezuma II: Tiempo y destino de un gobernante*, edited by Leonardo Lopez Lujan and Colin McEwan, (México City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010) 215.

⁹² Bodil Christensen and Samuel Marti, *Witchcraft and pre-columbian paper = Brujerías y papel precolombino*, 56.

during the time of Moctezuma II.⁹³ Franciscan friar, Bernardino de Sahagún (d.1590) provides written evidence of amate being used in a ceremony honoring Tezcatlipoca and Huitzilopochtli:

Which consisted of an enormous piece of paper, twenty fathoms (six feet each) long by one in width, and one finger thick. This paper was carried by a number of strong men ... to the temple of the god. At this festival all the young girls carried papers... in the procession and in the dance.... The priests wore around their foreheads a sort of paper disc shirred in the shape of roses.... As was their custom, they wore undergarments of paper; in their hands they carried scepters ... wrapped in paper painted with black stripes or lines.⁹⁴

Sahagún's description of paper being carried in processions, worn around priests' forehead, and even worn as undergarments, allows us to see the many ways amate was used for ceremonies during the late sixteenth century. This relationship between the Mexica and the amate is a relationship that the Hñähñu (Otomi) held as well by the time of the Spaniard's arrival. In the documents *Relaciones geograficas*, officials from the town of Tecpatepec noted that the Hñähñu (Otomi) worshiped the god Tezcatēpōcatl and offered him incense and paper.⁹⁵ By the late 16th century, the amate was a firm and important fixture in Hñähñu (Otomi) communities, not just the Mexica.

This varied use of amate for offerings and ceremonies meant there was a high amate production. According to the *Codex Mendoza* (ca. 1541), 480,000 sheets of amate were provided as tribute annually to the ruler of Tenochtitlan.⁹⁶ With the knowledge that

⁹³ Chavez Baldera and Lopez Lujan, "Al pie del Templo Mayor," 315.

⁹⁴ Franke J. Neumann, "Paper: A Sacred Material in Aztec Ritual." *History of Religions* Vol 13, No 2 (1973): 153.

⁹⁵ Yolanda Lastra, *Los otomíes : su lengua y su historia*, 171.

⁹⁶ Franke J. Naumann, "Paper: A Sacred Material in Aztec Ritual," 149.

the Hñähñu (Otomi) cities at that time had to send tribute to the Triple Alliance, which Tenochtitlan was part, there is a possibility that there were Hñähñu (Otomi) communities paying tribute to the Triple Alliance by sending amate. The amate is not only an offering to the gods but it becomes an offering to humans as well. It could have been a form of protection for Hñähñu (Otomi) communities, sending amate to try and appease the Triple Alliance in order to keep their towns safe.

With the arrival of the Spanish, things shifted drastically for the Hñähñu (Otomi) communities. The Hñähñu (Otomi) went from controlling large portion of the Mezquital and Mexico valley, to being hired to mine for silver and gold by the criollos and peninsulares.⁹⁷ As the Spanish spread further and their establishments began to grow, the Hñähñu (Otomi) political leaders began to lose control of their lands. The Indigenous populations were forced to convert into Catholicism, however, from the late 16th century documents *Relaciones geográficas*, we know that the Hñähñu (Otomi) communities continued to worship their gods and include amate in their religious ceremonies. With each passing decade the criollos and peninsulares began to control more and more land. As things worsened for the indigenous laborers, they joined forces with Miguel Hidalgo, who wished to help the poor laborers. Although there is no clear designation of the ethnicities that joined Hidalgo, the area of Dolores was known to be mostly populated by the Hñähñu (Otomi). It is also known that Hidalgo spoke Hñähñu (Otomi) along with

⁹⁷ Peninsulares is the term used for the Spaniards born in Spain, who traveled and settled in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Criollo is the term used for the Spanish population born in the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

Nahuatl.⁹⁸ With the end of New Spain, it was declared that indigenous communities did not have to pay tribute and were now considered equal with the rest of the population which took away any protections that had been established when the Indigenous communities had been considered their own entities.⁹⁹ Beginning in 1858, the Hñähñu (Otomi) began to lead several rebellions against the government which was trying and continues to try to take their land. The Mexican Revolution saw the rise of agrarian communities, who continues to fight for their lands to this day.¹⁰⁰ The Hñähñu (Otomi) that is recognized as creating the amate is the community from San Pablito, Pahuatlán, Puebla and will be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

Authenticating Traditions

The long history between the amate and the Hñähñu (Otomi) – and the rest of Mesoamerica – provide the amate material with a sense of an authentic ancient past. This authentication is based on how traditional amate has remained. According to Shiner:

This ideology of authenticity is based on three assumptions: 1) a false view of the nature of authenticity as tradition, 2) the myth of an unspoiled, pre-contact "primitive" or "traditional" culture, 3) the Art/craft distinction and its allied notions of the spirituality of the artistic vocation and the integrity of stylistic traditions.¹⁰¹

The history of the amate is seen as continuing without a change, connecting it to a pre-contact time. In addition to the history, scholarship tends to focus on the Hñähñu's (Otomi) ceremonies and their usage of amate, which paints present day Hñähñu (Otomi)

⁹⁸ Yolanda Lastra, *Los otomíes : su lengua y su historia*, 253.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 260.

¹⁰⁰ As briefly touched upon in the introduction, Indigenous communities have protested and reclaimed their identity as Indigenous. However, that is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁰¹ Larry Shiner, "'Primitive Fakes', 'Tourist Art', and the Ideology of Authenticity," 228.

communities as being never changing. It is this knowledge of a mystical, ancient ritual and past that is, whether consciously or not, embedded within the amate. The emphasis on the Hñähñu's (Otomi) traditional relationship with the amate authenticates the material to possible consumers who then place a value on the material.¹⁰² One of the most important aspects of amate is how it is created, the handmade aspect giving it the stamp of authentic bark paper.

The process of making the bark into amate starts with the stripping of the bark from the tree. In the Hñähñu (Otomi) cosmology humans and non-humans share the energy of the universe. The word for this vital energy is *nzahki*. The *nzahki* is found within a person or a non-human, while the skin (*ši*) helps contain the energy inside. All skin is the same, whether coming from a tree, human, or animal. For example, the sky is referred to as *mahes'I*, "el lugar de la piel venerable" (the place of the venerable skin) because it wraps around the earth, which holds the energy. When it comes to trees, the bark is considered the skin of the tree, keeping the tree's energy from seeping out. The jonote tree is thought to take its energy straight from the earth and it is for this reason that the Hñähñu (Otomi) prefer its bark for making amate. The act of breaking the skin is seen as a form of putrefaction but it is also the start of a new life cycle. However, when it comes to debarking a tree, the Hñähñu (Otomi) must be careful not to hurt the core of the tree, otherwise the tree will not be able to regrow its bark.

The process of making amate paper has been historicized by Diego Rivera, who painted a mural depicting the process, *Papermakers* (1951) [Figure 9], on the second

¹⁰² Phillips and Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," 13.

floor of the Palacio Nacional in Mexico City. By painting this mural in the Palacio Nacional – the president’s residence and the central seat of Mexico’s federal government – alongside Rivera’s major mural series, *History of Mexico* (1935), establishes amate as authentically Mexican, authentically ancient, and an authentic tradition that continues to this day. The paper process depicted by the mural begins on the top right of the mural with a man straddling a tree-branch, a jagged knife raised in his right hand, ready to strike down into the tree’s thick bark. Standing at the bottom of the tree, another man – dressed solely in a white loincloth – reaches up towards a branch, tugging at a strip of bark, revealing the white inner flesh of the tree. It is this inner flesh of the tree that is used to make the amate. Once the bark has been collected, the soft inner layer is separated from the rough outer layer.

On the lower right of the mural, positioned below the man tugging at the bark, a woman in a white dress sits by a spring, a cluster of bark-strips in her arms. In the spring, soaking in the clear blue water, are the white strips of bark, softening up into malleable fibers. The fiber in the water is the soft, inner layer of the bark. This soft layer is contemporarily boiled in water, which usually contains ash or lime in it to aid in softening the fibers. In order to speed up the softening they might add caustic soda.¹⁰³ Looking back at the mural, on the left side of the spring, a woman has a table like surface on her lap and a large stone on her right hand. On the table are the softened strips of bark

¹⁰³ Citlalli Lopez, Amate, Mexican bark paper: resourceful harvest strategies to meet market demands, 2004. Translated from: López, C. ‘Amate’ papel de corteza Mexicano [Trema micrantha (L.) Blume]: Nuevas estrategias de extracción para enfrentar las demandas de mercado. En: Alexiades, M.N. y Shanley, P. (eds). *Productos Forestales, Medios de Subsistencia y Conservación. Estudios de Caso sobre Sistemas de Manejo de Productos Forestales No Maderables*. Volumen 3 - America Latina. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia (2004). [online] URL: <http://www.cifor.org/scripts/newsletters/publications/detail.asp?pid=1507>

laid out in a grid pattern, creating empty patches that the woman will begin to fill in. The stone in her hand will be used to press the fibers down, flattening them into a recognizable sheet of paper. Once this is done, the amate will be stretched out and left to dry. The paper is, depending on its use, smoothed out and cut into desired sizes. The surface of the amate will vary, with some sheets being smoother than others, some having sharper edges, all depending on the skill of its creator.

The Hñähñu (Otomi) healers (*bãdi*) are the ones that end up using the amate the most, for the amate is essential in healing treatments and ceremonies. The ceremonies vary from those done specifically for asking good will from spirits to those seen as “witchcraft” because the rituals affect individuals.¹⁰⁴ The amate, for all the ceremonies, is cut by the *bãdi* into a figure that resembles the spirit or individual in some way. The *bãdi* calls upon the spirits (*s’utapi*) who become present through the amate, which stops being a cutout figure and becomes the spirit. In order to shape the amate, it is folded in half, so the figure is symmetrical. The humanoid figurines tend to share the same basic format. They are given two legs and two arms that are raised upwards. The head, when the paper is unfolded looks like it has two faces, one looking left and one looking right, at the same time, there is a frontal face peering out. When the paper remains folded, there is only one face that is seen.

Because there are so many spirits, there are a variety of different figurines. One example is the *God of Lightning or Hail* (Figure 10). This amate cutout has a three-pronged crown on its head and what look like knobs sprouting from of its arms and legs

¹⁰⁴ Galinier, *La mitad del mundo*, 183.

which represent the lightning or hail. The spirit of the rainbow is represented as a female, because instead of having two legs spread out, her lower body has a triangle like shape from which the legs come out from. (Figure 11) Attach to her arms and arching over her head is the rainbow. The spirit of the peanut is depicted as male, with branches sprouting from its arms and legs. (Figure 12) From these branches, there are bulbs shaped like peanuts hanging down. The spirit of the maize, is depicted as male, with ears of corn sprouting from its limbs. (Figure 13) Even within these specific spirits, the figures have variations because each healer has their unique style. If we look at two different cutouts of the maize spirit, we can see that one spirit has easily recognizable ear husks, while the maize of the other figure look purely like spikes. (Figure 14) The amate cutouts being discussed in this paper are ones that were made for selling.

Creative Process

In the 1960s, with the advent of tourists venturing into the Sierra Norte, the Hñähñu (Otomi) began to focus more on selling amate as a new source of income. The Instagram post that the Museo de Cultural Populares posted was an image of an amate humanoid figure. The amate cutouts, by being in published materials and institutions, the cut-out amate figures become the only figures that tourists recognize and therefore are the kinds of amate objects that they end up looking for. Art historian, Mary Katherine Scott, in her article “Examining the Messages of Contemporary ‘Tourist Art’ in Yucatán, Mexico: Comparing Chichén Itzá and the Puuc Region,” discusses Puuc artisans and how they market their art. Scott interviewed one artisan, Jesus Delgado Ku, who “suggests that certain subjects may be more popular than others due to tourists having seen the

originals in various museums around the world...for these individuals, what counts as 'Maya' art is what they have already seen in the museums and will therefore interest them more than imagery with which they are not familiar ..."¹⁰⁵ In a similar way that tourists search for certain 'Maya' art in Yucatán, tourists who have seen the amate cutout figures in social media or in institutions would be searching for those kinds of objects. In addition to this cultivation of familiarity, there is the idea of authenticity added to the objects. The institutions aid in enforcing the idea of authenticity, therefore that is what the tourists end up looking for, consciously or subconsciously, is authenticity of tradition and the past. Hugo DeBlock discusses the way that the Vanuau leave their creations outside or placed above a fireplace in order to make them look older because they know that tourists will pay more for objects that look like they have been used or look that they are particularly old.¹⁰⁶ By doing field work within the community of San Pablito, art historians could discuss what could be similar complexities occurring, which I believe they are by the different artworks that are being created within the community.

The Hñähñu (Otomi) have expanded into bigger and complex designs all while still imbuing their work with what could be seen as "authentically traditional" Hñähñu (Otomi) culture. They create what I would call a collage, where they paste the humanoid figure on a blank amate sheet. (Figure 15) They either paste a dark humanoid figure on a light colored amate or the switch it, they paste a light-colored humanoid figure on a dark

¹⁰⁵ Mary Katherine Scott, "Examining the Messages of Contemporary 'Tourist Art' in Yucatan, Mexico: Comparing Chichen Itza and the Puuc Region," In *Tourism and Visual Culture, 2 : Methods and Cases* ed. by Peter M. Burns, Jo-Anne Lester, and Lyn Bibbings (Wallingford and Massachusetts: CABI, 2010), 4.

¹⁰⁶ Hugo DeBlock, *Artifak*, 135.

amate sheet. By doing this, they continue to provide the humanoid figure which is connected to the “ancient rituals” and appeals to tourists, but it also allows them to push their creativity. They also have intricate compositions where they combine animals, geometric shapes, and of course, the humanoid figures they are known for. In three examples by Humberto Trejo Gonzalez, we can see how varied the compositions can be. In Figure 16 we see the humanoid spirit, his arms raised up and radish looking vegetables sprouting from his limbs. He is enclosed within a diamond shape, almost as if he were inside a hill, from which the vegetation would then sprout from, and all-around Gonzalez has created a fringe. There is no part of the amate that is not consciously part of the design. In Figure 17, a sun is the focal point of the artwork, with the edges shares that similar fringe and birds decorate the corners. In Figure 18, there are two birds connected by their beaks while they sit upon a plant and their wings are spread out. Surrounding them is a circular frame from which rays of some kind are shooting out. In the three examples we see Trejo Gonzalez personal style by the way that he depicts the birds. However, we can also see repeating motifs that come up, like the rays of the sun, the birds, and the vegetation that frames all three examples. He is arranging and designing the compositions all with the symbols that he knows and that will probably call to tourists.

It has been easy to think about the amate as a tourist object that can connect us to the ancient past however, this does not take into consideration the Hñähñu (Otomi) actions and decisions. I have not had the honor of speaking to the community and I dare not speak on their behalf, but I believe that there is resistance being made through their

continued creation of amate. Naakwehgeshik of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians in his essay “My Father’s Business” states:

The production of art for the tourist market by the Little traverse Bay Odawa is a reflection of cultural continuity and adaption in the face of enormous pressures to relocate, assimilate, or otherwise fade away. this continuation of the economic adaptation reflected in the production of what observers have come to call “tourist art” is one of the leading indicators of a strong and sustained cultural existence.¹⁰⁷

The Hñähñu (Otomi) have had to adapt as well and the development of their amate production is evidence of that. Not to mention that they continue to create amate for both, private usage and for the market. Another example of this adaptation can be seen in the books some healers created, providing information on rituals and descriptions of different spirits.¹⁰⁸ The book is usually made from a light colored amate, with darker colored amate figures pasted onto the pages. In figure 19, we can see a page of one of these books, with the spirit clearly in the center and its description at the top of the page. These books were meant to be and continue to be an income. However, the amate as a blank sheet of paper is also sold worldwide, the demand of that material must also be taken into consideration when thinking of amate.

Conclusion: Responsibility in Materiality

The increased demand of amate as a material has led to increased debarking, which thanks to other social and economic factors has affected other communities in the area. Let us return to Henry Glassie, he calls material “a part of the world, the record of

¹⁰⁷ Frank Ettawageshik, “My Father’s Business,” In *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, edited by Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999) 29.

¹⁰⁸ Karl Herbert Mayer, “Amate Manuscripts of the Otomí of San Pablito, Puebla.” *Mexicon* Vol 34, no. 6 (December 2012): 131.

bodily action in nature” and that the objects “recall the technology by which nature was made culture.”¹⁰⁹ Objects are made from materials and the materials come from nature, this is especially pertinent when talking about amate, which is made from tree bark. The process of removing the bark from the tree is one of the selling points for the amate, but the debarking of trees is not without repercussions.

With the increased demand for amate, the harvest of the bark is done by farmers who used to work solely in agriculture but because of the “lowering of subsidized prices of staple goods” they have needed to start branching out.¹¹⁰ The harvesting is seasonal, with certain harvesters debarking trees all year round while others become harvesters for the extra income during the summer. The time of the year, whether it is tourist season or holidays, or even the climate, affects both the debarking of the trees and the production of the amate itself. Amate used to be made from fig trees but with the increased demand for amate, Hñähñu (Otomi) have had to find a different tree to use because fig trees “are slow growing and difficult to find” after being overharvested.¹¹¹ Hñähñu (Otomi) now use the jonote tree (*Tremia micrantha*), which unlike the fig tree, can be debarked all year round.

The jonote trees are usually found in shade-grown coffee plantations because they provide the coffee beans shade. After eight years, the jonote trees get too big and start competing with the coffee beans so they must be removed. The trees will then have their barks removed by the harvester and processed into amate paper by the Hñähñu (Otomi). Once the tree reaches the fifteen-year-old mark, the bark is too tough to be made into

¹⁰⁹ Henry Glassie, *Material Culture*, 42-44.

¹¹⁰ Citlalli López, “Amate, Mexican bark paper,” 387.

¹¹¹ Citlalli Lopez. “Amate, Bark Paper” (Center for International Forestry Research. 2004), 87.

paper while regenerated bark tends to regrow tougher which makes it harder to make into amate. Because of the constant need for tree bark harvesters have had to start traveling farther away from San Pablito.¹¹² However, the harvesters must rush back to San Pablito as quickly as possible to sell their bark strips to the Otomi to ensure that the bark remains fresh and no fungus grows on it.

The harvesters and the Hñähñu (Otomi) must haggle for prices, this usually happens on market days, with harvesters setting up in San Pablito with their fibers. They cannot afford to not sell just like the Hñähñu (Otomi) cannot afford to not buy. The Hñähñu (Otomi) have to take into consideration the money that goes into buying the fibers, but also the money for the ash and lime that they use to soften the fibers. They also need fuelwood to start a fire on which their big pots for boiling are placed upon. If they are going to dye the amate they must buy the dye as well. These are all expenses that the Hñähñu (Otomi) have to budget for. Depending on the size of a household is how much paper is made and who they sell to. Some households develop into workshops, selling paper to “semi-industrial processing units.” There has also been an increase of men migrating to the U.S.A., leaving women behind to create the amate paper and handle the household.¹¹³

¹¹² Citlalli López, “Amate, Mexican bark paper”, 376.

¹¹³ Ibid., 371.

This change to the households of San Pablito leads to complex gender relations, which can take us back to Eli Bartra's book on women and folk art. Gender is a discussion to be had, but beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, in my third and last chapter, I continue to explore environmental questions by looking at the way amate has spread out from San Pablito. I discuss art historian's responsibility to the land, to materials, and to each other.

Chapter 3

Amate Beyond San Pablito

Art history scholarship seems to be comfortable looking at the environment when it comes to artworks that specifically interact with the land. When it comes to artworks categorize as Land art or Environmental art, scholarship easily dives into discussion of the land. For example, feminist artist Mary Beth Edelson tapped into the idea of land and the female body in her work, which according to curator Brian Wallis, offered, “an alternative union between the human and natural spheres that superseded both conventional religion and rationalism.”¹¹⁴ It is also easier to discuss the effects artists have on nature when society can clearly see the results, for example, artist Heizer’s *Double Negative* was seen as “environmentally destructive.”¹¹⁵ However, artists should not have to be directly interacting and discussing environmental issues for art historians to think about the relationship between nature and art.

Art historian, Sugata Ray in his book *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion: Geoethetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550-1850*, looks at the changing environment of South Asian and how it affected the art developed in the area. Ray points to previous studies like Millard Meiss, researching the ways that the Black Death influenced Florentine Art, as art historical scholarship that considered the way that nature affected art production.¹¹⁶ Ray in his book looks at the Little Ice Age, its effects on the climate

¹¹⁴ Brian Wallis and Jeffrey Kastner. *Land And Environmental Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), 34.

¹¹⁵ Brian Wallis and Jeffrey Kastner. *Land And Environmental Art*, 32.

¹¹⁶ Sugata Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion: Geoethetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550-1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019) 17.

and the way that culture in South Asia reacted to this. He uses the term geoaesthetic to refer to the way that visual culture was influenced by the environment. By looking into the relationship between nature and human, as opposed to solely focusing on the human, eco art history can come to fruition.¹¹⁷

The humanities as we know them now were born from the Enlightenment, which placed the human at the center. Dipesh Chakrabarty calls out humanist historians in his article, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” by stating how the disciplines “create their objects of study” and that the historians “do not realize that the protagonists of their stories— persons—are reductions, too.”¹¹⁸ By looking solely at the actions of humans, the humanities have missed the bigger picture that involves nature. Ray and Meiss have effectively argued their cases for the climate and environment affecting art productions, after all, no one can argue against the Black Death affecting society. I agree to a certain extent with Chakrabarty’s comment that “the crisis of climate change calls on academics to rise above their disciplinary prejudices, for it is a crisis of many dimensions.”¹¹⁹ Art history needs to be more interdisciplinary and look at gender studies like Eli Bartra, tourist art like Hugo DeBlock, or ecology like Sugata Ray. Looking at the relationship between the human and nature can shed light on the past but also help the future.

The different ways of approaching material that was discussed in chapter two, consider the environment, consider the non-human as having agency, whether the work is

¹¹⁷ Sugata Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion*, 23.

¹¹⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 215.

¹¹⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” 215.

specifically created to discuss the environment or not. Whether it is New Materialism, which “sees its task as creating new concepts and images of nature that affirm matter’s immanent vitality,” or Place-Thought from the Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe cosmologies, which connects agency to spirit “and spirit exists in all things, then all things possess agency,” approaches to materiality are including nature into the discussions.¹²⁰ However, what also needs to be taken into consideration is the relationship between Indigenous communities and the land from which the materials used by artists come from. Chapter one showed the way that arte popular has tried to keep contemporary Indigenous communities in México marginalized, and a similar occurrence can be seen when it comes to looking at contemporary Indigenous communities in México and their connection to the land. T.J. Demos in his book, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*, states that “nature has been colonized in concept as well as in practice” but in order to change this it is not enough to think about sustainability in general instead we must also look to see which communities are not being heard.¹²¹ It is not enough to think about materiality and its connection to nature, art historians should also be looking at the Indigenous communities that are part of the material-nature relationship. This chapter offers inquiries that touch upon amate, the Hñähñu (Otomi), and their relationships with artists who use amate for their works. First, however, I provide a brief look at Mexico’s environmental activism and where Indigenous communities fit within the movements.

¹²⁰ Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans”, 30. Diane Coole and Samantha Frost, “Introducing New Materialism,” 8.

¹²¹ T.J Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 14, 35.

Mexico's Environmental Activism

Indigenous communities have strong and prominent positions in environmental activism in Mexico. In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect which led to the reduction of farming subsidies which lead to lower wages for small scale farms.¹²² This was part of the reason why some of the farmers in Pahuatlán became harvesters of bark and selling it to the Otomi. The NAFTA agreement was met with opposition from Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), a movement of largely Tzotzil Maya in Chiapas who “linked their rebellion to five hundred years of struggle against Spanish colonialism, subsequent and ongoing North American imperialism, and continuous oppression of Mexican governments in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.”¹²³ EZLN focuses on sustainability by incorporating collective and organic farming, using solar and winds to produce electricity.¹²⁴ NAFTA has had an impact across México, not just to the farmers and Hñähñu (Otomi) of Pahuatlán or the Tzotzil Maya in Chiapas. It is not only NAFTA that is causing communities like EZLN to push against the government's actions. Indigenous communities have protested the building of factories and infrastructure. Early this year, 2021, the Mayan town of Homún filed a lawsuit against Mexican authorities who are trying to build an animal industrial complex near the town of Homún. The building of this complex “violates the Mayan

¹²² T.J Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016) 143.

¹²³ T.J Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 152.

¹²⁴ T.J Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 152-153.

children's rights to a healthy environment and to autonomy as Indigenous people, according to the suit."¹²⁵

However, all of this activism has been met with violence. Meanwhile, the state of Sonora built an independent aqueduct near the Yaqui River Basin, which was protested by Yaqui activists who were trying to confirm that there would be water for the Yaqui community near the banks of the river. This year, in May 2021, the Yaqui activist Tomas Rojo Valenzuela was reported missing, after opposing the building of the aqueduct.¹²⁶ He has not been the only environmental activist to go missing or killed, Nahua Samir Flores was killed after being an important activist against the building of a power plant in the state of Morelos.¹²⁷ To protect the rights of environment activists México ratified the Escazu Agreement proposed by the United Nations in November 2020 but it has not been much help to the activists.¹²⁸ Knowing how much policies and construction have impacted Indigenous communities, how should we think about a material like amate, with its increased demand possibly leading to overharvesting?

In the previous chapter, I laid out the relationship between the Hñäähñu (Otomi) and the amate. Without the Hñäähñu (Otomi), there would be no amate, and at the same

¹²⁵ Center for Biological Diversity. "Public Health Experts, Conservationists Ask Mexico's Highest Court to Uphold Suspensions of 49,000-Hog Industrial Animal Operation in Yucatán peninsula." Press Release, May 5, 2021. <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/public-health-experts-conservationists-ask-mexicos-highest-court-to-uphold-suspension-of-49000-hog-industrial-animal-operation-in-yucat%C3%A1n-peninsula-2021-05-05/>

¹²⁶ "Tomás Rojo, the indigenous leader who led the war for water in Mexico, disappears." *Market Research Telecast*. May 31, 2021. <https://marketresearchtelecast.com/tomas-rojo-the-indigenous-leader-who-led-the-war-for-water-in-mexico-disappears/58457/>

¹²⁷ "Indigenous opponent of Morelos power plant murdered." *Mexico News Daily*. February 20, 2019. <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/opponent-of-morelos-power-plant-murdered/>

¹²⁸ "Mexico ratifies treaty that protects rights of environmental activists." *Mexico News Daily*. November 14, 2020. <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/treaty-protects-rights-of-environmental-activists/>

time, the amate is helping the Hñähñu (Otomi) community by providing an income.

Without their relationship, other artists would not be able to use the amate. The amate now has a relationship beyond the one they have with the Hñähñu (Otomi), but because the amate is intertwined deeply with the Hñähñu (Otomi) community, the relationship becomes amate- Hñähñu (Otomi)- artists. In the rest of this chapter, I provide questions for future discussions that can focus deeper into the complex connections between material, Indigenous communities, and artists.

The Far Reaches of Amate

The popularity of amate has been credited to the usage of amate paper by Nahua communities in the Alto Balsas Nahua Community. According to Taylor Cowen, in his book *Markets and cultural voices: liberty vs. power in the lives of Mexican Amate painters*, Ameyaltepec. Guerrero was the community where painting on amate began before it spread out to other communities like Oapan, Xalitla, and Maxela.¹²⁹ Cowen focuses on the Oapan community, specifically three brothers, Marcial Camilo Ayala, Juan Camilo Ayala, and Felix Camilo Ayala. By looking at this family and how they developed their skills as Nahua amate painters, Cowen maps the growth of what he calls a “creative cluster” and how this cluster “has been essential to [Oapan’s] economic growth and thus to the liberty of its residents.”¹³⁰ According to Cowen, Nahua artisans began to paint on amate around the 1970s, when ceramics was no longer putting food on

¹²⁹ Tyler Cowen, *Markets And Cultural Voices: Liberty Vs. Power In the Lives of Mexican Amate Painters*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005) 22. According to him, Oapan, Xalitla, and Maxela are the ones doing creative art while the rest of the communities who make amate paintings are tourist pieces.

¹³⁰ Tyler Cowen, *Markets And Cultural Voices*, 2.

the table for their families. The Hñähñu (Otomi) would go to Nahua communities and encourage them to use amate to paint on.¹³¹ With the increase of amate paintings, there also meant an influx of amate paintings in the market. To make money Nahua painters had to travel out into major cities like Cuernavaca to sell their paintings. This was hard because not all of them spoke Spanish, and usually their biggest buyers were international visitors. Mexicans would not buy amate paintings at high prices because they were indigenous trinkets and not worth the money.

The amate paintings can range from being depictions of animals and flowers to telling stories. For example, in the amate painting, *Village Life* (Figure 20) by Reynaldo Ascencio depicts the everyday life of a village. In the bottom half of the painting, we see a couple feeding roosters and chickens, meanwhile the top half of the painting depicts harvesting of some kind as hinted by a man holding a scythe and a woman carrying a basket filled to the brim with some oval like objects. *Village Life* depicts a small scene with only six human figures and the border is only made up of three bands. However, paintings can also be complex with more than twenty humans depicted. In a *Nativity Scene* (Figure 21) by Marciana Martinez Ramirez, the border by itself is made up of four different bands, each with its own geometric design. The nativity scene is depicted on the top-third section of the amate, the family nestled under a black curved structure, with angels announcing the birth of the savior. Below the nativity scene is a long procession of people, snaking around the town, around buildings, and every centimeter of the surface is

¹³¹ Tyler Cowen, *Markets And Cultural Voices*, 22.

decorated. These are but two examples of the different kinds of amate paintings that the Nahua communities create.

In the 1990s, Nahua painters from Oapan, Ameyaltepec, Xalitla created paintings that protested the building of a hydroelectric dam near San Juan Tetelcingo.¹³²

Anthropologist, Jonathan D. Amith, after seeing the paintings, organized an exhibit and catalogue with the Mexican Fine Arts Museum in Chicago titled, *Amate Tradition:*

*Innovation and Dissent in Mexican Art.*¹³³ Amith organized this exhibit to showcase the paintings and teach people about the consequences of building the hydroelectric dam.

This brought interest to both the material, amate, and the Nahua communities who were making them. However, what is not discussed is the relationship between the Hñähñu (Otomi) and the Nahua communities. Cowen mentions the Hñähñu (Otomi), they are the ones who make the amate that the Nahua use to paint, however there is not many details given to the relationship between the different communities. There are discussions to be had about how the Nahua communities buy the amate paper, what relationships they have with the Hñähñu (Otomi), and their thoughts on the ecological impacts that come from harvesting bark.

I want to take a quick moment to point out that Nahua paintings have been discussed as art, unlike the Hñähñu (Otomi) who are seen as using amate solely for rituals. The Nahua paintings are used to protest dams and used for economic development, but there has not been scholarship that looks at the Hñähñu (Otomi) cutouts

¹³² Jonathan D. Amith, *La Tradición Del Amate: Innovación Y Protesta En El Arte Mexicano* (Chicago: Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, 1995) 13.

¹³³ Jonathan D. Amith, *La Tradición Del Amate*, 13.

and their art process in the same vein as the Nahua paintings. The difference in artworks being produced by two different communities using the same material shows the way that communities approach materials and how they proceed to adapt it for their own uses. It is a combination of the Nahua and Otomi amate creations that have spread knowledge of amate into an international market.

For \$7.95 dollars you can buy a sheet of amate paper, cream color, 15.5” x 23.5”, all through the Mulberry Paper, Design and More website. They carry varied colors, from lilac to orange and different sizes like a 47”x 95” sheet for \$99.95 dollars. Their description of the paper contains the following:

Go back to ancient times with this great Mexican Amate Paper! This ancient paper dates back to pre-Columbian and Meso-American times and is still hand made by the Otomi Indian artisans of Mexico using the same methods of their Mesoamerican ancestors from 3000 years ago. It has been used through the ages in religious and legal texts and as a canvas for painting.¹³⁴

From the beginning, Mulberry Paper emphasizes the way that amate is an ancient tradition, which authenticates the material and gives it that sense of exoticness. They use the idea of an ancient tradition, one that is unchanged through time, to sell the paper but what also ends up happening is that the “Otomi Indian artisans” are then also placed and thought of as living in the past. The paper is only authentic because the “Otomi Indian artisans” are authentic themselves and what ends up being marketed and sold, is the romantic idea of owning a part of the past. The same kind of description can be found in TALAS (conservation, archival, and bookbinding supplies) website or no description at

¹³⁴ “Mexican Amate Bark Papers.” Mulberry Paper, Design and More. Accessed May 22, 2021. <https://www.mulberrypaperandmore.com/c-268-amate-bark-paper.aspx>

all like in Mexico's website, Empapelarte.¹³⁵ The paper is readily available across the globe. The essence of an authentic ancient past follows the material, regardless of what it is being used for.

As explained in the previous chapter, authenticity is embedded within the amate material, and it is that authenticity that sells. Whether a person is looking online to buy a sheet of amate to use for a project or if it is a Nahua amate painting or Hñähñu (Otomi) amate cut out, there has to be in the description that the object is handmade by the Hñähñu (Otomi) community, because it helps establish authenticity. By saying that it is handmade by an Indigenous community, the amate is not only connected to an authentic tradition but because it is not processed by a large company, the harvesting of the bark is not a conscious worry. It is handmade and therefore it must be sustainable. Knowing what we know about the amate's relationship with the Hñähñu (Otomi), the farmers, and the Nahua communities, and the effects harvesting bark can have on the nature, there are questions that art historians can ponder when looking at artists and their usage of amate.

Questioning Artists

With amate being seen and thought of as being an ancient tradition and “authentically Mexican”, are artists using it to tap into the ancient past and authenticate their own identity? For example, Carlos Merida was a Guatemalan artist known for his depiction of Guatemalan and Mexican Indigenous women in colorful basic shapes. His

¹³⁵ “Amate Bark Handmade Paper.” TALAS. Accessed May 22, 2021. <https://www.talasonline.com/Amate-Bark-Handmade-Paper>. “Serie 800 Amate Color.” Empapelarte y algo más. Accessed May 22, 2021. http://empapelarte.com.mx/tienda/default.php?cPath=1_86&language=en

abstract work, *Arabescos Cromaticos* (1969) (Figure 22) is mixed media on amate. The work resembles a blueprint, shapes of varied colors branch out from the square-frame, branches connecting at different angles, the dark, bright colors contrasting with the amber gold of the amate paper. Knowing that Carlos Merida went into Indigenous communities, perhaps Merida interacted with the Hñähñu (Otomi). He could have a deeper connection to amate that is waiting to be researched.

A similar question can be raised about contemporary Oaxacan artist, Francisco Toledo (Zapotec), known for his depictions of animals with a fantastical twist, who also used amate for some of his paintings. In his painting, *Elefante* (1978) (Figure 23) the usage of amate paper with its not quite straight edges adds dynamism to an already dynamic composition. It almost looks as if there are two different amate sheets that Toledo put together but as you look closer at the edges, there is no sign of an overlap. Why did Toledo decide to use amate? Toledo is known for the work he put in “protecting Oaxaca’s unique cultural and natural patrimony,” and therefore could have had interactions with the Hñähñu (Otomi) community.¹³⁶ Using amate could have been a way of helping preserve the tradition or a way of rebelling against the idea of using a traditional canvas. There are a number of other artists who have used amate, like Mexican artist Teresa Serrano (Figure 24) or Danish artist, Palle Seierse Frost (Figure 25), but what were their reasoning for the usage? They could be tapping in the amate’s ancient part or it could be that it was readily available. There might be a chance that they might

¹³⁶ George Mead Moore and Francisco Toledo. “Francisco Toledo.” *BOMB*, no. 70 (Winter 2000): 113.

have been in contact with the Hñähñu (Otomi) community. These are all directions art historians can take to get a complex look at artists' relationship to amate.

Mexican artist, Gabriel Sánchez Viveros (b. 1962) studied architecture in Ciudad Universitaria de UNAM.¹³⁷ After receiving a six-month job offer to work in Saudi Arabia, Sánchez Viveros was offered to stay on longer and the six months turned into fifteen years. During those fifteen years, he worked on four palaces for prince Al-Saud, mixing the northern Saudi Arabia style with Mexican style of architecture.¹³⁸ In a recent Master Class interview for Cultura Colectiva, Gabriel Sánchez Viveros welcomed us into his studio and described his interest in using natural pigments in his work. As he began his class, Sánchez Viveros spoke of the difficulty in acquiring materials and for this reason he wanted the audience to work with what they had at home, both inside and outside. Sánchez Viveros then lifted from the table a piece of bark, “yo aquí tengo una corteza que agarre de mi jardín de mi estudio,” and began to draw upon it with a white pastel crayon.¹³⁹ This usage of natural materials continued throughout the rest of the almost hour-long class. He used leaves and flowers, pressing them down into cotton paper to create imprints of them, imbuing the art with liveliness. By using the natural materials, Sánchez Viveros encouraged viewers to think about the environment, because of his strong feelings towards nature, it came as a surprise when I could not find

¹³⁷Carlos Paul, “El arquitecto Gabriel Sánchez Viveros publicará un libro sobre su estancia en Arabia Saudita,” *La Jornada*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2020/06/15/cultura/a06n1cul>.

¹³⁸ Carlos Paul, “El arquitecto Gabriel Sánchez Viveros publicará un libro.”

¹³⁹Translation: Here is a piece of bark that I took from my studio's garden. Gabriel Sánchez Viveros, “Arte + Natura: Master Class Impartida por Gabriel Sánchez Viveros para Cultura Colectiva,” Cultural Colectiva, August 24, 2020, Video, 57:27, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_Pt3MZ6ghA&t=1216s&ab_channel=GabrielSanchezViveros.

interviews of him speaking about the Hñähñu (Otomi) communities and overharvesting bark.

In his website, he states, “nature is the greatest source of inspiration. It just needs to be properly appreciated,” and it is this idea that inspired his recent works on handmade paper, most which are on amate.¹⁴⁰ Should we expect artists to take into consideration moving beyond appreciation to actively aiding nature? In a 2018 interview by the Secretaria de Cultura, Sánchez Viveros states that he fell in love with the beauty of the paper and that he hopes more artists begin using it so they can help keep the tradition of amate alive.¹⁴¹ Art historians can question where the artist acquires his amate from a company or from the Hñähñu (Otomi) themselves. As a human being, part of this world and part of México, there is a responsibility to the material and to the community, whether he takes it on or not. Art historians can and should ask these questions.

In a recent series of paintings that he has made, amate is the material used the most to paint upon. The amate papers are so large that Sánchez Viveros has commented that it is hard to find amate paper that big.¹⁴² The paintings in the series *Primitivo* are created with his body. Using acrylic paint, he covers himself in the red paint and then presses himself onto the paper. What is left is an impression of his body in red, the

¹⁴⁰ Sánchez Viveros, Gabriel. “About the artist.” Accessed May 21, 2021.

<https://www.gabrielsanchezviveros.com/about-the-artist-1>.

¹⁴¹Secretaría de Cultura, “Abren la exposición Rojo. Historias en papel amate en el Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares,” Secretaría de Cultura: Prensa. Gobierno de Mexico. October 27, 2018, <https://www.gob.mx/cultura/prensa/abren-la-exposicion-rojo-historias-en-papel-amate-en-el-museo-nacional-de-culturas-populares?tab=>.

¹⁴²Secretaría de Cultura, “Abren la exposición Rojo. Historias en papel amate en el Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares.”

negative and positive space playing against each other to create a stark contrast. In this *Untitled* work (Figure 26), created in 2017, we can see the head is divided into two, one face looking left and one looking right while the arms are raised upwards. It resembles one of the Hñähñu (Otomi) paper cutouts. Yet, from the interviews and articles written about these exhibitions and artworks, there is no direct mention to the Hñähñu (Otomi) community. The vibrant red color left on the paper is jarring with how bloodlike it is. In another painting from this series, we see the impression of his body curled up in a fetal position (Figure 27). These impressions touch upon a primordial fear in humanity, one which for survival reason makes us weary of red liquid. The red pigment itself is one honored in Mexico and although, Sánchez Viveros does not use the natural pigment derived from the cochineal, it is still harkening to that ancient pigment that came from the continent of the Americas. The combined usage of the amate and the red paint come together to give the paintings in the series *Primitivo* that feeling of an ancient past.

We could look at the way that Sanchez Viveros uses amate in his *Primitivo* series as a way of tapping into the amate's traditional and ancient past. If we add in the fact that he lived outside of Mexico for fifteen years, perhaps we can think of him using amate as a way of anchoring his identity in a authentically Mexican material. Sánchez Viveros has made it clear that he is interested in nature, in recycling and interacting with nature in some way so perhaps he is using amate to feel closer to the spirit of the tree, closer to nature because the amate is handmade. He has stated that he wants to ensure that the tradition does not die away and perhaps art historians can inquire upon his awareness of environmental changes and the current status of the community. There are many more

questions that come to mind and any answers to these questions would probably lead to more questions. However, the questions that interest me are those anchored by the material, and in this case, that is amate.

Conclusion: Responsibility

The questions I have offered up for discussion in this case study stems from one question, what responsibility do art historians have to the land and the Indigenous communities that live upon it. The previous chapter showed how intertwined amate and the Hñähñu (Otomi) are, but it went beyond that to touch upon the way that their relationship affected nearby communities. This final chapter moved beyond Pahuatlán, Puebla, to get a brief look at a wider network. Between the two chapters, I have showed how connected the amate and the Hñähñu (Otomi) community are to each other, but also to outsiders. However, I have also touched upon briefly on the struggles that the communities, Hñähñu (Otomi) and non-Hñähñu (Otomi) are facing in the area of Pahuatlán, Puebla, as well as other Indigenous communities across the nation of Mexico. How should art historians approach a material like amate and its relationship with communities and individuals that live cities, states, and countries away from Pahuatlán, Puebla? Or perhaps, we can go back to the very beginning and ask: how should art historians approach arte popular?

Conclusion Moving Beyond Arte Popular

As previously discussed, art historical scholarship on arte popular tends to provide short descriptive blurbs on materials or objects, sometimes both, but without providing in-depth discussions into their contexts. The case study on amate from the last two chapters provided a different way of looking at arte popular that steps away from trying to place amate within the category of arte popular. Instead, the case study explored the different relationships that connect and surround the material. It moves beyond talking about amate as part of a national aesthetic and toward one which focuses on its complex histories and ecological relationships. This created a discussion centered around the Hñähñu (Otomi) communities who have been ignored when it came to talking about their relationship with the amate. Moreover, it has become clear that an in-depth discussion of amate must also include substantial field work, speaking to artists and their communities. In this conclusion, I offer possible avenues to expand the conversation around materiality and arte popular. Once again, there are many paths and topics from which discussion can expand, but I look at similarly underexamined materials, different methodologies, and forms of display.

Amate is but one material within the long list of what is considered arte popular; there are many other materials which would benefit from further consideration such as marble and onyx. For example, art historians can look at sculptures made of marble found within the valley of Mexico as a result of volcanic eruptions.¹⁴³ These sculptures can

¹⁴³ Carlos Monsiváis, Fernando del Paso, and José Emilio Pacheco, *Belleza y poesía en el arte popular mexicano*, (Queretaro, Mexico: Tiempo imaginario and CVS publicaciones, 1996) 164.

reveal information about the changes that have occurred within communities, both why they stopped creating sculptures from marble or why they continue to create the sculpture. In an article by *Mexico News Daily*, journalist Joseph Sorrentino discusses the masons from the town of Tecali de Herrera who are known for their skills at creating objects from marble and onyx. According to Sorrentino, the Chichimecas who settled in the area in the 12th century sent marble and onyx as tribute to Tenochtitlan.¹⁴⁴ Although there has been scholarship about materiality when it comes to the Pre-Contact and Colonial periods, there has not been in-depth look into the contemporary relationship of the material.

In the same vein as the amate, we can pose several questions when considering arte popular objects made of marble and onyx. Art historians could look at the different adaptations that have evolved when it comes to both the retrieval of marble and onyx, as well as the process of carving the actual material. I showed that the Hñähñu (Otomi) now buy the bark from harvesters which could mean that there is a similar relationship between Tecali de Herrera community and those who mine the marble or onyx from a quarry. In the same way that seeing Gabriel Sánchez Viveros work ignited my interest in amate as a material, Leonardo Nierman's onyx sculptures that swirl like waves, seeming to almost take flight despite their heavy, earthly material, adds intrigue to the onyx material.¹⁴⁵ The word onyx is used as part of the title of an animated show, *Onyx Equinox*,

¹⁴⁴ Joseph Sorrentino, "Puebla town's artisans keep alive traditions going back nearly 1,000 years." *Mexico News Daily*. March 10, 2021. <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/mexicolife/puebla-towns-artisans-keep-alive-traditions-going-back-nearly-1000-years/>

¹⁴⁵ "Leonardo Nierman/ White Onyx Sculpture Contemporary Art Signed Large." *Modern Artifact Contemporary Masters*. <https://modernartifact.com/products/white-onyx-sculpture-contemporary-art-signed-large>

which takes place in Mesoamerica and is filled with ancient gods like Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl.¹⁴⁶ Out of many materials that are connected to Mesoamerica, the showrunners decided to go with the material onyx for their title, giving it prominence over others. Another material that can be considered is silver. Mexico currently contains three of the ten largest silver mines in the world.¹⁴⁷ The silver is used to create varied objects, from jewelry to plates and belt buckles but scholarship has not touched upon the impact of the mining nor how communities are acquiring the silver. Lastly, gourds have a long tradition of being used as containers for water and they are now part of arte popular. In Figure 28, you can see a gourd decorated with lacquer in vibrant colors, however, there is little scholarship that looks at the process of growing and harvesting. There are a myriad of materials and different objects that are categorized as arte popular that are waiting to be contextualized. There are so many possibilities and paths that can be taken when it comes to arte popular.

This is not to say that there is nothing to discuss when it comes to the term arte popular itself because there can be more in-depth discussion about settler colonialism, its current impact on Indigenous communities and the way that arte popular fits into the equation. Ever since the Enlightenment, from which art history was established,

¹⁴⁶ "Onyx Equinox." Crunchyroll. Accessed June 7, 2021. <https://www.crunchyroll.com/onyx-equinox/videos>. The synopsis for this animation is the following, "The gods are at war for the future of humanity, and an Aztec boy named Izal finds himself caught in the middle of their dangerous game. In order to save humankind, he must complete an impossible task--closing the five gates to the underworld. Izal reluctantly agrees, but only after learning his quest will also correct a terrible tragedy. His journey to become humanity's champion will be one of hope and despair, of trust and betrayal, where Izal must confront his own darkness and decide if the human race--with all its flaws and contradictions--is worth saving."

¹⁴⁷ "The 10 biggest silver mines in the world." Mining Technology. Last Updated January 27th, 2020. <https://www.mining-technology.com/features/feature-the-10-biggest-silver-mines-in-the-world/>

categorizing has become the way for us to understand and approach the world around is. There are discussions to be had about arte popular that looks at the objects by way of their gender relations. There is a difference between the way that works like textiles are treated which are typically made by women as compared to the way that metalwork is treated which is typically done by men. Perhaps future art historical efforts can incorporate women and gender studies and look at the history of arte popular specifically through gender dynamics. This can help map disparities between genders but also help broaden discussions about gender that breaks away from a strict binary. When it comes to Indigenous communities in Mexico at least, looking into women and their roles might help in discussions of femicide. Art history has a responsibility to the environment, and to human beings.

Additionally, a discussion which considers the ways in which museums, like Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City or the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and other institutions acquire, care for, and display arte popular is long overdue. It would be interesting to see how different the care is between arte popular and other kinds of art, as well as the difference between museums and galleries when it comes to exhibition design. An important aspect of museums is educational materials, therefore looking at what types of materials are offered that teach about arte popular, if any, can aid in understanding not only how institutions see arte popular but how visitors do so as well. Museo de Culturas Populares uses social media to provide images and short descriptions, they could be a case study for learning how digital outreach influences viewers. When it comes to amate, the in-person and online communities that the Museo de Culturas

Populares are learning mostly about the usage of amate in rituals by the Hñähñu's (Otomi), all through the educational programming and digital outreach such as social media. These discussions can look at multiple case studies, different objects and how they are exhibited/displayed because there is definitely a lack of discussing this aspect of arte popular.

There are also questions to be asked about the market for arte popular, domestically as well as internationally. Arte popular is connected and used interchangeably with terms like artesanías and handicrafts. Sometimes those are the terms used in online descriptions to boost sales of objects. Rick Lopez in *Crafting Mexico* touches upon the different economic institutions that marketed arte popular, but there is more research to be had on the contemporary relationship between the creators, the institutions, the collectors, and secondary vendors. It would be interesting, for example, to see whether foreigners are buying arte popular when they visit México or do they prefer to buy arte popular online. Scholarship can also look at the popularity of different objects and who buys them, because the demand can shed light to the way that different objects and communities have adapted their processes. These are all discussions that are worth having and moving forward, I hope are had.

In the end, this thesis set out to show that art history needs to be interdisciplinary and move away from the traditional Western European frameworks which do not often consider works and objects that fall outside of established frameworks. By looking at arte popular and its many complexities and using different methodologies—including material culture, new materialism, Place-thought, among others—scholarship can move

towards decolonizing art history. In his 2018 book, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Walter Mignolo defines decoloniality as “to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought.”¹⁵⁰ Ultimately, this thesis is about viewing arte popular through a different perspective than those which dominate the discourse. Hopefully, this perspective will lead other art historians to both narrow and broaden the methods, perspectives, and scope of their scholarship on arte popular.

¹⁵⁰ Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018) 17.

Appendix: Folk Art Terms and Definitions

<p>Museum of International Folk Art</p>	<p>Generally, folk art is ART that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be decorative or utilitarian May be used every day or reserved for high ceremonies Is handmade; it may include handmade elements, as well as new, synthetic, or recycled components May be made for use within a community of practice or it may be produced for sale as a form of income and empowerment May be learned formally or informally; folk art may also be self-taught May include intangible forms of expressive culture like dance, song, poetry, and foodways Is traditional; it reflects shared cultural aesthetics and social issues. It is recognized that, as traditions are dynamic, traditional folk art may change over time and may include innovations in tradition. Is of, by, and for the people; all people, inclusive of class, status, culture, community, ethnicity, gender, and religion
<p>“Folk Art.” Dictionary.com, Accessed March 2021. https://www.dictionary.com/browse/folk-art.</p>	<p>artistic works, as paintings, sculpture, basketry, and utensils, produced typically in cultural isolation by untrained often anonymous artists or by artisans of varying degrees of skill and marked by such attributes as highly decorative design, bright bold colors, flattened perspective, strong forms in simple arrangements, and immediacy of meaning.</p>
<p>“About: American Folk Art Museum.” <i>About American Folk Art Museum</i>, February 2020, folkartmuseum.org/about/.</p>	<p>The American Folk Art Museum is devoted to the aesthetic appreciation and creative expressions of self-taught artists across time and place.</p> <p>The field of American folk art was first defined at the turn of the twentieth century by collectors, professional artists, critics, dealers, and curators whose search for an authentic American art seemed to be finally answered in works that presented a nuanced picture of national identity, faith, progress, ingenuity, community, and individuality. Under the umbrella of “folk art” the field expanded to also include artists working in the present. For the last twenty years, the term self-taught has more regularly come to address these artists, whose inspiration emerges from unsuspected paths and unconventional places, giving voice to individuals who may be situated outside the social mainstream. Those individuals have been active</p>

	<p>participants in the shaping of American visual culture, influencing generations of artists and establishing lively artistic traditions.</p>
<p>Barnes, Sarah. "10 Famous Folk Artists Who Carry on the Tradition of Creative Expression." My Modern Met, October 29, 2017, https://mymodernmet.com/what-is-folk-art-definition/.</p>	<p>What is Folk Art?</p> <p>Folk art is broad term that describes a variety of media and techniques. From painting to sculpture, these pieces have defining characteristics that are not style based (like line art or hyperrealism) or necessarily influenced by the likes of academia. One aspect is often rooted in traditions of a community and/or culture. The piece (or pieces') aesthetic often expresses the identity that comes from these places, rather than of the individual artist.</p> <p>"Many of the artworks come from before the rise of the middle class, before the rise of mechanization," Stephanie Knappe, curator at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art explained. "It really is about carrying on and carrying through tradition during a time of great change. There is a stability to be found in traditions and keeping the past alive."</p> <p>But that's not to say that all artists work like that. There are some extraordinary makers who feel compelled to make art as a way to express themselves in ways that they couldn't otherwise.</p> <p>Because folk art is so open in terms of its appearance, it's hard to find common themes or styles.</p>
<p>Smithsonian, "American Traditions: A Taste for Folk Art." Archives of American Art, Accessed March 2020. https://www.si.edu/spotlight/folk-art.</p>	<p>The definition of American folk art is notoriously difficult to pin down. In the twentieth century "folk art" has embraced everything from Pennsylvania German frakturs to eccentric architectural environments.</p> <p>Holger Cahill in his landmark 1932 exhibition <i>American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America</i>, for the Museum of Modern Art, looked to the pre-industrial past for "the simple and unaffected childlike expression of men and women who had little or no school training in art, and who did not even know that they were producing art." In the 1940s, art critic and collector Jean Lipman pointed to folk art as the product of a great democracy. It was spontaneous, home-grown, non-derivative, and non-</p>

	<p>academic. Three decades later, Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr., and Julia Weissman in their book <i>Twentieth Century American Folk Art and Artists</i>, expanded the scope to include living artists, and asserted that “the vision of the folk artist is a private one, a personal universe, a world of his own making,” unaffected by the mainstream art world.</p>
<p>Yenawine, Philip. <i>Key Art Terms for Beginners</i>. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1995.</p>	<p>Folk art: in which schooling and academic training play little part, is handed down from generation to generation and usually reflects commonly held regional values and customs. Often not thinking of themselves as professionals, folk artists simply make things as a matter of course- quilts for example.</p> <p>Categories such as "folk art" trouble some people, because they imply qualitative distinctions between say, fine art and folk art, or high art and popular culture. There are indeed differences in the training and motives of the artists, among other things, but using "fine art" to suggest superiority no longer seen as reasonable. We use labels to help us sort things out but not to confer judgement.</p> <p>Naïve: art is related to folk art, in which images and emotions are also expressed very directly and simply. Their meanings, however, can be very elusive unless you are filled in on the culture from which they come. In many instances this is not a simple matter, some naive art is made by people whose realities are narrowly defined, such as patients in mental hospitals, who are sometimes referred to as "Art Brut." In this general category falls art known by other names, such as "outside", "tramp", or "prison" art.</p>
<p>Harold Osborne, and Ian Chilvers. <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Art</i>. New ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.</p>	<p>Folk Art: Term describing objects and decorations made in a traditional fashion by craftsmen without formal training, either for daily use and ornament or for special occasions such as weddings and funerals. Decorative woodcarving, embroidery, lace, basketwork, and earthenware are among the typical products of folk art. The term is not properly</p>

	<p>extended to include articles which are mass-produced to appeal to popular taste, such as Christmas cards or Coronation mugs. Folk art is little subject to fashion and changing taste. Its methods are handed down in the home from generation to generation, and traditional terms and designs persist with little alteration. The perpetuation of a folk art seems to depend upon the continuation of a peasant population or other relatively settled social structure. Attempts to revive or artificially reproduce folk art in the context of Arts and Crafts movements among the urban intelligentsia are frequent but rarely successful.</p> <p>Naive Art: Term applies to a painting (and to a much lesser degree sculpture) produced in more or less sophisticated societies but lacking conventional expertise in representational skills. Colours are characteristically bright and non-naturalistic, perspective non-scientific, and the vision childlike or literal-minded. The term 'primitive' is sometimes used more or less synonymously with naive, but this can be confusing, as 'primitive' is also applied loosely to paintings of the pre-Renaissance era as well as to art of 'uncivilized' societies. Other terms that are sometimes used in a similar way are 'folk', 'popular', or 'Sunday painters', but these too have their pitfalls, not least 'Sunday painter', for many amateurs do not paint in a naive style, and naive artists (at least the successful ones) often paint as a full-time job. Sophisticated artists may also deliberately affect a naive style, but this 'false naivety' (faux naïf) is no more to be confused with spontaneous quality of the true naive than the deliberately childlike work of say Klee or Picasso is to be confused with genuine children's drawing. Naive art has a quality of its own that is easy to recognize but hard to define. Scottie Wilson summed it up when it said, 'it's a feeling you cannot explain. You're born with it and it just comes out.'</p>
Brigstocke, Hugh. <i>The Oxford Companion to Western Art</i> . Oxford ;: Oxford University Press, 2001.	<p>Folk Art: A term used to describe objects and applied decoration derived from community tradition and executed by people without formal training, either for daily use or associated with a particular tradition, occasion, or ceremony. Typical products include woodcarving, weaving, decorative painting, basketry, and earthenware, but it ranges in sophistication from the subtlety of American quilts to the</p>

	<p>cheerful brash flower painting of English canal-ware. True folk art is little subject to fashion and changing taste. Its methods are handed down from generation to generation and traditional patterns and designs persist with little alteration. However, its resistance to change, despite changes in society, exposes it to the danger of irrelevance. Once central to a particular culture it has become increasingly marginalized, produced for tourists and thus inevitably debased or artificially maintained as a leisure occupation practiced by enthusiasts. The perpetuation of unadulterated folk art largely depends upon the continuation of a peasant population, shared religious belief, or other relatively settled social structure. The term has always been used by commentators, rather than practitioners and is generally confined to European and colonial communities.</p> <p>Outside Art: A term used to describe the art made by people not conventionally associated with art production, such as psychiatric patients, children, and prisoners. It is synonymous with Art Brut- 'raw art'- a term coined by Jean Dubuffet, who, in 1964, began to collect works he considered to be free from cultural norms and fashions or traditions in art. In 1948, he had founded the Compagnie de l'Art Brut with Andre Breton, in the first edition of who periodical Dubuffet defined the term as 'works executed by people free from artistic culture, for whom mimesis plays little or no part, so that their creators draw up everything from their own depths and not from the stereotypes of classical art or of modish art. We have here a "chemically pure" artistic operation.</p> <p>Primitive Today the term is most commonly used to describe aspects of Western art which refer to, or manifest, forms and values derived from African and Oceanic tribal objects celebrating ancestral and regenerative qualities. The term implies a Western viewpoint, whereby ethnic art- historically posited as 'other'- is subjected to formal study, originally by ethnologists and later by artists and art historians. In recent times, the term has been desired for its earlier ethnocentric and pejorative usage, which is why it is often placed within quotation marks. Towards the end of</p>
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	<p>19th century, it was used in an 'evolutionist' sense to denote the cultural artefacts of those people deemed to fall outside the influence of Western civilization such as the African Negroes out of the Sahara, the Eskimos, and the inhabitants of the Pacific islands. The conceptual complexity and aesthetic subtlety of the best of these artefacts were not the appreciated, regarded as they were as the mere fetish objects of barbaric peoples whose cultures were thought to be in a formative or degenerative phase. Modernist artists were the first to use 'primitive' in an admiring sense, and it is now well established as a term of praise within an artistic context.</p>
<p>Mayer, Ralph. <i>A Dictionary of Art Terms and Techniques</i>. New York: Crowell, 1969.</p>	<p>Folk Art Art, handicrafts, and decorative ornament produced by people who have had no formal art training but have an established tradition of styles and craftsmanship. A country or region may have a characteristic folk art.</p>
<p>Lemke, Antje Bultmann., and Ruth Fleiss. <i>Museum Companion; a Dictionary of Art Terms and Subjects</i>. New York: Hippocrene, 1974.</p>	<p>Folk Art Paintings, pottery and sculpture by unschooled, unidentified artists that carry on a folk culture with its traditional motifs, symbols and abstract decorative patterns. Subjects often are related to birth, death, marriage, religious ceremonies, festivals, everyday life. See also: Primitive Art</p>
<p>Duro, Paul, and Michael. Greenhalgh. <i>Essential Art History</i>. London: Bloomsbury, 1993.</p>	<p>Folk Art A term used to describe art and artefacts made within the parameters of rural craft industries by artisans with little or no interest in emulating fine art production. Thus woodwork, fabric and pottery decorated with the traditional designs of a region, reflection the interests and tastes of that community, are typical folk-art products. It is a characteristic of folk art that it remains largely uninfluenced by fine art movements (there is no Baroque period of folk art, for example), but finds its continuity in the self-sufficient craft practices of rural communities.</p> <p>Naive Art: Not to be confused with folk art, primitive art or Art Brut. Naive art is the work of artists without formal training (art education and training) who exhibit a lack of concern with such conventions of representation as a scientific perspective or consistent use of chiaroscuro. Naive artists,</p>

	<p>such as Henri Rousseau, Grandma Moses, and Alfred Wallis, favor strong colors and literal drawing to express an intensely personal interest in narrative. Not all naive work is by untrained artists. L.S. Lowry in his industrial landscapes, and the Die Brucke group used the freedom enjoyed by the naive artist to infuse their work with a directness of vision and a 'common-sense' focus on narrative.</p>
<p>Hume, Helen D. <i>The Art Lover's Almanac: Serious Trivia for the Novice and the Connoisseur</i>, 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003.</p>	<p>Folk Art Terms</p> <p>Folk art comes out of an identifiable tradition, such as traditional Navajo rugs or pottery from the San Ildefonso Pueblo in New Mexico, and is created by non-academically trained artists. The American Visionary Museum defines "folk art" as coming out of a particular cultural tradition, in contrast with "visionary art," which comes from individual inspiration. However, it is commonplace to use the term folk art to describe any work that fits either category. This list includes words that may have several meanings in reference to art but have specific interpretations when applied to folk art.</p> <p>Art Brut: a French term that means "raw" or "strong" art, referring to the fresh, emotional appeal of some folk art. First used by Jean Dubuffet, founder of the Collection del'Arte Brut in Switzerland.</p> <p>Assemblage: an assemblage is created from found objects, such as wood, metal, plastic, or glass, joined together by various means to create sculpture. Folk art assemblages are sometimes referred to as junk sculpture.</p> <p>Contemporary folk art: this is artwork that is being produced now, by artists around the world, following a cultural tradition.</p> <p>Environmental art (sometimes called yard art): some folk artists beautify their surroundings, creating artwork from materials. A prime example is Simon Rodia's <i>Watts Towers</i> in Los Angeles, a huge fantasy-construction that was created from broken China embedded in cement, and supported by metal rods. Tressa Prisbrey's <i>Bottle Village</i> is another example of the genre.</p>

	<p>Faux folk art: this art is created by academically trained artists to look like work by self-taught artists.</p> <p>Naive: the French term for the work of an artist whose work is unsophisticated and rather childlike</p> <p>Outsider Art: this generally refers to the works of self-taught artists, some of whom may have spent their lives in prison or mental institutions or are developmentally, physically, or mentally disabled. Other outsider artists are simply people who have not had traditional artists education who express themselves through sculpture, painting, or constructions.</p> <p>Primitive: a term used to describe the works of non-academically trained artists; was also applied to the work of Flemish painters of the 15th century (Flemish Primitives)</p> <p>Self Taught- An Artists who has not had formal training, but has learned technique simply by "doing".</p> <p>Visionary art: this art comes from within the artist, and is not based on cultural traditions; paintings with subject matter based on fantasy, dreams, "voices", or "visions." Visionary works frequently have religious or sexual overtones.</p> <p>Most folk art developed in rural societies, with traditions passed down through generations. Training was acquired through watching and learning from family members or through apprenticeship. The folk artist continuing in a cultural tradition seldom signed their work. The work done by the artists in rural communities was as much a part of their lives as cooking, keeping house, and watching children, with the exception that the artwork often also served as a source of income.</p>
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Figure 1. Graciela Ramírez López, *Corona de Muerte*, 2004, wax, in Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías. *Arte Popular de Mexico: 30 años de reconocimiento al Arte Popular Mexicano*. Mexico City: Impresora y Encuadernadora Progreso, S.A. de C.V. (IEPSA), 2006.



Figure 2. *Casta Painting* c.1750, oil from canvas, 67 x 56.2 cm, From University of California, San Diego. https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003758552.

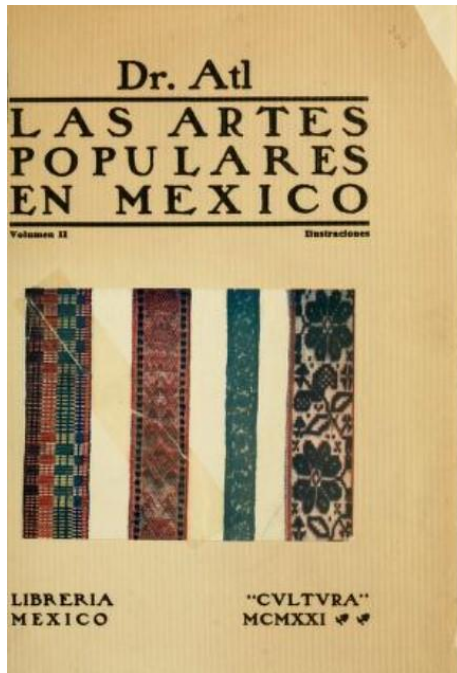


Figure 3 Dr. Atl, *Las artes populares en Mexico* v. 2. 'Cultura', 1921. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5479/sil.75861.39088002036895>.



Figure 4 Diego Rivera. *La Creación/Creation*, 1922-1923, Encaustic and Blade of gold, 7.08 M x 12.9 M, Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, https://library.artstor.org/asset/ASCHALKWIJKIG_10313990534.



Figure 5. Jose Clemente Orozco, *Epic of American Civilization: The Coming of Quetzalcoatl*, 1932-1934, fresco, UCSD Libraries Image Collection.



Figure 6. David Alfaro Siqueiros, *América Tropical*, 1932, mural, El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, Photograph by Author.



Figure 7. Diego Rivera, *Pan-American Unity*, 1940, fresco, 6.74 x 22.5m, City College, San Francisco, image from Jacaqueline Barnitz, Art and Art History Department, University of Texas, Austin.



Figure 8. Fernando Leal, *La fiesta del Señor de Chalma*, 1922-1923, San Ildefonso College, Wikimedia Commons accessed June 10, 2021. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FiestaChalmaLealSICDF.JPG>.

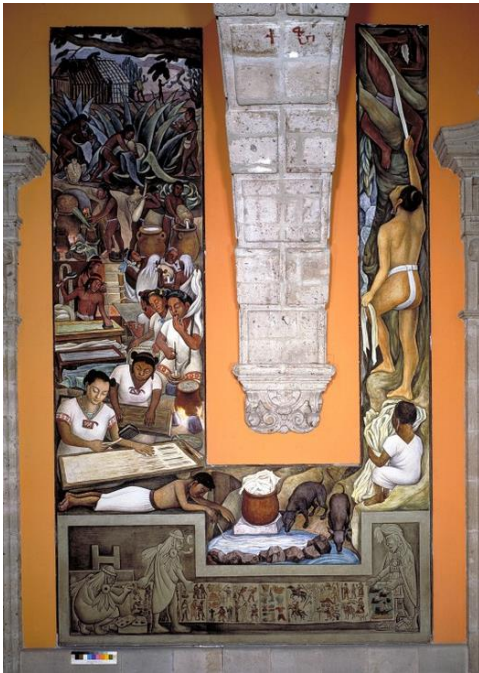


Figure 9 Diego Rivera, *El Amate/The Papermakers*, 1951, fresco, 4.92 x 4.02 m, Mexico City, From Bob Schalkwijk Photography Collection.



Figure 10. Anonymous, *Señor del Granizo/ Lord of Hail*, n.d., amate, 20 x 14.50 cm, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. From Oliver Vega, Beatriz. *Papel ceremonial entre los otomíes*. 1st ed. México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1997.



Figure 11. Anonymous, *Señora Arco Iris/Lady of Rainbows*, n.d., amate, 20 x 14.70 cm, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. From Oliver Vega, Beatriz. *Papel ceremonial entre los otomíes*. 1st ed. México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1997.

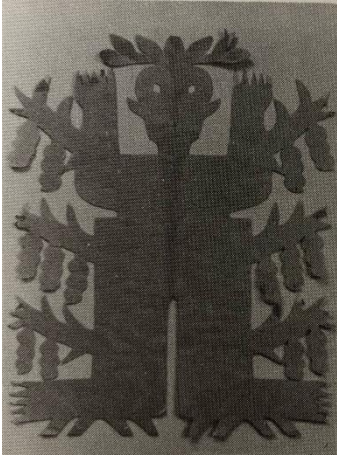


Figure 12. Anonymous, *Espíritu del Cacahuatate/ Spirit of the Peanut*, n.d., amate, 21.40 x 17.40 cm, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. From Oliver Vega, Beatriz. *Papel ceremonial entre los otomíes*. 1st ed. México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1997.

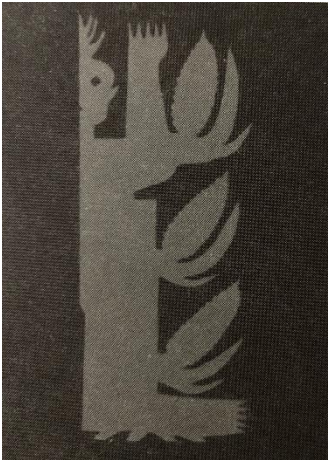


Figure 13. Anonymous, *Espíritu del Maíz/Spirit of the Corn*, n.d. amate, 21.30 x 16 cm, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. From Oliver Vega, Beatriz. *Papel ceremonial entre los otomíes*. 1st ed. México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1997.



Figure 14. Anonymous, *Espíritu del Maíz/Spirit of the Corn*, n.d., amate, 29.70 x 11.70 cm, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. From Oliver Vega, Beatriz. *Papel ceremonial entre los otomíes*. 1st ed. México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1997.



Figure 15. Anonymous, *Untitled*, c.a. 1970s, amate, 21.50 x 29.50 cm, © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 16. Humberto Trejo Gonzales, *Untitled*, 1995, amate, 34 x 53.50 cm, © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 17. Humberto Trejo Gonzales, *Untitled*, c.a. 1990s, amate, 40 x 60 cm, © The Trustees of the British Museum.

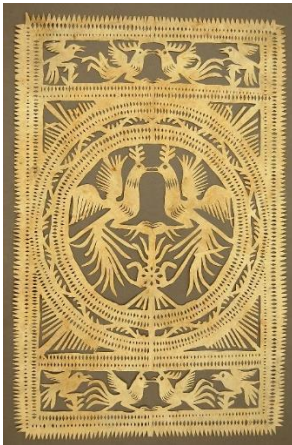


Figure 18. Humberto Trejo Gonzales, *Untitled*, c.a. 1995, amate, 34.50 x 54 cm, © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 19. Alfonso Garcia Tellez, *HISTORIA DE UN DRUJO NAGUAL SAN PABLITO PAHUATLAN PUE*, August 10, 1978, amate, 17.50 x 14 x 1 cm, © The Trustees of the British Museum.

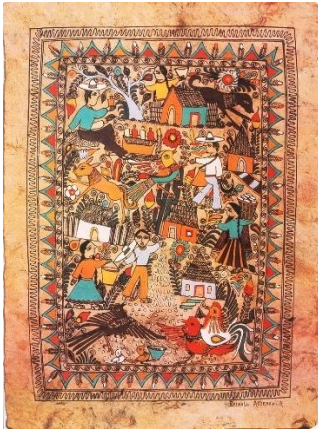


Figure 20. Reynaldo Ascencio, *Bark paper painting: village life*, [n.d.], paint on amate, Guerrero, Mexico, https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003745351.



Figure 21. Marciana Martinez Ramirez, *Untitled (Nativity Scene)*, c.a. 1980s, amate, 42 x 60.50 cm, © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 22. Carlos Merida, *Arabescos Cromataics/Chromatic Arabesques*, 1969, mixed media on amate paper, 59.5 x 59.5 cm, Colección Noriega Escobedo, https://library.artstor.org/asset/ASCHALKWIJKIG_10313990983.



Figure 23. Francisco Toledo, *Elefante/Elephant*, 1978, Gouache on amate paper, 79 x 41 cm, Colección Particular, https://library.artstor.org/asset/ASCHALKWIJKIG_10313991065.



Figure 24. Teresa Serrano, *Yasi de Nuevo (Heraclito)*, 1991, Graphite and acrylic on amate paper, 2.3 m x 1.19 m, Contemporary Art (Larry Qualls Archive), https://library.artstor.org/asset/LARRY_QUALLS_10311713876.



Figure 25. Palle Seiersen Frost, *Hallazgo XXI/FIND XXI*, 1990, Amate paper folded, Bob Schalkwijk Photography, https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953_35953_31192901.



Figure 26. Gabriel Sánchez Viveros, *Untitled*, 2017, Body print with acrylic paint on handmade amate paper, 244 x 122 cm, Series Primitivo, <https://www.gabrielsanchezviveros.com/en/primitivo>.



Figure 27. Gabriel Sánchez Viveros, *Untitled*, 2017, Body print with acrylic paint on handmade amate paper, 122 x 244 cm, Series Primitivo, <https://www.gabrielsanchezviveros.com/en/primitivo>.



Figure 28. Francisco Coronel Navarro, *Bule con aplicación de hoja de oro*, 2004, gourd and lacquer, in Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías. *Arte Popular de Mexico: 30 años de reconocimiento al Arte Popular Mexicano*. Mexico City: Impresora y Encuadernadora Progreso, S.A. de C.V. (IEPSA),