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Textual Poch@s in the Transpacific Borderlands:

Chicana/o/x Art beyond Aztlán

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana/o and Central American Studies

by

María Daniela Z. Jiménez

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana/o and Central American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

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My dissertation, "Textual Poch@s in the Transpacific Borderlands: Chicana/o/x Art beyond Aztlán," is the first in-depth study of connections between Asians, Asian Americans, and U.S. Latinas/os/xs in the visual arts. Drawing from the fields of Chicana/o/x art, cultural studies, fandom studies, and literary criticism, I present readers with the concept of the textual poch@. A textual poch@ is, in essence, an individual whose varied cultural tastes may or may not correlate with the dominant narratives and ideals of the racial/ethnic group they belong to or identify with. Nevertheless, a textual poch@ makes sense of their identity by creating cultural productions that are influenced by, but not beholden to, their racial/ethnic group's expectations.

I use the textual poch@ framework to situate three different understudied artists who identity as Chicana/o/x, Japanese American, and Japanese —Rio Yañez (b. 1980), Shizu Saldamando (b. 1978), and Kazuya "Night tha Funksta" Naito (b. 1984)— to discuss how they each contribute to understandings of relational ethnic studies. Relational ethnic studies is a field concerned with how the presence and interaction with other communities of color affect the development of identity, history, and culture of non-white, ethnic and racial groups. This

approach acknowledges that communities of color do not exist in separatist bubbles, nor is their identity formation only influenced by understandings of whiteness. Merging the textual poch@ framework with relational ethnic studies, this dissertation ultimately argues that the visual arts can help inform the re-envisioning of relational ethnic studies, Chicana/o/x art, and transnational understandings of Chicanas/os/xs in an effort to build new coalitional networks.

The dissertation of María Daniela Z. Jiménez is approved.

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DEDICATED TO

The loving memory of Bruce

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If you happened to come across this dissertation through a search engine or database, for one reason or another, thank you for taking the time to read it.

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Introduction

Jim Mendiola's 1996 film, *Pretty Vacant*, begins with the protagonist, La Molly, sharing a brief autobiography:

> I was born 21 years ago on January 23rd, 1973…the same day Raza Unida met for their first —and only— national convention, and across the Atlantic, David Bowie released *Ziggy Stardust*: both movements didn't last, a radical Chicano political party and Bowie's particular strain of androgynous rock, but both had their influences on me, to this day.

Pretty Vacant is a 32-minute black and white film centered on a 21-year-old queer Chicana from San Antonio, Texas named La Molly. She works at the local Hogwild record store, is a drummer for the all-female band, Aztlán-a-go-go, makes her own movies using a Super 8, and single-handedly writes, edits, and publishes a zine called *Ex-Voto*. The production of *Ex-Voto* is the first instance the viewer learns of Molly's awareness of the need to document diverse Chicana/o/x representations because, as she states, "I published because no one was addressing my interests or needs. Simple as that" (*Pretty Vacant*).[1] The lack of visibility and content in the media for and about Chicanas/os/xs like her —who have an interest in different aspects of popular culture that are not bound solely to Mexican traditions— is what drives La Molly's desire to document herself as a way to connect with other Chicanas/os/xs who encounter similar issues of identity and culture.

[1] My use of "x" and "@" in relation to "a" (feminine) and "o" (masculine) in Spanish-language words like "Chicano," "Latino," and "pocho" is an effort to highlight queerness and those who do not identify with the female/male binary in the Spanish language. Additionally, for the purpose of this study, I use Chicanas/os/xs, Japanese Americans, and Japanese nationals as terms that group these individuals into categories based on their race/ethnicity. However, this does not mean that I view these groups as monolithic.

I begin with this particular reference to Jim Mendiola's *Pretty Vacant* and La Molly as a way to situate the differences people of color sometimes experience within their own racial and ethnic group, especially in terms of cultural taste, how such tastes influence cultural productions, and their performance of ethnic and racial identity. Stuart Hall's "New Ethnicities" challenges, critiques, and interrogates the idea of essentialism as it applies to communities of color; in particular, the Black community within the United Kingdom. Hall concedes that there was a time in which Black essentialism served as "a critique of the way [B]lacks were positioned as the unspoken and invisible 'other' of predominantly white aesthetic and cultural discourses" and thus, required that the Black community present a united front that showcased commonalities among its members (441). But he also explains that as "the struggle [for representation] moves forward and assumes new forms, it does to some degree *displace*, reorganize and reposition the different cultural strategies in relation to one another" (442). What is being displaced is the "end of the essential [B]lack subject" because the issue is "the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subject positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category '[B]lack'" (443). Using La Molly and Stuart Hall as starting points and inspiration, I, too, am interested in what it means to disrupt Chicana/o/x nationalist essentialism by examining Chicana/o/x visual art that is heavily influenced by Japanese and Japanese American aesthetics, history, and culture. This critique of essentialism is not meant to demonstrate that there is no such thing as a Chicana/o/x identity or culture but rather point out the multiple factors that have influenced the construction of it. Additionally, by acknowledging the influences of other cultures outside of Latin America present in Chicana/o/x culture and identity, there is potential to help create space for Chicanas/ox/xs and their cultural tastes and practices that do not necessarily "fit in" with the dominant, nationalist understandings of what a Chicana/o/x is supposed to like or create.

As such, in this dissertation, I discuss the life and works of three visual artists who identify as Chicana/o/x, Japanese American, or Japanese: Rio Yañez (b. 1980), Shizu Saldamando (b. 1978), and Kazuya "Night tha Funksta" Naito (b. 1984). Their collective works provide a new way to discuss Chicana/o/x art and help situate visual expressions that are influenced by, but not beholden to, nationalist ideals of what Chicana/o/x art should be or look like. In examining Chicana/o/x and Japanese cross-cultural exchanges and their manifestations in the visual arts, I seek to illuminate how such influences and understandings challenge preconceived notions (internal and external) of the wider Chicana/o/x and U.S. Latina/o/x communities through a textual poch@ framework.[2] Textual poch@, a concept that will be discussed later on, is an original framework that I developed by building upon literary studies, fandom scholarship and Chicana/o/x art theory. In essence, it provides a lens from which to discuss a group or individual's varied cultural tastes and cultural production that may or may not subscribe or correlate with the dominant narratives and ideals of the racial/ethnic group they belong to and/or identify with.

The international appeal of (often conflated) Chicana/o/x and Mexican cultures is not a new phenomenon. Chicana/o/x and Mexican artists, musicians, authors, academics, military personnel, and politicians (to name a few) have traveled widely outside North America under different circumstances and as a result, the world has learned about Chicanas/os/xs and Mexicans through these unofficial cultural ambassadors. At the same time, travelers to the United States and Mexico have also learned about Chicanas/os/xs and Mexicans. Although popular media sites such as *Vice*, *Remezcla*, and *Mitu* have covered instances of Chicana/o/x culture abroad, an extensive academic study focusing on the results of these cultural exchanges has yet to be

[2] The bulk of my dissertation will focus on Chicanas/os/xs but on occasion, I will use Latina/o/x if the observations or statements apply to the wider U.S. Latina/o/x community.

undertaken. The closest theoretical and ethnographic work on this topic has been Michelle Habell-Pallán's *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture*. She argues that, "[A]n analysis of Chicana/Latina popular performance culture is critical to understanding the impact of globalization on contemporary national and local culture and constitutes 'part of an emerging paradigm of local histories' within Latinos studies… [*sic*]" (2). However, her study focuses on Chicanas and Latinas abroad and their influence on the places they visit but not so much on how those places influence Chicana and Latina performers.

Ultimately, I view the work of acknowledging and studying the ways cross-cultural influences are present between different communities of color as part of the larger effort towards relational ethnic studies fields. Scholars like Luis Alvarez and Natalia Molina have called for relational approaches to scholarship. This means that rather than treating communities of color comparatively, a relational analysis "recognizes that the construction of race is a mutually constitutive process…it attends to how, when, where, and to what extent groups intersect. It recognizes that there are limits to examining racialized groups in isolation" (Molina, "Examining Chicana/o History" 522). Additionally, a relational ethnic studies approach can help bring attention to the similarities between groups rather than focusing on difference and in turn, encourage the documentation of such histories as an effort towards the possibilities of coalitional work.

Literature Review of Theoretical Frameworks

Chicana/o/x Art – Rasquache

The key concept that established the foundation of Chicana/o/x art as an academic subfield is rasquache as aesthetic. The discussion and theorization of rasquache is an important moment in Chicana/o/x art scholarship because it established the vernacular and its uses in cultural works as a legitimate focus of study. The theorization of rasquache is often associated

with the academic work on Chicana/o/x art by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto and Shifra Goldman, who both explored rasquache's influence on Chicana/o/x artists. However, prior to Ybarra-Frausto and Goldman's work, anthropologists Suzanne Seriff and José Limón laid the groundwork for the rasquache conversation through their short essay, "Bits and Pieces: The Mexican American Folk Aesthetic," featured in the *Art among Us/Arte entre Nosotros: Mexican American Folk Art of San Antonio* exhibition catalogue. In their essay, Seriff and Limón write about mexicanismo as "the expression of identity and belonging used by Mexicans whether in their native country or in the United States" (40). Outside the United States, mexicanismo "becomes a marker of allegiance to a cultural 'homeland' that is distinct from the dominant culture in which Mexican Americans live…this allegiance manifests itself in an aesthetic style that pervades all the traditional Mexican American arts: music, dance, games, stories, jokes, food …" (Ibid.). The mexicanismo aesthetic is characterized by "the way in which 'bits and pieces' are creatively put together to form a coherent and meaningful whole … from the resources available at the moment of creation. Assembling bits and pieces is the stylistic basis of the Mexican American folk aesthetic" (Ibid.). Additionally, these bits and pieces are a form of code, a communication that sends specific messages meant to be read by the people within the community, such as fellow Mexican Americans, in this case. Seriff and Limón's recognition of the bits and pieces aesthetic as integral to the identity of mexicanismo reflects Ybarra-Frausto and Goldman's own theorization of rasquache as an important aesthetic tied to Chicana/o/x identity.

Tomás Ybarra-Frausto's canonical essay "*Rasquachismo*: A Chicano Sensibility" has been foundational to the development of rasquache as an aesthetic and framework for scholarship on Chicana/o/x cultural works including art, literature, and film. Ybarra-Frausto defines rasquache as an aesthetic effort and sensibility that relies on the creator's ability to be resourceful and "make do" with what they have in order to achieve the end goal. In this short

piece, Ybarra-Frausto is quick to point out, "To be rasquache is to posit a bawdy, spunky consciousness seeking to subvert and turn ruling paradigms upside down … Rasquachismo is neither an idea nor style but more of an attitude or taste" (5). Rasquachismo is a tactic for survival he continues, "an attitude rooted in resourcefulness and adaptability yet mindful of stance and style" (Ibid.). According to Ybarra-Frausto, rasquachismo originated in Mexico among the working-class. Since many of the Mexicans who migrate to the United States are from working-class backgrounds, rasquachismo "has evolved as a bicultural sensibility among Mexican Americans" as they continue to "make do" to survive (Ibid.). This observation mirrors the statements made by Seriff and Limón in the sense that rasquachismo and mexicanidad are tied to a transcultural identity that is meant to keep the people who carry out such aesthetic practices connected to their community and/or homeland. It is the attitude behind rasquachismo that gives the person enacting it the freedom and space to explore variations of taste, style, and aesthetic because, essentially, anything can become part of what the person ends up creating. Additionally, because the quality of the resources (materials, tools) available to the rasquache individual are limited, what is created out of rasquache is often ephemeral.

Rasquache is also a useful component for understanding Chicana/o/x approaches to art since it may be the case that Chicanas/os/xs may not have access to fine art supplies or institutionalized art training. Yet, such material limitations do not prevent Chicanas/os/xs from creating art, and, if the person is given the opportunity to become a professionally trained artist, their rasquache upbringing will often still inform their approaches and the subject matter featured in their art. As Ybarra-Frausto explains, "*Rasquachismo* is a sensibility that is not elevated and serious but playful and elemental. It finds delight and refinement in what many consider banal and projects an alternative aesthetic —a sort of good taste of bad taste" (8).

Shifra Goldman builds on Ybarra-Frausto's work in her short essay, "Assembling the Capirotada." She writes, "*Rasquachismo* as a *concept* can be found in many popular cultures: it is the ineffable, the fugitive, the indefinable quality that working class black people, for example, refer to as 'soul,' as 'funk,' or as the 'blues'" (Goldman 11). She elaborates on the idea of rasquachismo by providing examples of working class Chicanas/os/xs and Latinas/os/xs making do with what they have, such as "exuberant accumulative home ornamentation carried out with brightly patterned linoleum floors, oilcloth table coverings, Sears wallpapers, and plastic-protected or blanket-covered living room furniture" (Ibid.). Additionally, Goldman explains how this rasquache sensibility has also always been present in Chicana/o/x art and has even caused controversy because it has not always been legible to all audiences. In 1974, the Chicana/o/x art group known as Los Four shocked art critics with their 1974 Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) exhibit, *Los Four: Almaraz, de la Rocha, Lujan, Romero*.[3] The exhibit featured "*papel picado* (cut paper), farmworker union banners, tortillas, the hood of a lowrider car, and hundreds of accumulated daily —life objects on an altar— pyramid surmounted with feathers" —which visitors and critics dismissed as folk art rather than acknowledging the radical potential of the vernacular aesthetic (Ibid.).

Thus, for Goldman, rasquachismo manifests itself in two ways: 1) "as that of a life style, an 'irrepressible'… 'visceral response to lived reality' by an 'underclass'" and 2) as a mediation between "high" culture and popular culture (Ibid. 13). In presenting these two manifestations, Goldman is highlighting how rasquachismo is not limited to Chicanas/os/xs and Latinas/os/xs but is also prevalent among working class and non-Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x communities. She

[3] At the time of the exhibit, Los Four, a Los Angeles-based Chicana/o/x art collective, included Carlos Almaraz, Roberto de la Rocha, Gilbert Luján, and Frank Romero. Los Four were active from 1970s to the 1980s and later included Judith Hernández from 1974-1984.

describes how rasquachismo is present in cultural practices like gospel singing, vodun (voodoo) ceremonies, and Yiddish vaudeville theater because all of these practices fuse the "high" and the popular in their customs (Ibid. 12). Through the aforementioned examples, Goldman is pushing for readers to acknowledge the multiple ways in which rasquachismo, or "making do with what you have," can be relevant and understood. Her approach to expanding *who* practices rasquachismo and pointing out *where* such applications happen helps others further understand this Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x sensibility and its larger impact on other cultures.

Both Ybarra-Frausto and Goldman's engagement with rasquache as a practice and aesthetic paved the way for other Chicana/o/x art scholars, such as Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino, to expand their analysis of the vernacular by examining the many ways it manifests in [Chicana/o/x] art. In "Space, Power, and Youth Culture: Mexican-American Graffiti and Chicano Murals in East Los Angeles, 1972-1978," Sanchez-Tranquilino sets out to "clarify the contributions of so-called graffiti as seen throughout East Los Angeles in terms that [are] understandable within its own developmental and functional contexts and not dependent on legitimizing structures of dominant Anglo society for its value" (57). Through his analysis of graffiti and its influence on mural-making, Sanchez-Tranquilino aims to highlight the value of graffiti that is often overlooked due to the criminalization of youth who partake in such a practice. He specifically utilizes semiotic analysis in his case study of the Estrada Courts mural program to bridge the ties between barrio calligraphy (a term he uses for graffiti) and mural art. Through this approach, he demonstrates how something as rasquache and vernacular as graffiti can also serve as an art form and political act.

Sanchez-Tranquilino explains that barrio calligraphy is a "visual system developed by Mexican American graffiti writers themselves to keep a public check on the abuse of power in the streets" primarily by serving as inscriptions that "follo[w] an established system for

conveying information" (59). Using cans of spray paint as their medium and the walls of their neighborhood as their canvas, Mexican American youth claim identity through the only means available to them: by spray painting their street nicknames and related insignia as a way to create hypervisibility of their presence in urban spaces. By using identifying symbols (their nicknames and lettering style), the youth employ barrio calligraphy as a way to claim space, authority, and territorial protection of their homes. He focuses on the young men from the Varrio Nueva Estrada gang (VNE), who express interest in mural-making after other artists created murals in their neighborhoods —which VNE saw as an encroachment on their territory. Under the guidance of former gang member Charles "Cat" Felix, VNE youth designed their own mural that spoke to their experiences as barrio warriors while also creatively formulating insignias that served the same purpose as graffiti. For example, the VNE youth decide to incorporate pre-Columbian images of warriors to represent the battles they have to fight in their neighborhoods and in society. Their practice of graffiti as a visual system and its influence on their approach to mural-making are examples of rasquache sensibility because the practice brings together the vernacular (spray paint) with the "high" (muralism as a more established form of art). At the same time, barrio calligraphy is not meant to be decipherable by all who see it but rather by a select few, such as people in their community. It is this understanding of graffiti as rasquache code that lends itself to a semiotic analysis. Through the use of semiotics, Sanchez-Tranquilino is able to legitimize the rasquache practice of graffiti as something other than vandalism while also situating the youth of the Mexican barrios as cultural readers/semioticians in their own right. This perspective helps to push against the misconceptions associated with graffiti and the youth who practice it. Additionally, the connection he makes between graffiti and mural-making further exemplifies the role that rasquache sensibility and aesthetics play in contemporary artistic practices.

The aforementioned authors have all engaged with rasquache in order to expand on the importance of the vernacular and its role in the aesthetic practices of Chicana/o/x visual art. The rasquache conversation is important in my own work because many of the cultural exchanges between the Chicana/o/x, Japanese American and Japanese artists I discuss serve as examples of the influences of the vernacular in the artists' respective understandings of Chicana/o/x and/or Japanese culture. As such, the artists' emphases are not on presenting monolithic or nationalistic interpretations of Chicana/o/x and Japanese cultures but rather on engaging in a conversation that allows the cut and fusion of different elements into a larger component that speaks to such influences. Therefore, I see this dissertation contributing to the rasquache conversation by examining rasquache practices in, and outside, Chicana/o/x communities as well as how the practices of rasquache manifest differently according to region —especially since the aforementioned authors solely focus on southern California and San Antonio, Texas.

A smaller body of work on Chicana/o/x and Mexican art and Asian influences does exist —mainly through the scholarship of Rubén Gallo and Karen Mary Davalos. In 2006, Gallo continued his work on orientalism and Mexican art (begun in his first book, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art*) with the article, "Mexican Orientalism." Gallo analyzes Mexican artists' and authors' fascination with Asian culture and how they incorporate aspects of it in their art and literature. He concludes that Mexican Orientalism provided "an 'other' needed for the construction of the Mexican national self" (73).[4] Meanwhile, in her most recent book, *Chicana/o Remix: Art and Errata Since the Sixties*, Davalos dedicates one chapter to the discussion of European and Asian influences among Chicana/o/x artists. Ultimately, Davalos argues that Chicana/o/x artists' travels to Europe and Asia played formidable roles in the way they came to

[4] Gallo initially discussed this topic in the first chapter of his 2004 book, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art*.

understand their own identities and artistic choices with respect to content and medium. The chapter mostly focuses on European influences with Chaz Bojórquez being the only artist who traveled to Asia. While Davalos's chapter provides more of an expository overview rather than strong analyses or theoretical interventions, it is nonetheless a commendable effort for starting the conversation on non-Chicana/o/x influences in Chicana/o/x art. As such, my own dissertation's focus on Japan continues these conversations on Asian influences on Chicana/o/x art and presents a theoretical framework that can facilitate these much-needed discussions.

The Origins of the Textual Poch@

Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* includes a chapter, "Reading as Poaching," that critiques the assumption that general, mass audiences are passive consumers with questionable, or bad, cultural taste. Moreover, he is aware how factors such as socioeconomic class construct hierarchies of taste and knowledge that, in turn, dictate what culture is deemed to be, and who can participate in its creation, consumption, and how. Examining the act of reading, de Certeau focuses on how reading literature allows the reader (consumer) to bring something new to the text:

> The reader takes neither the position of the author nor an author's position. He invents in texts something different from what they 'intended.' He detaches them from their (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something un-known in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings. Is this 'reading' activity reserved for the literary critic (always privileged in studies of reading), that is, once again, for a category of professional intellectuals (*clercs*), or can it be extended to all cultural consumers? (169).

De Certeau thus believes reading can be carried out by anyone and, in doing so, each reader brings forth valid interpretations of the text regardless of that reader's class or education level. As such, he is more interested in the creative process the readers bring to the text and views readers as "… travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves" (Ibid. 174). De Certeau does not define "poaching" but the context suggests that he views readers as limitless and therefore, must be given the freedom to move about in texts in order to present their own subjectivities and interpretations.

It is de Certeau's interpretation of readers as liberated poachers and tastemakers that informs the theory behind Henry Jenkins's classification of fans (general audiences) as textual poachers in his book, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* challenges the misconceptions that fans are obsessive, psychotic, and unable to develop their own tastes or opinions. Building on de Certeau's framing of readers as poachers, Jenkins situates fans as nomadic poachers in order to further his argument that fans have the ability to conduct their own reading and unique participatory engagement with cultural texts — even if fan practices do not fall in line with the reading methods developed by academics. He explains:

> What is significant about fans in relation to de Certeau's model is that they constitute a particularly active and vocal community of consumers whose activities direct attention onto this process of cultural appropriation … Fans are not unique in their status as textual poachers, yet, they have developed poaching to an art form (Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* 27).

For Jenkins, poaching-as-an-art-form refers to the cultural production that fans have developed from the cultural works they consume and are inspired by. For example, fans often write fan fiction based on established characters to expand plots, hold conventions focusing on specific movies, comic books, television shows, and have viewing parties. This indicates that fans not only interpret texts, but through such interpretations, are able to draw from the primary cultural text in order to present new ideas and formulate their own cultural productions.

Unlike de Certeau, Jenkins defines poaching as an "impertinent raid on the literary preserve that takes away only those things that are useful or pleasurable to the reader" while his idea of nomads means that "readers are not simply poachers … they are always in movement, 'not here or there,' not constrained by permanent property ownership but rather constantly advancing upon another text, appropriating new materials, making new meanings" (Ibid. 24, 36). Jenkins's book established the foundation for fandom studies because of his critical engagement with fan audiences and the cultural works they produced. Both de Certeau and Jenkins center the everyday person as a valid source of knowledge capable of creating new works from the multiple cultural texts to which they are exposed. It is with this in mind that I now turn to the term "pocho" and connect it to the conceptualization of the textual poch@.

Pocho, like Chicano, is a term that still holds negative connotations for some people of Mexican descent while others have reclaimed the word(s) as a source of pride. "Pocho" was originally used to refer to fruit that has rotted. Thus, the word is associated with ideas of taintedness, impurity, and being spoiled. When pocho is applied to a working class Mexican or Chicana/o/x living in the United States, it is meant as an insult, a critique of the person's perceived Mexican identity. To be called pocho brings into question the person's Mexican background due to several factors such as not being able to speak Spanish, or speaking Spanish in a limited manner, lacking close ties to Mexico, or practicing their own version of Mexican

customs. In other words, it is almost a way of saying that the Mexican in them has spoiled and/or has become "Americanized."

Thus, the textual poch@ concept can be applied to an individual who experiences marginalization and/or has to justify their cultural practices and interpretations because they deviate from their society's dominant narratives and cultural tastes. This deviation results in their own interpretation and reconfiguration of their culture and identity through what, as already discussed, Tomás Ybarrao-Frausto has termed rasquache, or making do with what one has in order to create something new. Textual poch@s' sources of knowledge are usually cultural texts such as (but not limited to): art, music, literature, and ceremonial practices. They draw from their understandings of these texts —taking the bits and pieces that make sense to them and speak to their experience, similar to de Certeau's readers and Jenkins's fans— to create their own cultural productions that are subversive in the sense that these new works challenge the dominant narratives that exclude textual poch@s in the first place.

Textual poch@ practices also counter the misconception that poch@s do not have the sufficient background knowledge on Mexicans, Chicanas/os/xs, and Latinas/os/xs to understand, contribute to, and create new cultural works. Like de Certeau and Jenkins's nomadic, poaching readers, working-class Mexican migrants and Chicanas/os/xs outside Mexico are subjected to a hierarchy of taste as it relates to their exposure to and consumption of Mexican popular culture. The influence of Mexican mass culture on working-class Mexicans and Chicanas/os/xs brings into question their Mexican identity because they are seen as lacking the adequate upbringing, language, and sources of knowledge available to the elite Mexicans of Mexico who dictate dominant notions of what it means to be Mexican. At the same time, Chicanas/os/xs and working-class Mexican migrants must negotiate being racialized subjects in the United States. They thus become textual poch@ poachers of multiple texts, in and outside the United States,

and must draw from these texts to make their experiences decipherable to themselves and others as a way to survive in a society that seeks to eradicate them.

Transpacific Borderlands, Relational Ethnic Studies

Gloria E. Anzaldúa's experimental text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, presents several concepts connected to cultural mixture, but primarily the idea of the borderlands. First, Anzaldúa's work re-conceptualizes the United States-Mexico border. She challenges the idea that borders are firm structures meant to divide and keep people separate and shows the permeability of borders when she describes it as an open wound "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country —a border culture" (Anzaldúa 13). The constant contrast between these two seemingly separate worlds/countries creates the borderlands, "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary," whose inhabitants are "transgressors, aliens" because they do not conform to one way of life or a specific way of doing things that coincides with the expectations of the countries on either side (Ibid.). The borderland transgressors must learn to negotiate their identity and culture in a way that speaks to their lived experiences. Hence, they are inclined to fuse aspects of United States and Mexican culture as a means for survival, creating the border[lands] culture after which Anzaldúa names her book.

Since the publication of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, scholars like José David Saldívar, in *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*, and Arturo J. Aldama, Chela Sandoval, and Peter J. García, editors of *Performing the U.S. Latina and Latino Borderlands*, have built upon her work by continuing to situate the borderlands as a site for American studies, cultural studies, and performance studies scholarship. At the same time, the aforementioned scholarship has focused on using borderlands as a framework from which to

examine multiple case studies rather than an expansion on what is actually meant by Anzaldúa's borderlands or proposing an alternative framework. However, it is important to note that Saldívar's work around Trans-Americanity and comparative American Studies has been influential in helping re-think the Americas from a hemispheric perspective rather than just the United States or North America (which conveniently includes Canada but leaves out Mexico). In acknowledging the hemispheric influences of, and between, different countries in America, Saldívar decenters the notion that the United States is the only country in the hemisphere that influences others. Instead, he highlights how the United States is a product of external influences, too.[5]

Anzaldúa's borderlands (and border culture) is specifically concerned with Chicanas/os/xs and the United States-Mexico border. Yet, recent engagements with the idea of borderlands expand both its spatial and regional focus and who can enact aspects of border culture. In their essay, "Living in the Transpacific Borderlands: Expressions of Japanese Latino Culture and Identity," Maria Jose Plascencia and George J. Sanchez provide an overview of the long history of Asians in the Americas and present the concept of "transpacific borderlands," thereby building on the existing understanding of borderlands in Chicana/o/x studies. They write:

> [Transpacific borderlands aims] to encompass the range of cultural dynamics present in the transnational migrations and settlements of Japanese – origin peoples across the Americas. If living in the "transpacific borderlands" can be understood to be "betwixt and between" the cultural poles of Japanese, Latino, and American, we hope that greater insight will result regarding the various

[5] See Saldívar's interview with Mónica González García, "On the Borderlands of U.S. Empire: The Limitations of Geography, Ideology, and Disciplinarity" in *Trans-Americanity: Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality, and the Cultures of Greater Mexico*.

cultural directions and diversities implied in the concept of "Japanese Latino"…

(6).

Hence, Plascencia and Sanchez's understanding of the borderlands do not limit the production of border culture to the United States region. They consciously bring the Pacific Rim region into the history of Chicanas/os/xs, Mexicans, and Latinas/os/xs. This spatial and geographic tactic not only interrupts discourses of where borderlands culture literally takes place but highlights the overlooked history of Asian-Latina/o/x connections.

Scholarship on Asian-Latina/o/x connections has been recently undertaken from a (mostly) historical lens with work focused on the migrations of Asian peoples to Mexico and Latin America, the disruption of how mestizaje has been conceptualized through intermarriage between Asians and Latinas/os/xs, the racialization (and effects) of Asians in Spanish-speaking countries in the Western hemisphere, Chicanos in Vietnam and Japan due to war, and the influence of race on spatial relations.[6] Meanwhile, Afro-Latina/o/x, African-American and Latina/o/x, and Afro-Asian connections have larger presences in academic scholarship. The work of scholars such as Gaye Theresa Johnson, Gerald Horne, Vijay Prashad, Bill Mullen, and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, along with the *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition* anthology edited by Josh Kun and Laura Pulido, highlights the interracial and intercultural convergences between Black and Brown and Black and Asian communities in the realm of music, U.S.-Mexico border, wartime coalitions, space, housing, education, and more.[7] I will be

[6] Some of these scholars and their respective works include: Robert Chao Romero (*The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940*), Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr. (*Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* and *Transnational Crossroads: Remapping the Americas and the Pacific* edited with Camilla Fojas), Jason Oliver Chang (*Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940*), Perla M. Guerrero (*Nuevo South: Latinas/os, Asians, and the Remaking of Place*), and others.

[7] See Gaye Theresa Johnson's *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles*, Gerald Horne's *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican*

drawing from such scholarship to model my own discussions on Asian-Chicana/o/x exchanges and cultural productions and address the gap in this area of relational ethnic studies.

First introduced by historian Luis Alvarez within the context of Chicana/o/x Studies (and later expanded upon by Natalia Molina), relational ethnic studies aims to study ethnic and racialized groups in relation to each other, not in silo, and not in relation to whiteness. In his analysis of Chicana/o/x zoot suit youth, Alvarez writes, "… it is virtually impossible to capture the full complexity of the Chicana/o experience without accounting for how Chicanos related to others and vice versa. This relational quality… requires us to address the complexities, nuances, and the messy reality of identity and community formation" ("From Zoot Suit to Hip Hop" 69). As such, relational ethnic studies as a field is concerned with how the presence and interaction with other communities of color affect the development of identity, culture, and history of non-white ethnic and racial groups. This approach acknowledges that communities of color do not exist in separatist bubbles, nor are they only influenced by United States society's construction of whiteness.

The Textual Poch@s among Us

The dissertation is divided into three chapters, with each artist and their respective work serving as individual case studies for how their textual poch@ positionality emerges and how it influences their approach to art. In the first chapter, readers are introduced to Bay Area-based artist Rio Yañez and his digital art. Drawing from Henry Jenkins's idea of convergence culture, this chapter discusses how Yañez's textual poch@ positionality led him to participate in new and social media. In turn, this participation introduces him to the world of Japanese youth who emulate Chicana/o/x chola/o culture in online communities. The second chapter centers on Los

Revolution, 1910-1920, Bill Mullen's *Afro Orientalism*, and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu's *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era*.

Angeles-based artist Shizu Saldamando. While Saldamando is mostly known for her depictions of queer, punks, and goths of color communities, this chapter brings attention to her work that speaks to the histories of social injustices faced by Japanese Americans and how she is able to use such histories to draw connections between communities of color. Lastly, the third chapter introduces readers to Osaka-based artist, Kazuya Naito, who creates art under the moniker, Night tha Funksta. Night is a textual poch@ within his Japanese society. Though he never dismisses his Japanese heritage, his commitment to the historical roots of culture (whether Japanese or Chicana/o/x) has led him to create artwork that helps Chicanas/os/xs learn how their history and culture is conceptualized and presented in a transnational context.

Ultimately, these chapters not only focus on the variety of influences and cross-cultural exchanges that textual poch@s facilitate, but demonstrate the importance and relevance of the visual arts in contributing to conversations about relational ethnic studies, identity formation, and transnational understandings of communities of color. In doing so, these understudied artists and cultural productions can help guide the re-envisioning of academic fields and opportunities for coalitional work in unexpected places.

Chapter 1
El Rio: Digital Textual Poch@

Rio Yañez is a Bay Area-based Chicana/o/x visual artist whose work is heavily influenced by, and is in conversation with, social media platforms and communities. My fandom of Morrissey and The Smiths led me to one of Yañez's pieces, *I Have Forgiven Guadalupe*, (fig. 1) during a random internet searches in 2009.[8] In this image, Yañez stylized the English singer with Virgen the Guadalupe iconography, creating a new rendition of the well-known Kevin Cummins photograph through digital modification (fig. 2). These changes included adding color to the black-and-white original and a blue cardigan dotted with yellow stars, a direct reference to the Virgen de Guadalupe's own patterned cloak. The allusion to Guadalupe is further highlighted with the incorporation of a bright, yellow-orange mandorla that surrounds Morrissey. *I Have Forgiven Guadalupe* not only re-presents Morrissey in a colorful, digital format, but by featuring key Virgen de Guadalupe symbols, Yañez highlights the importance of Morrissey as a key cultural icon for Chicanas/os/xs who, most likely, also revere the iconic virgin.[9]

[8] Steven Patrick Morrissey in an English singer from Manchester who also used to be the lead singer for The Smiths. He is known for controversial comments and opinions.

[9] The perceived Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x affinity for Morrissey is the subject of a documentary (William E. Jones's aptly named *Is It Really So Strange?: An intimate look at the cult of Morrissey*) and has been addressed in mass-market books and media. For example, Simon Goddard and Mark Simpson, both well-known British music journalists, acknowledge the Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x phenomenon in their own works on Morrissey.

Figure 1. Rio Yañez, *I Have Forgiven Guadalupe*, 2007. Born-digital image. www.flickr.com/photos/elrio/857277972/in/album-72157622948584162/.

Figure 2. Kevin Cummins, *Paradoxical Singer*, 1991. Photograph, dimensions unknown. Location unknown. www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/english-singer-and-lyricist-morrissey-gives-a-v-sign-in-news-photo/85373555.

It is this playful, innovative, and thoughtful approach of fusing Chicana/o/x icons with popular culture that makes Rio Yañez's artwork exciting. Yañez notes that "his images bring together heroes, friends, and childhood fantasies with Chicano aesthetics, traditional images, and politics, as a response to the lack of Chicano art and iconography in cultural staples such as

comic books, pro-wrestling, music, and Godzilla movies" (Khoshaba). Much of Yañez's aesthetic sensibility and approach to art stems from positionality as a textual poch@, a person who is able to bring together various interests and cultural influence in order to create something new without being limited by the dominant narratives or expectations of their cultural background. In the first part of this chapter, I devote a substantial amount of space to discuss Yañez's biography and upbringing in the predominantly Latina/o/x San Francisco Mission District. This is not only to inform the reader about the instances in Rio's life that led him to develop a textual poch@ approach to life, but also to situate him in the context of Chicana/o/x art since he is an understudied artist in the field.[10]

Meanwhile in the second part of the chapter, I argue that Yañez's positionality as a textual poch@, coupled with his love of new media art, blogging culture, and social media, influenced his participation in what Henry Jenkins refers to as convergence culture, "where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways" (*Convergence Culture* 2). It is through his engagement with convergence culture that Yañez learns about the existence of Japanese youth who enact their own interpretations of Chicana/o/x chola/o culture online. The remainder of the chapter is a discussion of Rio's "Tokyo Cholos" digital portrait series and how such artistic works not only represent the importance of acknowledging cross-cultural exchanges between Chicanas/os/xs and Japanese nationals, but provide rich visuals that ask viewers to engage with the signifiers of Chicana/o/x chola/o representations. Ultimately, Yañez's participation in convergence culture and his production of

[10] The only academic undertaking of Rio Yañez's work has been my MA thesis, *Nos(Otros), Los Textual Poch@s: Understanding Notions of Chicanx/Latinx Identities through the Digital Art of Rio Yañez*, completed in December 2016. UCLA doctoral student, Angelica Becerra, is also focusing on Yañez in her forthcoming dissertation (not yet filed as of this writing).

new media portraiture that speaks to the identify formation of both Chicanas/os/xs and Japanese youth, situates him in a new light within the field of relational ethnic studies. Relational ethnic studies places greater emphasis on how people of color in the United States develop their identity and practices as they relate to other communities of color, rather than operating under dated compare-and-contrast analyses, or solely in relation to whiteness. However, as will be shown in this chapter, Yañez's "Tokyo Cholo" series documents these relational identity formations through online convergence culture that is not necessarily confined to the physical region of the United States —which can potentially push how relational ethnic studies scholars approach future work.

The Reluctant Son and Heir of Chicana/o/x Art

Riorene Adalmauricio "Rio" Yañez was born in San Francisco, California, on January 11th, 1980, the only child of Chicana/o/x artists Yolanda Lopez and Rene Yañez.[11] Growing up in San Francisco's Mission District allowed Rio to be immersed in a place that exposed him to art from an early age, even if he did not initially appreciate the specific type of art he had access to. In an episode of *The (art) Scene Podcast*, Yañez describes his childhood in the Mission District and Chicana/o/x art scene as a "Chicano Art *Wonder Years* upbringing" because "it was this kind of renaissance in the 80s of new technologies, of murals really getting a foothold in the community, of Dia de los Muertos, of Carnaval, of what I would consider these [to be] cultural institutions of San Francisco" ("Episode 24: Rio Yañez"). At the same time, the Mission had a reputation for being a dangerous part of San Francisco due to gang violence in the 1980s and 1990s, to the point where "[p]eople were getting killed for their shoes in the street" (Ibid.). He

[11] Since I was unable to interview him, the following biography is based on his participation in *The (art) Scene Podcast* interview.

continues, “It was beautiful and amazing and kind of terrifying at the same time to be a young person [in the Mission] …if you would’ve seen photos of me …I wore black, grey, and white. There was no color because it was incredibly dangerous. I grew up in the Norteño side of town but …you could never be sure” (Ibid.). Still, Rio found solace (and color) in his own interests at an early age —primarily through an obsession with superhero comic books and Godzilla.

He acknowledges that as a child, he did not value his exposure to Chicana/o/x art as much as he should have. “I still had my face buried in X-Men comic books because that’s where my heart really was. A lot of it is in retrospect realizing how lucky and fortunate I was” (Ibid.). Part of the reason why Chicana/o/x art did not initially appeal to Yañez was because he was frustrated that his interest in broad popular culture did not seem to merge with what was depicted in Chicana/o/x art. He recalls a time when, at six years old, he witnessed Enrique Chagoya making one of his prints:

> Growing up I was always told that the art I was seeing was important, that it was historical, or history in the making. I’d seen an Enrique Chagoya print, not just seen it but seeing him work on it and being produced…but also being a brat about it. You know, “Why is Enrique Chagoya doing a portrait of Che or Frida and not, like, you know, Hulk Hogan or Wolverine from the X-Men?”…I always questioned why those two things didn’t overlap. And of course, whenever they did, it was incredibly inspiring for me (Ibid.).

This anecdote demonstrates Rio’s early textual poch@ tendencies. He was not dismissive of Chicana/o/x art and culture, but his own tastes did not seem to have a place in what was considered to be Chicana/o/x. In this sense, the presentation of Chicana/o/x identity expressions that were available to him appeared limited, as essentialized constructions of Chicana/o/x

identity that focused on nationalist discourse, politics, and revolution. This did not mean that Yañez did not care about art in general; he recognized its value. Rather, Yañez's interest in art stemmed from his obsession with comic books and the worlds created through it that allowed him to delve into superhero universes. This was the type of art and the types of narratives he found most appealing. Because of the significance of comic books in his life, Yañez believed that he would one day become a comic book artist and create his own series.

As a high school student, Yañez signed up for art classes where, after much trial and error with different media, he began to explore the world of analog photography. He enjoyed using a point-and-shoot camera to document his life, friends, and neighborhood and developing his own film. With his mother's encouragement, Yañez participated in the California State Summer School for the Arts where he was able to take college level courses in photography at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Santa Clarita, California. Participating in the program was a huge milestone for Rio because "for the first time, [he] felt that [he] was being taken seriously as an artist and the work that [he] was doing was taken seriously. And so [his] goal at that point was 1) to go to CalArts and 2) to study photography" (Ibid.). After graduating from high school, Yañez attended the City College of San Francisco to fulfill his general education requirements and then transferred to CalArts to complete a degree in photography and media.

Portrait of the Chicano as a Displaced Art Student

At CalArts, Rio experienced a new challenge: displacement and homesickness. He did not develop the same attachment to southern California as he had for his hometown. This, in turn, left Rio uninspired to document his surroundings. Instead, he began to look inward. Most of the photographic series he completed in college focused on self-identity, what it meant to be Chicano, and what it meant to culturally present one's self as Chicano. For his 2005 senior thesis, he merged his childhood interests with the new media he learned through his digital arts

and illustration courses. Rio created and posed as a Mexican wrestling character whose image was then photoshopped onto scenes from superhero comic books. The Mexican wrestling persona interrogated white and Latino comic book characters about the lack of Chicana/o/x images in mainstream comic books. Because of the lack of representation of people who looked like him in the comic books he was obsessed with since childhood, Yañez was able to create the intersection of his interests and tastes he wished to see, as his capstone project.

After completing his art school education, Yañez continued to create art and collaborated with his father to curate, host, and develop multiple events and shows that centered on art, technologies, cultural traditions, and the role of the Internet in curatorial display and aesthetic. It was around this time that Rio began to explore the Chicana/o/x blogger scene and one blogger in particular, Cindy Mosqueda, who blogged under the name CindyLu on Lotería Chicana, set the model for how he wanted to communicate online. Through CindyLu's work, Yañez learned how to build an online presence, engage with his audience, find community, and learn about new platforms. His blog helped him connect with others who shared his interests. He would post his photography and artwork on Flickr, an image sharing platform that helped him develop an audience. Rio continues to have heavy presence on social media through his personal blog, Facebook and Instagram accounts, and is savvy in his strategic use of such platforms to share his art, communicate with others, draw inspiration from social media, and open up possibilities for collaboration.

For example, one of Rio's most well-known ongoing art series is "El Rio's Valentine's Day Cards." Since 2006, he has come up with witty, digital Valentine's Day cards that reference Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x popular culture, non-Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x mainstream U.S. popular culture, and current events. The type of cultural production content Yañez has featured on his Valentines has ranged from *Ugly Betty* and *The X-Files* to N.W.A., and The Obamas.

Another one of his ongoing art projects is The Great Tortilla Conspiracy, an art collective he founded with his late father, Rene, Jos Sances, and Art Hazelwood in 2007. Dubbing themselves "the world's most dangerous tortilla art collective" and modeled after the Free Masons, The Great Tortilla Conspiracy "is a collective based on food" that also pays homage to "the miraculous appearance of several deities, not least of which is the Virgin of Guadalupe, upon various surfaces…as well as upon various food stuffs" —which is why the collective replicates these appearances on food themselves ("About"). The Conspiracy has hosted and been present at various events throughout California. They design an art stencil specific to the event and then screenprint the art on tortillas using a specialized chocolate recipe they developed to serve as edible ink. The tortilla is "cooked on a griddle so that the image is affixed to the substrate. Simultaneously cheese is melted on the reverse side. Salsa is optional. The art consumer can both eat and enjoy the esthetic sensation that is The Great Tortilla Conspiracy" (Ibid.).

In an interview with Christy Khoshaba for *Mission Local*, Yañez explains, "One of the things I'm interested in is iconography. And that's also an influence on my mother's work …so this whole idea of what an icon was, was etched into my mind from a very young age" (Khoshaba). Yañez's mother, Yolanda López, is most well-known for her re-imagining of the Virgen de Guadalupe. For example, López's three-piece Guadalupe series (*Portrait of the Artist as the Virgen de Guadalupe*, *Margaret F. Stewart: Our Lady of Guadalupe*, and *Guadalupe: Victoria F. Franco*) features the artist, her mother, and her grandmother in place of the Virgen. López was one of the first Chicana/o/x artists to render new depictions of cultural icons that others previously thought to be untouchable. Her approach to iconography is from a Chicana

feminist standpoint.[12] For Yañez, the iconography he is interested in stems from his interests as a child:

> To me the icons of my childhood, as an artist still carry a lot of weight. And that's everything from comic book characters to pro wrestlers …And there are things that I never really grew out of or lost interest in as an adult and a professional artist. It involves sampling or remixing of those icons, but it's really a kind of a cultural study of presenting tropes and icons in a new light, a new way (Khoshaba).

His acknowledgment of the importance of "sampling or remixing of those icons" is reflective of the textual poch@ practices he identified with from an early age. As previously noted in this chapter, Rio did not understand why his popular culture interests did not co-exist with what was presented to him as Chicana/o/x art or why mainstream popular culture did not make room for Chicanas/os/xs (as illustrated in his senior thesis photo series). Rather than keeping these worlds separate, textual poch@s like Rio refuse to constrict themselves to dominant understandings of Chicana/o/x culture. By refusing such restraints, they are then able to draw from multiple non-Chicana/o/x influences to fuse their tastes and experiences into new cultural works, like Yañez's digital art. The focus, then, is not in presenting an accurate portrayal of an icon but rather, an amalgamation of the icon that also reflects his influences as a textual poch@.

Along with his interests in comic books and wrestling, Rio had a fascination with Godzilla from an early age. Yañez explains how, in addition to comic books, his work and art

[12] I would also like to point out that even though she is not the focus of my chapter or dissertation, Yolanda Lopez's work also speaks to the idea of textual poch@ practices in that she, too, was not restricted by the long-held beliefs associated with previously "untouchable" images. To learn more about her work, see Karen Mary Davalos's *Yolanda M. López* monograph.

practice is heavily influenced by Japanese icons like Godzilla. He states, "I was obsessed with Godzilla movies when I was a kid. And there are things that I never really grew out of or lost interest in as an adult …" (Ibid.). Additionally, Godzilla was one of Yañez's muses. His early childhood art pieces always consisted of him depicting Godzilla in different elements of destruction ("Episode 24: Rio Yañez"). Godzilla, the Japanese Gojira monster, has garnered a strong following internationally and is often attributed as one of the key figures responsible for Japanese culture's appeal in the United States.[13]

While a student at CalArts, Rio was able to meet Japanese exchange students from Tama Arts College in Tokyo. He decided to stay in touch with the students through a Japanese social media site called Mixi. The website works similarly to MySpace as it allows users to upload images of themselves, customize their profiles with different templates and graphic art, and share entries that hyperlink to other users' profiles who have listed the same interests. When Yañez made his Mixi profile, he listed Chicano art and Chicano culture under his interests and was surprised by what he found:

> I was shocked to discover thousands of young Japanese self-identified Chicanos, Chicanas, cholos, cholas, and Aztecs. This discovery sent me on an obsessive path to investigate this subculture of Chicano aesthetics, slang, music in Japan and how social media was propelling it forward. To my utter amazement there were groups on mixi [sic] that modeled themselves after Chicano lowrider car clubs, Sureños, Norteños, and Mechistas. As a Chicano nerd that was made to feel isolated by my long fascination with anime, manga, and Japanese pop culture, it didn't seem

[13] For more information on the Godzilla and Japanese-U.S. phenomenon, see *In Godzilla's Footsteps: Japanese Pop Culture Icons on the Global Stage* edited by William Tsutsui and Michiko Ito.

> possible that such mutual interest would exist. As I gained access to their world, it was clear how much social networking websites have allowed greater access to images of Chicanos for these teenagers and have likewise allowed them to find a public audience for their alter-egos ("Aztlán on Blast" 257).

He discusses the continued appeal of Japanese culture in "Aztlán on Blast: Social Media Art," the artist's communiqué he penned for the Spring 2013 issue of *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*. Under the section, "Tokyo Cholos and Homegirl Purikura," Yañez explains, "…part of my visual art practice is dedicated to exploring how Chicano and Japanese youth have used social media to exchange aesthetics and language" (Ibid. 257). He also discusses the role social media has played in helping him distribute his digital art as well as influencing his aesthetic approaches based on the information he finds on the Internet and how Japanese fandom and youth subculture has been present in his most recent work. Yañez's acknowledgment that the Internet has allowed him to explore the cultural exchange between Chicanas/os/xs and Japanese youth is important and is a keen observation of what Henry Jenkins refers to as convergence culture. Henry Jenkins's *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, focuses on the changing landscape of media and the culture factors that drive this change. His analyses are framed by what he refers to as media convergence. Jenkins defines convergence as the:

> technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes in the way media circulates within our culture …the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, the search for new structures of media financing that fall at the interstices between old and new media, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who would go almost anywhere in search of the kind of entertainment experiences they want (*Convergence Culture* 322).

Media convergence, specifically, is "a situation in which multiple media systems coexist and where media content flows fluidly across them" (Ibid.). Convergence (and media convergence) is ongoing, through processes and intersections of multiple media rather than a fixed relationship. Like his previous work on fandom culture, Jenkins is interested in how consumers drive culture, instead of how culture drives consumers. While Jenkins acknowledges that access to media is not distributed equally (meaning that participation is still in the hands of a specific section: predominantly white males), he does believe that "consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers" (Ibid. 18, 23). The more control consumers have over the media they use, the more they can maximize their participation and get the most out of the media made available.

For Yañez, this has been the case through his own clever use of social media platforms and the Internet. The purpose of his signing up for a Mixi account was to keep in touch with his classmates. Yañez does not speak Japanese but with the help of his friends, he was able to navigate the site's interface to create a profile and make the technology (Mixi) work for his networking needs. His ability to customize his interests in the profile section is what led him to learn about the Chicana/o/x-influenced youth subculture in Japan which then led the creation of the artwork for the "Tokyo Cholos" series.

DigiTokyo

Yañez is arguably one of the first Chicana/o/x artists to really incorporate Internet culture into his artwork. He makes extensive use of social media sites like Mixi and his keen eye for cultural innovations on the Internet led him to store a collection of Japanese chola/o profile

pictures he had downloaded from the social networking site.[14] After acquiring a handful of profile pictures, Yañez "creat[ed] large-scale portraits based on the low-res images …[and] develop[ed] more images of Japanese cholos in a style referencing classic Chicano silkscreen posters" ("Aztlán on Blast" 258). This collection of portrait art led to his "Tokyo Cholos" series. The common thread among the teenagers depicted in the series is their shared fascination with Chicana/o/x and cholo culture and style as evidenced by signifiers like clothing, make-up, grooming style, props, poses, and hand gestures.[15]

The first portrait is titled, *Don Barba*. It shows a close-up of a male-presenting teen, against an orange background, wearing a green Pendleton-style button-up flannel (fig. 3). The Pendleton name is a reference to the manufacturer, Pendleton Woolen Mills, a textile company based in Portland, Oregon that has been in operation since 1863. Flannel shirts are a key fashion staple for cholas/os. While the company also produces blankets and other clothing, their long-sleeve flannel shirts for men are one of the most popular items. In turn, these flannel shirts are a key fashion staple for cholas/os and are often referred to as Pendletons —even if not actually manufactured by the namesake company.[16] Don Barba's black hair is slicked back and he sports a mustache and goatee. His forehead and eyes are covered up by a royal blue bandana wrapped around his head. Like Pendleton flannels, bandanas are part of the chola/o aesthetic most often

[14] The artist mentions in his artist's communiqué that he collected profile pictures from mixi.jp users but unfortunately, I was unable to find the original profile pictures the portraits are based on (with one exception) to include for comparison.

[15] Though outside of the scope of this chapter, I would like to note that Korean performance artist, Nikki S. Lee, has completed several photography projects where she immerses herself among various U.S. subcultures, including New York Latina/o/x youth, and emulates their clothing style and behavior.

[16] Pendleton is also the name members of the Native American community use to refer to the company's blankets. Similar to Chicanas/os/xs' affinity for the company's flannel shirts, Native Americans have come to use Pendleton's blankets as a gift and symbol for special occasions. Though the conversation on Pendleton is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting.

used as an accessory, regardless of gender. If a chola/o is part of a gang or claims spatial territory within a neighborhood, the color of the bandana they accessorize with may give some indication of their gang affiliation. In Don Barba's case, his blue bandana may reference the Los Angeles Dodgers or Sureños. The Sureños (meaning Southerners in Spanish) is a gang based in the United States that allies itself with the Mexican Mafia. However, there is not enough context to make it clear what the use of a blue bandana represents or the artistic choice that Yañez might have made. Meanwhile, Don Barba's pose —upper torso and head are angled towards the left and his head is tilted down— gives a sense of anonymity. The only signifiers present in this portrait are the Pendleton and the strategically colored bandana.

Figure 3. Rio Yañez, *Don Barba*, 2009. Born-digital image. www.flickr.com/photos/elrio/3235221425/in/album-72157613108017570/.

Litt13 One is the second portrait in the series (fig. 4). Both her name and appearance suggest that Litt13 One might be a teenage girl. Her black hair is divided into two braids that are long enough to come down the front of her torso. Like Don Barba, Litt13 One uses a bandana as part of her headwear accessory. However, her bandana is dark brown and only wrapped around her forehead. This allows viewers to see her eyes which are outlined in thick, black eyeliner,

adding fierceness to her stare, which confronts viewers. Her lips are outlined as well and filled in with dark red lipstick. She wears a light tan t-shirt that features the phrase, "Home Girl," in Old English, a font style often seen in chola/o/x print culture, even though "Home" is the word most visible to the viewer. "Home girl" or "homegirl" are terms of endearment used by U.S. youth of color in reference to their close friends. The inclusion of the word "home" demarcates familiarity and a sense of belonging; it suggests that the person who uses the word in relation to a friend may be emphasizing the closeness of their friendship, almost like family. Unlike *Don Barba*, Litt13 One's gaze and body are facing the viewer. Her head is tilted to the right while she throws up a gang sign with her left hand, but the meaning behind it is not explicit. Meanwhile, in the dark magenta background, a Mexican flag has been placed diagonally on the left side. Additionally, the stylization of her name with the number "13" replacing the "le" in "Little" is a nod to the popular use of the number 13 in cholo communities. In this sense, her name, use of the Mexican flag, and labeling herself a "home girl" serve as identifying markers as well as signifiers as to who Litt13 One might be.

Figure 4. Rio Yañez, *Litt13 One*, 2009. Born-digital image. www.flickr.com/photos/elrio/3235221265/in/album-72157613108017570/.

Mona is the third portrait in the series (fig. 5). Unlike the other three teenagers' portraits featured in the series, *Mona* is based on the cover art of her album, *Hearty Beat* (fig. 6) and she is the only teenager in the series who is actually a public figure outside of the social networking site. Mona, who is also known as Sad Girl, hails from Kyoto, Japan. She styles herself in the 90s chola aesthetic —often wearing hoop earrings, heavy eyeliner, mascara, and outlined lips. She has garnered a following as a rapper and singer who incorporates Chicano rap-style beats into her songs. She has also done a cover of Selena's "Dreaming of You," the English-language track that was supposed to serve as the Tex-Mex singer's crossover debut single.

In the original *Hearty Beat* album cover (fig. 6), the image is set in sepia tone with distressed, fading edges, and white text. The only color that disrupts the sepia tone is the pale red of the rose tucked in Mona a.k.a. Sad Girl's hair. In Yañez's rendition of the album cover, Mona is the passenger in an old school, classic, orange car. Her arms are crossed and rest on the car window opening. She wears black criss-crossed jelly bracelets and holds her chin. Mona looks directly at the viewer with serious, black-lined eyes, and thick, colored eyebrows. She wears a light pink lipstick and a mole underneath her right eye. Her light brown hair is arranged in the Pachuca style, teased high and decorated with a red rose over her right ear. All that is visible of her clothing is a purple top with white edges on the sleeves. The car's driver also appears to be looking at the viewer but his eyes are not visible behind his black loks.[17] He has a goatee and moustache and his hair is slicked back and held in place by a hair net. He wears dark blue, baggy jeans, a tan collared shirt over a black top, and a gold crucifix necklace. The driver rests one arm on the steering wheel and the other on the seat. The interior of the car is light grey. It is unclear if the car is in motion but through the car windows, unidentified teal and turquoise shapes make up

[17] Loks is U.S. Chicana/o/x slang for sunglasses.

the background which also suggest that they could be driving along a shoreline, either in Japan or California.

Figure 5. Rio Yañez, *Mona*, 2009. Born-digital image. www.flickr.com/photos/elrio/3235221111/in/album-72157613108017570/.

Figure 6. MoNa a.k.a. Sad Girl, *Hearty Beat* album cover, 2008.

The last portrait in the series is titled *Babu the Gangster* (fig. 7). The male-presenting teenager wears a Dodger-blue bandana, like Don Barba. Where Don Barba covers up his eyes with the bandana, Babu uses the bandana to cover his entire face —except for his eyes, which meet the viewer's gaze directly. Babu's upper torso is covered up by the dark, navy blue baseball jacket he wears. With his right hand, Babu the Gangster throws up a gang sign that is different from Litt13 One's, but still not identifiable. His head is covered up by an eggshell-colored beanie that has the word "Chicano" written across, in Old English font, that hints at his identity. Meanwhile, the blue and white shades of his attire are contrasted by a deep red color.

Figure 7. Rio Yañez, *Babu the Gangster*, 2009. Born-digital image. www.flickr.com/photos/elrio/3236067074/in/album-72157613108017570/.

All of the portraits, with the exception of *Mona*, emphasize the individual being depicted, particularly their face and upper body in the foreground of the image. The close-up style of the portraits also pushes the viewer to engage with the subjects on a more intimate level and take note of the ways in which the youth depicted in the portraits are stylized through the clothing they wear, hand gestures, and strategic use of bold colors. Moreover, the portraiture approach and angles are highly connected to the poses and aesthetic practices of social media. Beginning

with the first successful social networking site, MySpace, users would often upload pictures of themselves that were close-ups of their face from different angles. Many times, these profile pictures were taken by the users themselves, using a personal digital camera or early versions of mobile camera phones. Since the social media participants were their own photographers, most profile images resulted in close-ups or photographs that focused on their face but gave the illusion that the photograph had been taken at a distance (users were frequently betrayed by shadows of their extended arms). Viewers of the "Tokyo Cholo" series can see hints of these poses and methods of self-portraiture (through photography) in *Littl3 One*, *Don Barba*, and *Babu the Gangster*. In *Littl3 One* and *Babu*, parts of the subjects' arms are cropped out of the image. In *Littl3 One*, her upper right arm is slightly visible and angled away from her body, suggesting that she might have been holding the camera at a distance in order to take a picture of herself. With *Babu*, his left arm appears to be extended and angled away from him, also hinting that he could have been holding a camera with his left hand to take the picture. The self-photography in *Don Barba* is significantly subtler because neither of his arms are visible in the image yet the camera's angle and his pose (lowered head, deflected gaze, and shifted torso) suggest that he might have extended the camera upwards to take the photograph from a downward angle. The subjects' self-photography furthers the idea of self-representation on social media as well as more direct approaches to portraiture.

For the most part, the portrait backgrounds are presented as solid, bold colors that connect with the subject's clothing palette but do not interrupt or draw attention away from the subject. Instead, the colors enhance the subject's presence. As Yañez previously noted, he wanted the "Tokyo Cholos" collection to emulate the silkscreen style of Chicana/o/x posters in the sense of using bold colors and minimal use of background imagery. In addition to classifying the digital art pieces as portraits, Yañez's decision to bring out how the subjects

present themselves on social media ties to a larger conversation around convergence culture and how Chicana/o/x cholo representations, through popular media, have been adapted.

A Convergence of Cholas/os

Films like *Boulevard Nights* (1979), *Zoot Suit* (1981), *American Me* (1992), *Blood In, Blood Out* (1993), and *Mi Vida Loca* (1993) have all provided Hollywood/mass media depictions of cholo culture that is specific to the Los Angeles area.[18] Most importantly, Allison Anders's *Mi Vida Loca* is the go-to Chicana/o/x film for chola aesthetic. Journalists from blog websites like *Remezcla* and publications like the United Kingdom-based *Wonderland* magazine have addressed the film's impact as a foundational cultural text that enabled the homegirl aesthetic to, for better or worse, go mainstream.[19] In the article, "A Look Back at the Move that Taught America How to Dress Like a Chola," *Remezcla* blogger Andrew S. Vargas rhetorically asks, "[G]iven that there are still very few university courses about chola style, and even fewer *New York Times* features, where all these fashion vampires taking their cues from? Our bet is that it's a little 199[4] indie gem called *Mi Vida Loca* (a.k.a. *My Crazy Life*)" (Vargas). The impact of movies like *Mi Vida Loca*, due to their commercial success, means that more people are exposed to the films and in turn, the film audiences' interpretations of Chicana/o/x culture are informed by such depiction of cholas/os. The information that the Japanese youth gather based on social media, Hollywood films, and other formats (such as music) provides them with a sense of what Chicana/o/x chola/o identity entails. With these sources in mind, the Japanese youth then enact a form of mimicry in their attempt to replicate what they perceive to be chola/o attitudes and

[18] The role of film in informing Japanese communities about Chicana/o/x experiences also comes up in the third chapter of this dissertation, which focuses on Japanese artist, Night tha Funksta.

[19] *Remezcla* is a media website that focuses on "Latin" music, entertainment, and culture. *Wonderland* is a fashion and lifestyle magazine.

aesthetics as exemplified in the portrait, *Mona*, and the original cover art for her album, *Hearty Beat*. In this sense, members of the Chicana/o/x cholo Japanese subculture also participate in convergence culture because they draw from one form of media (film, for example) to create their own stylization and representations that they then promote on social media via Mixi.

At the same time, Yañez's textual poch@ positionality and the desire to find and create cultural products that speak to this part of his identity is what allowed him to learn about the presence of Chicana/o/x cholo culture in Japan. In turn, he contributes to this convergence culture by shifting the use of media to produce digital art portraits based on social media photography and in the process adds another layer for audiences to consider: what exactly makes the portraits Chicana/o/x art and the subjects Japanese? Are there any characteristics in the portraits that speak to the teenagers' Japanese nationality or signal to the viewer that what the images they are seeing are Japanese youth's interpretation of Chicana/o/x youth subculture? Would any markers in the portraits suggest that the teenagers are *not* Chicana/o/x? One of the most fascinating characteristics about "Tokyo Cholos" is the racial ambiguity behind the portraits' subjects. That is, if the portraits were presented without context or details informing the viewer that the people depicted are Japanese, there are no other features within the portraits that would hint at this. How then, would the portraits be read by a viewer who did not have the background information for the images they are presented with? All the teenagers depicted are evidently non-white. This is determined by the color of their hair, eyes, and skin tone. They could all "pass" as Chicana/o/x because of the way they are presented in the portraits in terms of clothing, the signifiers depicted on their clothing (like the use of the word "Chicano" on Babu's beanie and the phrase "Home Girl" on Littl3 One's t-shirt), hairstyles, posture, gestures, and other signifiers (such as the Mexican flag displayed in the background of Littl3 One's portrait)

that have long been associated with the chola/o style as it has been depicted in the mainstream media.

Other Chicanas/os/xs like Yañez have also taken notice of the appeal of Chicana/o/x culture (specifically chola/o culture) among some Japanese youth subcultures. Gabriel San Roman's *OC Weekly* article, "When East Los Meets Tokyo: Chicano Rap and Lowrider Culture in Japan," focuses on the Chicana/o/x music and car culture's appeal overseas. According to San Roman, the interest of Chicana/o/x culture to Japanese people was partially influenced by, and grew because of, the re-issuing of Chicana/o/x soul era classic recordings by the Japan-based label, Barrio Gold.[20] The music that comes out of this genre has been taken up by the Japanese youth in their own creation of new music inspired by the sounds of G-funk and Chicana/o/x rap. Some of these artists have taken to social media to distribute their music while simultaneously creating an audience in Japan for these particular genres that in turn welcomes Chicana/o/x musicians.

The appeal of Chicana/o/x culture in Japan has drawn mixed feelings from self-identified U.S. Chicanas/os/xs. San Roman writes, "Some Chicanos express supposed 'poser' dismay, but a greater majority are seemingly imbued with a certain sense of pride that their cultural expression has been adopted from far away" (Ibid.).[21] One online Chicana/o/x figure, Mayra "Hella Breezy"

[20] The third chapter of this dissertation provides more details on the Barrio Gold record label and its creator, Shin Miyata.

[21] For those Chicanas/os/xs who "express supposed 'poser' dismay" in relation to the Japanese chola/o youth, the dismay may stem from the threat Chicanas/os/xs feel when an outsider finds "their" [Chicana/o/x] culture appealing and emulates some of its components without the outsider acknowledging their own subjectivity. One of the most well-known examples is the rise and demise of "Ask a Chola," a vlog where a character named "Chola" would answer viewers' questions and give her "chola" perspective. Scandal erupted when it was discovered that the person behind "Ask a Chola" was a white woman named Chloe Michalopoulos. For more information, see Gustavo Arellano's article for *OC Weekly*: http://www.ocweekly.com/news/ask-a-chola-unmasked-and-guess-what-shes-from-santa-ana-6481748. Another reason why the use of chola/o culture by the Japanese may cause dismay is because of the racial profiling and criminalization people of color experience in the United States when incorporating chola/o aesthetics into their appearance.

Ramirez expressed her mixed feelings regarding the use of Chicana/o/x culture in Japan.[22] She wrote and published a blog post titled "Chola Japonesa," on November 30, 2010, to discuss her feelings about the Japanese singer/rapper, Mona aka Sad Girl.[23] Hella Breezy writes, "I ran into her music some time ago while doing some research on the fast growing Lowrider [*sic*] scene in Japan. Anyway, I'm not sure how I completely feel about her yet, but its [*sic*] how they say … 'imitation is the highest form of flattery' and this is what I say, 'Always imitated never duplicated!!!' c/s." She then goes on to explain she was initially bothered by Mona aka Sad Girl's cover of Selena's "Dreaming of You" but then comes to the conclusion that she should not judge anyone who is wanting to honor Selena's memory. She signs off on her blog post with: "Mona seems to be really down with the Brown and if she wants to show her love for our beloved Selena then who am I to judge …knock yourself out Sad Girl!!! Shout out to all the Hella Breezys' [*sic*] fans out there in Japan …Stay Brown Homies!!!" (Ibid.). Chicana/o/x soul and rap record labels, however, appreciate the Japanese audiences:

> Chicano Rap artists and the hustles behind the scene are among the more grateful [for the appeal of Chicano culture amongst Japanese audiences]. "Japan has been more of an avenue for profit," says Jaime Diaz, President and CEO of Urban Kings Music Group. "We distribute to stores out there and it has helped us out a lot. Japan will be first place to buy product from independent artists" (San Roman).

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[22] Ramirez is friends with Rio Yañez. The two collaborated on a portrait series titled "Homegirl Purikura," which merged Japanese purikura photobooth technology with portraits influenced by 1990s' star shots aesthetics.

[23] Mona aka Sad Girl is one of the subjects in Yañez's "Tokyo Cholo" series portraits.

The Japanese fans not only like the Chicana/o/x cultural productions but are also willing to spend enough money to sustain these markets abroad and further the careers of the Chicana/o/x musicians. However, with the Internet, in addition to the distribution of Chicana/o/x soul and rap, current Japanese youth have taken to social media and other digital spaces to learn about Chicana/o/x culture and practice chola/o aesthetics —which led to Yañez drawing a connection between social media and youth subcultures and exploring this phenomenon through his own cultural productions as a textual poch@.

Hybridity and Ambiguity

Yañez's "Tokyo Cholos" series was exhibited in a 2009 show he curated, *Hybridity: Explorations of Cross-Cultural Identities, Aesthetics, and Subjects*, that ran from February 5th through the 25th at the South of Market Arts (SOMArts) Cultural Center in San Francisco, California. The exhibit aimed to explore cross-cultural encounters and aesthetic influences in works by Japanese and Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x artists, including Japanese students from Tama Arts College. The featured artists were: Tonia Calderon, Kathy Fujii-Oka, Susan Kitazawa, Sofia Maldonado, Morena Marina Santos, Lydia Nakashima Degarrod, MariNaomi, Alex Neroulias, Niz, Shizu Saldamando, Jos Sances, Nichole Schach, Shizue Seigel, Mae Suzuki, Cynthia Tom, and Mino Toyoda.[24] In a promotional video recorded during the exhibition's opening reception, Yañez discusses his vision for the show, how the idea came about from conversations with artist Mae Suzuki, after talking about culture, identity, and aesthetic influences, and what hybridity means to him:

[24] Shizu Saldamando is the artist I focus on in the next chapter.

> I'm just really inspired to assemble a show that kind of brought all …those different elements, talking about identity, talking about our creative processes, and what influences, and how we see ourselves, how we see the world so "Hybridity" is the result of that …I think a lot of the pieces are definitely looking towards the future…and talking about identity, talking about aesthetics, talking about the creative process… ("Hybridity @ SOMArts").

The use of the term hybridity describes the artists who are "combining their own native aesthetics and subject matter with those of another, including bi-racial and bi-cultural artists and how they express their identities through art" to explore how "themes, subject matter, or aesthetics of two cultures can speak to the relationship, permissions, and boundaries that exist between them" (Ibid.).[25] Through the video, Yañez gives viewers insight into the type of conversations he and other art students had about identity and its confluence with the influence of international aesthetics. He and the other artists who participated in the show do not view the intermixing of cultures and aesthetics as a bad thing. Rather, they acknowledge the influence and productivity of hybridity as it has helped them explore new possibilities through their artwork. In a sense, by Yañez acknowledging that many of the pieces "loo[k] towards the future," he is optimistic that the "future" is a space for discourse on the directions aesthetics and art practices can take. It is not just about different elements coming together but the productivity such elements bring about.

As a textual poch@, Rio has been drawn to cultural mixtures, but does not highlight them as anomalies. Rather, Rio uses these instances of exchange that may be seen as hybridity or

[25] For Rio, his use of hybridity serves as a descriptor, rather than a full theoretical engagement with the term. Hybridity is a loaded term and the theoretical genealogy is beyond the scope of this chapter. See Homi Bhabha's work, *The Location of Culture*, for one of the earlier examples of how hybridity was theorized in the humanities.

results of convergence culture to bring attention to cultural productions that address the disconnection he felt to dominant narratives as a textual poch@. In other words, he disrupts these limited narratives of cultural expression by pointing out the overlooked amalgamations.

In the case of the Japanese youth and Chicanas/os/xs, there are no obvious historical connections or reasons why people would place both communities and regions together. However, the appeal of Chicana/o/x chola/o culture to the Japanese youth does influence their attempt to replicate the chola/o aesthetic as much as possible. Yañez depicts the replication of Chicana/o/x chola/o culture that the Japanese youth enact through hand gestures and clothing style associated with chola/o style. At the same time, there are factors that may interrupt the Japanese youth's attempt to replicate Chicana/o/x chola/o youth such as access to materials or understanding what some of the symbols mean, such as gang signs or affiliations. Earlier in the chapter, I referenced the *OC Weekly* article by Gabriel San Roman in which he addresses how some Chicanas/os/xs have reservations about other non-Chicana/o/x groups incorporating aspects of chola/o culture into their own identity practices. Such concerns are warranted but in the case of Japanese Chicana/o/x cholo, their exploration of identity through convergence culture and self-stylization and self-representation on social media can be subversive in the sense that it brings into question essentialized notions of Chicana/o/x identity.

For example, the use of Pendleton shirts by Chicana/o/x cholos is a practice that developed through the years —especially given that the shirts were manufactured by a white family-owned business in the Pacific Northwest and the shirts are meant to keep men warm while they work outdoors ("Company History"). The flannel shirts were taken up by cholos for style and over time and became identified as a key staple of Chicana/o/x culture. Now, the shirts are being used by Japanese youth in an effort to replicate Chicana/o/x style yet the garment is not Chicana/o/x or Japanese in origin. The mimicry enacted by the Japanese helps bring attention to

the construction of chola/o identity and de-stabilizes it in a productive way by pushing Chicanas/os/xs to be aware of the components they hold dear to their culture while also acknowledging how such components have connections to Chicanas/os/xs' own replication efforts.

Yañez's "Tokyo Cholos" portrait series and his willingness to experiment with cultural influences and racial ambiguity is an important intervention because he is also addressing the limitations of the dominant Chicana/o/x media narratives that some Chicana/o/x-identified individuals might experience if they, for example, do not identify as cholas/os. As a textual poch@, Yañez has long been aware that not all elements of his own Chicana/o/x culture speak to him while also recognizing the allure other non-Chicana/o/x cultures (such as Japanese) have had on his lived experiences. In recognizing the different cultural aspects that have appealed to him and that he has tried to bring together, Yañez recognizes the power and radical potential of textual poch@ positionality and convergence culture. Yañez is not necessarily breaking away from dominant (Chicana/o/x) narratives since he is still depicting chola/o culture but rather is disrupting such narratives by pushing viewers to question their own assumptions of dominant Chicana/o/x culture's origins as a means to further explore identity. And as Yañez's "Tokyo Cholos" series clearly suggests, the disruption of origins can provide groundwork for the future and expand the possibilities for textual poch@ expression.

Towards a Digital Relational Ethnic Studies?

From his early textual poch@ tendencies and initial exposure to Godzilla, Yañez has pursued his interest in Japanese culture —a characteristic he believes was, in part, passed down through generations on his mother's side. His maternal grandmother grew up with Japanese American friends who taught her how to count to ten in Japanese and sing the Japanese national anthem. Meanwhile, his mother, who was born in 1942 in the San Diego area, went to school and

was friends with Japanese American children who had either been born in the World War II incarceration camps or had family who experienced the incarceration trauma. Rio believes that these multigeneration intercultural exchanges between Chicanas/os/xs and Japanese Americans speaks to a larger connection between groups that further explains why Japanese and Chicana/o/x cultural merging exists ("Episode 24: Rio Yañez"). Yañez's recognition of these connections, along with his engagement of how these connections manifest through youth subcultures, online communities, and other instances of convergence culture, also speaks to the work scholars in relational ethnic studies are carrying out. It is not as simple as examining how, for example, Chicanas/os/as are similar or different to Japanese Americans and vice versa. Instead, it is about how the presence and interaction between ethnic and racialized groups in the United States impacts identity formation and cultural practices. What is unique and different about Rio's work is that these relational influences are not necessarily happening in a physical space or solely within the United States, but rather through a digital convergence culture. It is because of this aspect that Yañez's new media art deserves to be part of scholars' future analyses in order to help inform the directions that growing fields like relational ethnic studies are going.

In the next chapter, I focus on one of Rio Yañez's contemporaries, Shizu Saldamando, who also grew up in the Mission District and was influenced by art and music subcultures from an early age. However, it is Saldamando's own family history of Japanese American incarceration, along with her textual poch@ positionality, that enables her cultural productions to bring attention to the histories of coalitional work.

Chapter 2
La Shizu: Undercover Textual Poch@

Over the years, Shizu Saldamando has gained recognition for her detailed portraits of (what has been broadly categorized by art critics as) queer and punk youth of color subcultures. Saldamando often depicts her own friends in these renditions in an effort to counter the lack of representation certain communities experience. As Reyes Rodriguez, co-founder of the Tropical de Nopal art gallery points out, "Despite the revitalization of representational painting, few people are doing quite what Shizu is doing …Her subjects are a generation of people who are challenging culture even as they re-create it" (Shaktin). The majority of academic and mainstream art criticism pieces written about Shizu Saldamando focus on the importance of representing these subcultures and the people of color who are part of them. Yet, few (if any) publications on her artwork have engaged with Saldamando's communal artmaking practices or examined the ways her artwork promotes coalition-building among communities of color.

As an artist who identifies as both Chicana/o/x and Japanese American, Saldamando is able to be part of multiple spaces in the art world but rarely do those spaces explicitly speak to her intersectional identity. Thus, this chapter contributes to expanding how Saldamando and her artwork are understood, particularly around pieces that focus on multiple narratives of the Japanese American incarceration experience in the United States during World War II since this was a tumultuous time of racialization for Japanese Americans and Chicana/o/x communities in California. For example, Japanese Americans and Chicana/o/x youth (Pachucos) were seen as unpatriotic and threats to the security of the nation.[26] In this chapter, I focus on three of

[26] Scholarship about the instances of racial violence during this time period includes: *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* by Greg Robinson, *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* edited by Lawson Fusao Inada, *The Woman in The Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* by Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Sleepy Lagoon Murder Case: Race Discrimination and Mexican-American Rights* by Mark A. Weitz, and *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* by Luis Alvarez.

Saldamando's pieces: *Free All Political Prisoners*, *Farewell to Rohwer*, and *Farewell to Honouliuli*. Thematically and visually, these pieces may initially be thought of as representations of Japanese American history that can be categorized under the broader contemporary Asian American art canon. However, this chapter argues that these three artworks not only document the injustices faced by the Japanese American community, but serve as visual histories that connect the Japanese American World War II experiences of injustice with the disenfranchisement of other communities of color, particularly Chicanas/os/xs and U.S. Latinas/os/xs.

Moreover, the concepts and issues raised throughout this chapter speak to the larger goal of contributing to relational ethnic studies scholarship albeit through the visual arts. A relational ethnic studies approach means that attention is focused on how ethnic and racialized groups connect and the impact these connections have on the groups' construction of self. As such, I draw from one of the earliest concepts in the relational ethnic studies field to facilitate my discussion of Saldmando's work: Natalia Molina's racial scripts. According to Molina, racial scripts "highlight the ways in which the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space" and bring attention to "the different racial projects operating at the same time, affecting different groups simultaneously" (*How Race is Made* 6, 7). As will be demonstrated in this chapter, Saldamando's artistic efforts to document the injustices faced by the Japanese American community during World War II are also intertwined with the overlooked histories of how racialized groups have been linked across time and space through coalitional movements.

Additionally, I argue that it is Saldamando's positionality as a textual poch@ that facilitates her approach to art. Saldamando is a product of the 1980s and 1990s. Her musical tastes, for example, gravitated towards British punk, new wave, goth, and postpunk despite the

fact that these genres were not in line with those of her peers, who preferred hip hop.[27] At the same time, Saldamando offset such interests through her fashion choices: "I had baggy clothes and hoop earrings because that was the uniform for the neighborhood" (Saldamando, "Loca Motion: Eastside Art" 70). While her physical presentation fell in line with the Mission District's chola and hip-hop aesthetics, her musical tastes countered the outward conformity. This means that Saldamando is a textual poch@ who deviates from her dominant culture's expectations but at the same time, reconfigures her interests à la rasquache (making do with what is available to her) as a means to stay true to herself and survive. Drawing from interviews, artist statements, exhibition catalogs, participant-observation, email correspondence, and the artwork itself, I demonstrate how Shizu Saldamando's textual poch@ outlook enables her to reconfigure artistic practices, aesthetics, challenge the ways Chicana/o/x art, Asian American art, and political art are understood, and how the visual arts can help advance discussions of racial scripts.

Origins of an Undercover Textual Poch@

Shizu Ishibashi Saldamando was born in San Francisco, California on March 30, 1978. Her parents, a Chicano father from Arizona and a Japanese American mother from Chicago, have a long history of activism among communities of color that included pro bono legal work and calls for the end of nuclear arms. Saldamando grew up as an only child in the predominantly Latina/o/x Mission District neighborhood of San Francisco. Despite being mixed race, Saldamando was read as Mexican when she attended Lowell High School even though she was in an all-Asian girl punk band (Ibid.). Still, her neighborhood's demographics meant that Saldamando mostly hung out with Latinas/os/xs. She notes, "I was in both groups, although I

[27] I briefly return to the connection between Shizu's identity and music later in this chapter. For another discussion on the intersection between music and Saldamando's art, see Dr. Ariana A. Ruiz's dissertation, *In Transit: Travel and Mobility in Latina Art and Literature*.

dressed more like a chola and wore tons more makeup than I do now." (Ibid.). At the time, the Mission District had a reputation for being a rough area with significant gang violence. Saldamando's high school style was, in part, fashioned as a way to survive. "People would get jumped all the time, so you had to fit in." She explains, "It was really hard growing up there and navigating all the different gangs …I was lucky to be a girl, in that sense I wasn't forced to choose [a gang]" ("Shizu Saldamando" *Teen Angels*). In the midst of neighborhood violence and dismissive teachers, Saldamando found her artistic calling.

The Mission District boasts a wide array of murals and art centers.[28] Additionally, as Saldamando was growing up, the political focus of the art was varied and focused on issues like "nuclear arms disarmament, farmworker boycotts, Palestine and wars in Central America" (Ibid.). Shizu was also exposed to art at home where her parents displayed their own collection of Chicano art prints. Because of the art she saw around The Mission and in her home, Saldamando believed that Chicano art needed to convey a political message or ideology in order for it to be Chicano because its ultimate purpose was to be a political tool in the service of the community (Ibid.). However, this does not mean Shizu was not aware of other types of art or that her pursuit of art did not intentionally incorporate multiple aspects of her identity; it just looked different.

Shizu continued to develop her artistic practice when she moved to southern California to attend the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art with a minor in Chicana/o Studies in 2000.[29] Even while she was an undergraduate

[28] To learn more about the visual art culture of the Mission District, see Cary Cordova's book, *The Heart of the Mission Latino Art and Politics in San Francisco.*

[29] She also went on to complete a Master of Fine Arts degree at the California Institute of the Arts in 2005.

studying fine art, not everyone was supportive or understood what she was trying to get at with her work. She recalls a Latino professor who viewed her work as dated and irrelevant. He told her, "Your work looks like 1980s Chicano art. It's a dead movement. It's over. Don't ever go back" (Ibid.).[30] Meanwhile her parents' understanding and interpretation of art at the time (influenced by their own Chicano prints collection) was one that viewed pieces as needing to be explicitly political. They did not seem to understand why their daughter preferred to paint Morrissey when she could have painted a portrait of Cesar Chavez, a figure more commonly associated as having importance in the Chicana/o/x community (Shaktin).

Her aesthetics and choice of who to depict continued to be influenced by her new surroundings. Living in Los Angeles allowed Shizu Saldamando to find her place by connecting with others in the area who shared her interests and musical tastes. The predominant musical affinity of her Latina/o/x peers during her adolescence in the Mission District centered on hip hop. As an undergraduate, she began to attend house and backyard parties in the wider Los Angeles area. For the first time, she "felt normal" being around other Latina/o/x kids who were also fans of British bands like The Cure and The Smiths (Shaktin). Saldamando did not necessarily hide her musical tastes growing up –after all, she was in a punk band while in high school. Yet, because hip hop and gang affiliations were prevalent and dominated the tastes and influence on the Mission District youth culture, she perceived her own interests to be out of the ordinary. This challenge to stereotypes, dominant culture, and ways of manifesting one's self in the world is at the heart of who she is as an artist and the multiple ways she begins, engages, and continues these conversations with her artwork as a textual poch@.

[30] Unfortunately, Shizu does not describe the art piece that sparked these comments from her professor so it is not possible to provide additional context.

Reclaiming Portraiture, Expanding Representation

In 2011, Shizu Saldamando was one of the artists featured in the *Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter* exhibition held at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery (NPG) and in collaboration with the Asian Pacific American Center (APAC). Her portraits in the show included *Carm's Crew* and *Cat and Carm* (fig. 8 and fig. 9, respectively).[31] The exhibit, curated by Brandon Brame Fortune, Anne Collins Goodyear, Frank H. Goodyear III, Lauren Johnson, Rebecca Kasemeyer, Wendy Wick Reaves, Ann M. Shumad, and David C. Ward, also traveled to the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in Los Angeles, California, and the Asia Society Texas Center in Houston. The exhibit's purpose was to:

> displa[y] the diversity of contemporary Asian American identity through the groundbreaking work of seven visual artists …[who demonstrate], in microcosm, the nuances inherent to the Asian American experience. Their portraits of encounter offer representations against and beyond the stereotypes that have long obscured the complexity of being Asian in America and reveal the threads of contemporary life in novel ways ("Introduction").

[31] The people depicted in *Carm's Crew* are actually all Latina/o/x, not Asian American. This was a deliberate choice by the artist and a detail she recently shared in a public artist's talk.

Figure 8. Shizu Saldamando, *Carm's Crew*, 2009. Oil, gold leaf on wood, 36" x 48". Collection of Karen O'Brien and Jo Willems. www.asiasociety.org/sites/default/files/styles/600w/public/S/Saldamando_Crew_exhaa43-web_1.jpg.

Figure 9. Shizu Saldamando, *Cat and Carm*, 2009. Oil, gold leaf on found screen, 32" x 64". Location unknown. www.asiasociety.org/sites/default/files/styles/600w/public/S/Saldamando_CatCarm_exhaa42-web_0.jpg.

In her artist statement, Shizu Saldamando explains that her work explores "different social constructs and subcultures seen through backyard parties, dance clubs, music shows, hangout spots, and art receptions" ("Shizu Saldamando: Artist Statement"). Saldamando's

interest in what she sees as the "mundane" is actually an effort to "glorify everyday people who are often overlooked, yet whose existence is the embodiment and legacy of historical struggle" (Ibid.). Moreover, her work centers personal narratives that "disarm fixed hierarchical social and artistic constructs" because she recognizes that "fashion and place are constantly in flux, fluid in meaning yet rich in historical contexts" (Ibid.). Saldamando is drawn to the "fragmentation within the self as being more of an evolving, fluid, and never-ending process" rather than cultural diaspora (Ibid.). As such, her focus is on the various processes that continuously redefine a person's sense of self and identity because influences are always present, never fixed—just like how a person is always changing in response to their environment and its influences.

The artist statement is specific to the *Portraiture Now* show but what Saldamando wrote applies to her body of work as a whole. Her specific interest in bringing to the center communities and individuals who are overlooked is a recurring theme in her artwork. In an interview with Jasmine Fernandez, an APAC intern, Saldamando is asked to describe her artist philosophy. She replies by stating that artists, in general, tend to document their lives, resulting in artwork that is oftentimes a self-portrait of sorts. However, she specifically creates portraits because they allow her to "mediate on the process …the person …and it's always done with extreme care. And so that labor that's involved. And I also work from my own snapshot photography" (Interview by Jasmine Fernandez). Saldamando is an avid photographer of her own experiences and takes photographs at the different events she goes to, particularly photos of her own family and friends that later end up in her artwork.

Raquel Gutiérrez, a close friend, explains Saldamando's photography practices in the essay, "What Is Revealed When You Sleep": "Whenever Shizu is out at a party in L.A.'s Highland Park or a fun karaoke night at a Little Tokyo bar, at least one of the night's somnambulists will make it into her artwork …she strips off the context of party/rock

show/gallery/outdoor festival and casts a wash of ontological purity that brings the deeper, darker serenity floating inside each person to the surface" (Gutiérrez 11). Indeed, Shizu relies extensively on negative space to further highlight the people she depicts. Moreover, her portraits rely solely on the depiction of the person rather than the environment that the snapshot originally captured. This then pushes the viewer to truly engage with the portrait's subject[s] and piece together their own narrative.[32]

Saldamando's reclamation of portraiture also speaks to her textual poch@ positionality. For example, the genre of portraiture was initially used to depict nobility and regal figures. In other words, individuals who society (read: predominantly white society) deemed important, worthy of remembering, and had the means of financing such a painting, were the ones who were able to have portraits. By choosing portraiture as her main style, Saldamando is drawing from an art practice that has not been historically associated with communities or artists of color. At the same time, the people and communities she chooses to depict also deviate from the larger, dominant narratives associated with Chicanas/os/xs and Asian Americans. Saldamando's depictions of youth subcultures, such as punk and queer communities of color, document groups of people who have been overlooked and, in some cases intentionally erased, from the histories of Chicanas/os/xs and Asian Americans. Their erasure is often a consequence of their behavior and lifestyles being deemed "white," wrong, or deviating from the politics of respectability associated with the nationalist movements the dominant communities were a part of. As such, Saldamando is reclaiming the genre of portraiture and these overlooked histories in the Chicana/o/x and Asian American communities to piece her own alternative narrative that shifts the center, the margins, and highlights the contributions of individuals who would have

[32] Some of her more well-known pieces include *Grace and Ozzie* (fig. 10), *Gerardo Posing* (fig. 11), *La Otra Gerry* (fig. 12), and *May, Post-Breakup* (fig. 13).

otherwise been forgotten. The cultural texts she draws from are her own lived experiences and she brings forth what she reads into these situations and people into her work.

Figure 10. Shizu Saldamando, *Grace and Ozzie*, 2014. Colored pencil, glitter, spray paint on paper, 22” x 30”. Private collection. www.artsy.net/artwork/shizu-saldamando-grace-and-ozzie.

Figure 11. Shizu Saldamando, *Gerardo Posing*, 2008. Oil, glitter on plywood, 36” x 36”. Durón Family Collection. www.kcet.org/sites/kl/files/atoms/article_atoms/www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/images/5.gerardo%2520shizu.jpg.

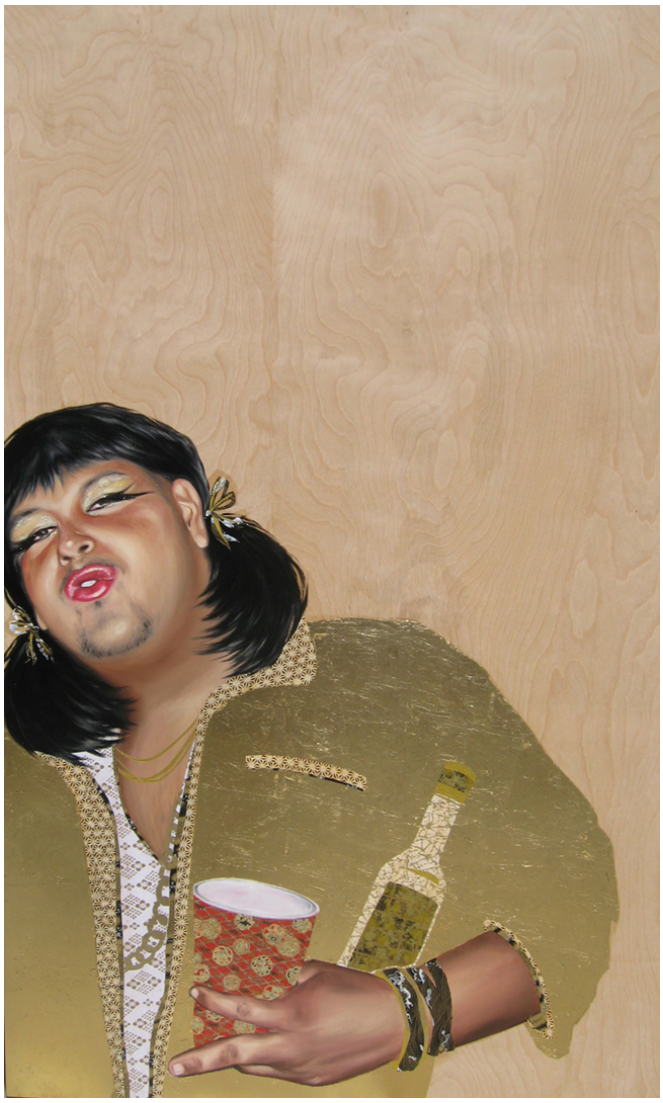

Figure 12. Shizu Saldamando, *La Otra Gerry*, 2009. Gold leaf, washi paper, oil, glitter on wood, 60” x 36”. Location unknown. www.artforum.com/uploads/upload.001/id11109/picksimg_large.jpg.

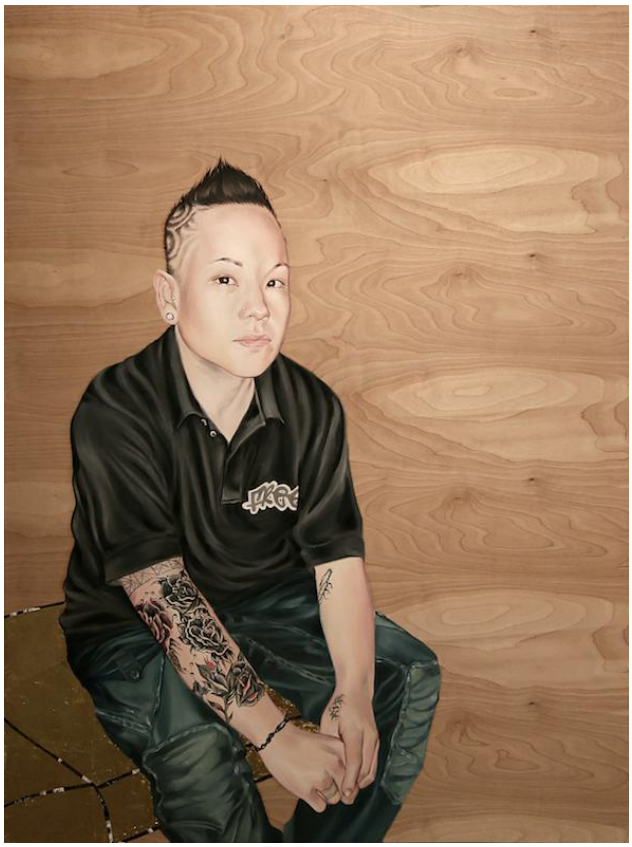

Figure 13. Shizu Saldamando, *May, Post-Breakup*, 2011. Oil, gold leaf, collage on wood, 48" x 36". Location unknown. www.museums.fivecolleges.edu/browser.php?m=objects&kv=5040987&i=3385854.

Her depictions of people of color, especially U.S. Latinas/os/xs who are into punk, new wave, goth, and other genres of rock, have helped establish her as an artist. At the same time, these portraits are what critics commonly latch on to, which means that her other artwork that does not focus on punk or queer communities has been overlooked. Most mainstream media pieces about her exhibitions will feature headlines that allude to the perceived novelty of Latinas/os/xs being fans of music that is not hip hop or usually associated with Latina/o/x identity such as "Painter Shizu Saldamando puts a face to L.A.'s Latinx art and punk scenes," "Chicano portraiture meets Siouxsie Sioux," and "The 'punk' art of Shizu Saldamando: The Latin experience is more than just trauma." While it is a positive thing that Saldamando's work is helping to expand the misconceptions of Asian Americans, Chicanas/os/xs and Latinas/os/xs,

it is also important to be cautious and not allow these new representations to become exoticized because they deviate from nationalistic and heteronormative narratives.

Shizu Saldamando has spoken out against being reduced to labels such as Japanese American, Mexican American, Chicana, Japanese Mexican, Asian American, or mixed-race artist because the emphasis on such categories creates essentialism around her work and who she is (Davis 39). In "Arturo, Looking At Art: On Japanese Latino Art and Asian Latino Intersections," Lawrence-Minh Bui Davis warns that while Saldamando's work opens up important questions to ask about art, "Scholars, curators, and lay audiences alike must toe a fine balance between tracing connective tissues and over-focusing on them, fetishizing them, reducing artists to cultural senators, artworks to cultural artifacts" (Ibid.). Saldamando's stance as well as Bui Davis's statement are points well taken. Meanwhile, it is the initial perception of Saldamando as an artist of mixed-race background that has allowed for her to be featured in a variety of shows that speak to her intersectional identity—primarily around exhibits that focus on Chicana/o/x, Latina/o/x, and Asian American communities. Moreover, Saldamando's artistic abilities and contributions span much more that what she has been given credit for so far. The remainder of the chapter will focus on how her textual poch@ positionality and art intersect with her family's history and histories of injustice.

Family Matters

On Sunday, September 17, 2017, I participated in a members' tour of the new exhibit, *Transpacific Borderlands: The Art of Japanese Diaspora in Lima, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and Saõ Paulo*, that opened at JANM in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo neighborhood. Thirteen artists' work were showcased throughout the museum and the media ranged from sculpture, video installations to drawings and paintings. The exhibition's aim was to highlight the experiences of

artists of Japanese ancestry in order to disrupt how Latin American art and Latin American identity are constructed in dominant narratives (Hanami and Sobral 1).

While I waited for the tour to start, a man wearing a baseball cap who was among the first to arrive talked to me about his interest in museums and growing up in the Los Angeles area. Shortly after, another man and two women arrived together and talked amongst themselves. The man who had recently arrived walked over and sat down next to me. He then asked the man in the baseball cap, "Which camp were you in?" I was taken aback by the question, realizing that I had never heard it asked before, let alone met anyone from the Japanese American community who had been incarcerated. I learned that the man in the baseball cap I first spoke to was born after World War II. He had not been incarcerated but his family had. The man who asked the question shared that he and his family had been incarcerated. He then mentioned that he and his family members —the two women— had come for the tour of the exhibition because his niece was featured in the show. It turned out that his niece was Shizu Saldamando.

On the morning of Sunday, December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service bombed the Pearl Harbor naval base in Honolulu, Hawai'i. The Pearl Harbor incident resulted in the United States entering into World War II. It also led to the suspicion that Japanese nationals in the United States and Japanese Americans were conspiring and sympathetic to the Japanese cause. Two months later, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which made legal the detainment and incarceration of people of Japanese descent living the United States[33]. Those living in the Western Defense Zone were forced out of their homes, schools, businesses, and neighborhoods and sent to incarceration camps throughout

[33] Executive Order 9066 specifically targeted Japanese Americans living on the West Coast. Japanese Americans in Hawai'i and other parts of the United States were least likely (or not subjected) to incarceration.

the country. When World War II ended, the incarcerated families had to start their lives over without any economic assistance or reparations for what they had lost as a result of being forcibly uprooted and confined.[34]

Shizu Saldamando learned about her family's history of incarceration throughout her life and her own mother was involved in developing curriculum to teach about the Japanese American incarceration camps in San Francisco schools. The persecution of the Japanese American community during World War II, and her family's history, enabled Saldamando to connect her family's experiences to those of immigrant communities in her neighborhood: "I saw the various ways that immigrants and people of color are easily scapegoated and targeted in order to further whichever agenda the current administration is seeking to implement" (Cheh). At the same time, Saldamando was alert to the ways practices such as art could "re-contextualize and assert an alternative narrative" (Ibid.). It is this awareness of the scapegoating of certain groups, the recognition of art as challenging narratives, and the impact of influencing dominant narratives, that led Shizu Saldamando to create art that, as she notes, "is not overtly political in that there are not many slogans or protest signs" but "depict[s] friends and family who occupy space outside of mainstream circles …These people are the legacy of many historical struggles; they have, out of the need for survival, created their own supportive spaces" (Ibid.). Saldamando's understanding of her art's content parallels the idea of racial scripts presented by Natalia Molina in her book, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, racial scripts "highlight the ways in which the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another, even when they do not directly cross paths" (Molina, *How Race is Made* 6). Being aware of racial scripts

[34] The Japanese American Citizens League began a redress movement in 1978.

"pulls the lens back so that we can see the different racial projects operating at the same time, affecting different groups simultaneously" (Ibid. 6, 7). Understanding racial scripts can help people "expand [their] focus from just the *representations* to include structural conditions that produced them. By seeing racial projects as *connected*, the groups themselves are more likely to see the similarities between them, which could lead to alliances" (Ibid. 9). Having this understanding of racial scripts as an artist, Saldamando has brought awareness of the different racial projects imposed on communities of color through art that, at first glance, only speaks to the Japanese American experience. However, as will be discussed in the rest of the following sections, Saldamando has drawn inspiration from the Japanese American incarceration experience to bridge conversations between the larger Asian American community and the Latina/o/x community.

A Paño with a Message for All Seasons

Shizu Saldamando's portraiture art takes shape on different media. Cloth is a particular favorite canvas of hers. Along with her use of bedsheets (examined later in this chapter), Saldamando has also made extensive use of paños while simultaneously reconfiguring who and what can be depicted in paño art.[35] Paño art is a genre in itself that is not commonly given the credit and visibility it deserves in the mainstream art world.[36] As it is understood in the Chicana/o/x community, paño art originated in the 1930s and 1940s prison system. Prisoners

[35] While the word "pañuelo" refers to actual handkerchief, "paño" is used to refer to the genre of art. In this chapter, I use "paño" to indicate the handkerchief is a piece of art.

[36] One exception to this was the *"Paños": Chicano Prison Art* exhibition held at MOHS Exhibit in Copenhagen, Denmark, from January 4th, 2013 through February 2nd, 2013. The 200 paños that were exhibited are owned by art collector, Reno Leplat-Torti. In terms of scholarship on the topic, see Victor Alejandro Sorell's chapter, "Latino Visual Culture Behind Bars: Artistic Inspiration and Redemption Within the Bowels of Despair," in *Behind Bars: Latino/as and Prison in the United States*, edited by Suzanne Oboler.

with artistic leanings did not have access to regular art supplies so instead, they used ball point pens to draw on handkerchiefs and pillowcases. Because blue and black-ink ball point pens were their only option for drawing, fine linework and skilled shading became the techniques that define paño art. The imagery most commonly depicted in paño art are religious figures such as the Virgen de Guadalupe, names and phrases in detailed script, Aztec iconography, sex and the female figure, roses, and prison motifs. Depending on the inmate's artistic skill, they can use their art as a form of barter and income with other inmates who might commission them to produce a specific piece. Oftentimes, these paño art pieces are sent back home to loved ones as a form of communication.

The influx of gang violence in Saldamando's neighborhood during the 1990s also brought about the presence of graffiti and prison art which soon made an impression on her artistic development. Shizu learned about paño art through her friends and *Teen Angels* magazine:[37]

> Friends would bring paño drawings to school that their cousin or someone had sent them from jail. I remember reading my friend's old copies of *Teen Angel* Magazine's [sic] or lowrider art magazines and trying to copy the ballpoint pen drawings we'd see. It was kind of the first accessible art that I saw that I thought I could copy or render decently. I'd draw Mexican flags, roses, crosses, pot leaves etc. and felt proud when it looked like the drawings in the magazine ("Shizu Saldamando" *Teen Angels*).

[37] A larger discussion of Teen Angel and the magazine with the same namesake is featured in the next chapter on Night tha Funksta.

It was this early exposure to fine linework, the possibilities of what could be artistically rendered with limited supplies, and non-overtly political art created by people of color, that heavily influenced Saldamando's craft and strengthened her talent for the detailed portraiture renditions and fine linework she is now known for. Additionally, part of the appeal of paño art for Saldamando is the material. She believes handkerchiefs allow the artwork to be delicate, intimate, soft, precious, and easy to blend (Shaktin). However, as a textual poch@, she has made her own interventions on who and what can be depicted on a paño. As early as 2004, she had drawn portraits of her friends on paños. Additionally, she has featured British and U.S. musicians on her paño art.[38] In 2013, Saldamando used paño art as a way to pay homage to activist Yuri Kochiyama and highlight the intersectionality of social justice between different communities of color, with special attention to the Latina/o/x community.

Yuri "Mary" Kochiyama was born Yuriko Nakahara, along with her twin brother, Minoru (Peter), in San Pedro, California on May 19, 1921. The twins also had an older brother named Masao (Art) who was born in 1918. Her parents, Seiichi Nakahara and Tsuyako "Tsuma" Sawaguchi, worked as a fish merchant entrepreneur, and a homemaker and piano teacher, respectively. Their lives, like those of many other Japanese Americans, changed dramatically after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Her father, Seiichi, was home recovering from his ulcer surgery when he was arrested and detained at Terminal Island federal penitentiary on December 7, 1941. Three FBI agents stopped by the Nakahara home earlier that day, suspicious of Mr. Nakahara's activities as a prominent community leader; he supplied Japanese ships in the San Pedro harbor and hosted Japanese nationals in his home. Mr. Nakahara was one of the

[38] For analysis of Saldamando's *The Holy Cuatro,* which depicts British post-punk, goth, and New Wave musicians Robert Smith, Siouxsie Sioux, Dave Gahan, and Morrissey, see Dr. Ariana A. Ruiz's dissertation, *In Transit: Travel and Mobility in Latina Art and Literature*.

approximately 1,300 Japanese Americans who were arrested within 48 hours of the Pearl Harbor incident (Fujino). While in custody for six weeks, he was denied medical care. Mr. Nakahara died on January 21, 1942, just one day after his release. After Executive Order 9066 was enacted, Yuri and the rest of her family were forcibly relocated from the Santa Anita Assembly Center to an incarceration camp in Jerome, Arkansas where they remained for three years. It was in the Jerome camp where Yuri met her husband, Bill Kochiyama, who had been part of the 442nd Japanese American U.S. Army combat unit ("May 19, 1921: Yuri Kochiyama Born"). The couple married in 1946 and in 1948, moved to New York where they raised six children: Billy, Audee, Aichi, Eddie, Jimmy, and Tommy. Yuri and her family became involved in local political organizations, joining the fight for civil rights and other causes. There is no doubt that the government's treatment of her family during World War II and the injustices they faced heavily influenced Yuri's political outlook moving forward. For Yuri, "Racism has placed all ethnic peoples in similar positions of oppression[,] poverty[,] and marginalization" (Ibid.).

The idea of earlier life experiences planting the seeds for her activism as well as Yuri's multifaceted approach to coalitional activism manifest themselves visually in Shizu's paño artwork, *Free All Political Prisoners* (fig. 14). The paño is squared but has been rotated clockwise to resemble a diamond. Using only a blue-ink ball point pen, Saldamando presents four portraits of Yuri based on photographs from key moments in her activist life. On the right side of the paño, viewers can see Kochiyama in her trademark cat-eye glasses, wearing a beanie, with a concentrated look on her face. The portrait is a reference to the photograph Yuri selected for the cover of her 2004 memoir, *Passing It On*. In the original photograph, Yuri stands between two activists at a New York event in the 1970s. Meanwhile, the portrait on the far left of the paño is based on an iconic photograph of Kochiyama taken around 1968 at an anti-war demonstration in Central Park. The photograph is an action shot that documents Kochiyama

speaking into a microphone. Again, Yuri is wearing her cat-eye glasses, hair kept under a handkerchief, as she addresses the crowd with the strength of her words.[39] To the left of this portrait is a picket sign that reads, "FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS," which gives the piece its title, alluding to the prison abolition work Kochiyama took part in.

Figure 14. Shizu Saldamando, *Free All Political Prisoners*, 2013. Ball point pen on handkerchief, 16" x 16". Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center. www.64.media.tumblr.com/14b135af35ff87d59a90688ac408d3be/tumblr_owi3slLkQI1rvzejbo1_1280.jpg.

Slightly below the portrait of Yuri from the Central Park demonstration is a smaller portrait of her that references an iconic photograph of a historical tragedy: Malcolm X's assassination on February 21, 1965 at the Audubon Ball Room in Manhattan. Yuri and Malcolm X had been friends since October 1963 when they met at a courthouse in Brooklyn. She asked him if he would support integration (Fujino). When Malcolm X was lying on the floor after

[39] Many other artistic pieces have stemmed from this particular photograph, ranging from a Google doodle to commemorate her birthday in 2016, to parents dressing up their children and having them pose like Yuri in order to recreate the photograph.

being shot, Yuri cradled his head and stayed with him. This moment was documented through multiple photographs that were later published in *Life* magazine. However, Yuri was not identified by name in the publication. The rendition of Yuri in the paño does not feature context of this historical moment. It only depicts Kochiyama from above the chest area. Her eyes cannot be seen since she is looking down, yet Saldamando captures Yuri's composure as she remains strong for her lifelong friend and ally. While the paño is meant to bring attention to Yuri's achievements, the realistic effects and detailed quality of Saldamando's photographic illustration are also worth noting since it is the strong visuals of this particular piece that enhance its significance.

On the right side of this image, Saldamando has written Yuri's name in nicely shaded script. Her name appears next to a depiction of the Statue of Liberty's head. This rendition of Lady Liberty is based on a photograph that accompanied Mary Breasted's *New York Times* article, written when members of the Young Lords took over the statue. Yuri joined them in this action because she was affiliated with the Young Lords. The Young Lords walked into the statue, asked tourists to leave, and locked themselves in at the top of the statue. They also draped the Puerto Rican flag just above Lady Liberty's forehead. They carried out this action and occupation of the Statue of Liberty was carried out in order to demand Puerto Rican independence and the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners: Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Andrés Figueroa Cordero, and Irving Flores Rodríguez.[40] The occupation of the statue only lasted nine hours because police forces began to move in. While Puerto Rican independence was not achieved this time, the political prisoners were pardoned by Jimmy Carter two years

[40] These political prisoners were Puerto Rican nationals who had been convicted for attempted murder because of their involvement in a shooting at the House of Representatives on March 1, 1954. The motive behind the action was Puerto Rican independence. Five members of congress were injured.

later. The drawing of the Statue of Liberty with the Puerto Rican flag is the only drawing on the paño that does not explicitly feature Yuri but at the same time, provides a bit more context for the viewer by featuring the flag.

Finally, the largest rendition of Yuri Kochiyama on the paño is based on a close-up photograph taken by Lia Chang when Yuri was older. Unlike the rest of depictions of Yuri, this portrait of her is the only one where she is looking directly at the camera and, therefore, the viewer. This is also the only likeness of Yuri that was based on a photograph that she intentionally posed for. Her trademark cat-eye glasses have been replaced by wide, curved frames. She is smiling. Saldamando's skillful shading of Yuri's short hair gives it a soft, curvy appearance. This is Yuri the elder.

It is also worth noting that in between the different portraits of Yuri, Saldamando drew cherry blossoms to fill in the smaller nooks around the drawings. Besides the obvious connection between cherry blossoms and Yuri's Japanese heritage, the flowers also seem to represent the various ways in which Yuri's activism blossomed. The cherry blossoms are depicted on branches at various stages of their life cycle —from small, nascent buds to flowers in full bloom. Behind the shoulders of Yuri the elder, small branches sprouting tiny flower buds emerge on each side, suggesting that Yuri's lifework has been influential in planting seeds for others to take on political causes. Drawing Yuri as a community elder and juxtaposing this depiction with emerging cherry blossoms further highlights how fertile Yuri's foundation is. Additionally, the depiction of Yuri in different stages of her life represents the seasons and lifecycles of her activism. Her multifaceted approach to standing up for what is right, fighting injustice and racism, translates to the multiple faces of Yuri depicted on the paño. The hardships she faced because of her Japanese American heritage that led to her political awakening. Yet, none of the portraits explicitly reference that time period of her life. That omission makes this representation

of Yuri even more powerful because it literally illustrates how her efforts were not self-centered or limited to the struggles affecting Japanese Americans and the larger Asian American community. Kochiyama's lived experiences of the injustices she and her family faced due to misconceptions and racially targeted policy made her aware that they were not the only ones affected by bigotry, racism, and xenophobia. In turn, these formative experiences facilitated her understanding of the racial scripts at play in the United States among communities of color–not just in times of war, but the ways that racial projects and racial scripts operate in everyday life. Thus, Kochiyama saw the value of coalition building between different causes and groups of people. This message is of great importance considering where the paño was exhibited.

Free All Political Prisoners was drawn by Shizu specifically for the pop-up gallery, "Art Intersections: Asian-Latino Pop-Up Museum," that ran from August 6th through August 7th, 2013 at the Veteran's Plaza in Silver Spring, Maryland. The pop-up gallery was the result of a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution's Asian Pacific American Center (APAC) and the Smithsonian Latino Center (SLC). From July to August, the centers celebrated cultural intersections between Asian Americans and Latinas/os/xs —with an emphasis on food fusions— through activities, public programming, and a social media campaign. The pop-up gallery was meant to serve "as a point of departure for visual conversations about communities & cultures in intersection" ("Art Intersections: Asian-Latino Pop-Up Museum"). When Saldamando was approached to create a commissioned piece for the exhibit, she knew Kochiyama was the perfect candidate for her portrait. In an interview with Erwin Recinos for *L.A. Taco*, Saldamando explains: "Her life's work directly addressed and was in opposition to the institutionalized racism that allowed the Military/Prison industrial complex to incarcerate so many people of color. So using the reference of prison Paño arte seemed like a good solution to what medium I should use for her portrait."

Saldamando's piece ties in nicely with the theme and purpose of the exhibition. While the portraits of Yuri do not provide much context for the viewer to identify where they were taken from, the inclusion of Yuri's name, along with the piece's title, helps viewers recognize a path they can explore. And as the exhibit's goal was to present visual art that serves as a point of departure, there is enough material in *Free All Political Prisoners* that can spark conversations. Moreover, an internet search for Yuri Kochiyama images will yield the original photographs since they are amongst the more well-known images of Kochiyama. Using iconic photographs of Kochiyama allows Shizu to not only render the activist in different instances, but also continue to redefine who can be considered an icon in the context of paño art. Moreover, by depicting an activist who was politically involved with many communities of color, Saldamando is able to push the discussion of Asian and Latina/o/x connections beyond foodways. This is not to say that food studies and foodways links are not important or do not have the potential to be political. Rather, Saldamando's contribution to the pop-up exhibit is a call for bringing forth these histories as an opportunity for further social justice work. As we shall see in the next section, Saldamando has also used art to present her family's experience of social injustice during World War II in other Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x spaces.

Keeping Memories of Resilience and Coalition in Full Bloom

Shizu Saldamando's maternal side of the family has played a pivotal role in her art practice. Shizu's grandmother, for example, enjoyed embroidery and knitting. Meanwhile, her grandfather was known for creating driftwood sculptures and detailed sand paintings when he was incarcerated during World War II (Estes). Her aunt liked to craft with her friends, using rubber stamps, origami, glass beads, and markers. With the exception of her uncle, a hairdresser, Shizu's family created art for pleasure and communal bonding, not livelihood.

In 2008, Saldamando was asked to create an altar for a Dia de los Muertos event at Self-Help Graphics in East Los Angeles. She planned to use this altar as a way to honor her recently deceased uncle who was a survivor of the Rohwer incarceration camp in Arkansas. She did not have a specific type of art piece in mind but was soon inspired by a life-altering experience with a chakra reader ("The Colors of Mourning | Shizu Saldamando | TEDxUNC."). This person told Shizu that the vision projecting out of her body was of a large black bird who enveloped and cradled her in its wings while simultaneously stuffing red, yellow, and black flowers into her mouth. Initially, Shizu thought this was a negative vision given that black birds usually indicate destitution or symbolize death (Ibid.). Saldamando soon realized that there was another message, the flowers the black bird fed her in the vision reminded her of the funeral wreaths she had learned about while visiting JANM's *Common Ground: The Heart of Community* exhibition:[41]

> I heard one of the volunteer docents talking about how, in the photos of funerals at the camps, the funeral wreaths were actually made out of paper. Real flowers were not available at the camps since most of them were located in harsh, remote environments. When people passed away, the community would come together and make paper flowers for the funerals (Cheh).

Learning about this practice at the camps and recalling the vision the chakra reader described, Shizu decided to create a paper flower wreath for her uncle's altar and simultaneously honor this funeral tradition specific to the incarceration camps. She made an appointment with a JANM archivist who was able to show Shizu flower-making patterns, including an instruction manual for making paper flowers from a Woolworth's catalog. She made copies of the manual and noted

[41] *Common Ground: The Heart of Community* is an ongoing exhibition at JANM that showcases Japanese American history. Materials include artifacts from Heart Mountain, an incarceration camp in Wyoming.

different flower-making techniques from the reference pieces the archivist shared. Materials featured in the instructions included scrap wood, shells, and pipe cleaners (Ibid.). With this information and reference materials, Saldamando began constructing her uncle's paper flower wreath.

Titled *Farewell to Rohwer*, (fig. 15) Saldamando used the Woolworth's pattern as a guide to make flowers out of washi paper. She then spray-painted the flowers black, red, and gold — reflecting the color scheme of the flowers noted in the chakra reader's vision. Using wire, Saldamando arranged the flowers into the rounded shape of a funeral wreath. While the wreath itself may look similar to common funeral wreaths, it is the material, construction, and source of inspiration that give the practice of using funeral wreaths a new take: a celebration of resilience. Shizu's uncle survived the camps. The flower patterns survived the camps. The flowers, created out of various materials, survived the camps. It is also significant that Saldamando chose to first exhibit (and construct), the piece as part of a Dia de los Muertos event. Funerals usually focus on remembrance and having the opportunity to say goodbye to loved ones one last time. The philosophy behind the Dia de los Muertos tradition is to remember and commemorate those who have passed by acknowledging aspects of what they liked best during their presence in the physical realm. Yet, there is an underlying understanding that the deceased still exist in some form or another. It may not be the flesh and bone of their human form but they still remain resilient —to an extent, survive— through memory and commemoration.

Figure 15. *Farewell to Rohwer*, Shizu Saldamando, 2006. Washi paper, ribbon, wire, glue, graphite on paper, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

One symbolic way to traditionally commemorate the dead on Dia de los Muertos is through the use of cempasuchiles, a type of marigold. The flower is used for decorative and traditional purposes, practices that began with the Mexica who used the cempasuchiles on altars and offerings to the dead. In present-day Dia de los Muertos tradition, the petals are spread out on the floor, creating a pathway that is meant to guide the spirits to the altars (Remezcla Estaff). Altars are also decorated with papel picado (influenced by the Chinese use of papier-mâché), that has been cut out to showcase different intricate designs (Sosa). As a textual poch@, Saldamando reconfigures the use of flowers and paper for Dia de los Muertos; she uses paper as the material from which to create the flowers for the wreath. This artistic decision not only alludes to the use of paper materials in the camps due to scarcity but also speaks to the tradition of using paper goods for Dia de los Muertos decorations. Additionally, she is incorporating a tradition that originated during a time of oppression and desire for survival amidst traumatic events, into a

practice meant to honor and celebrate the lives of the dead by keeping them alive through memory.

Commemoration, resilience, and remembrance take on a new form as Saldamando has made the effort to share her knowledge of making flowers out of paper through interactive workshops. Part of the JANM programming that was planned in conjunction with the *Transpacific Borderlands* exhibition was a flower-making workshop led by the artist as a way to honor camp survivors. In an interview with JANM she refers to camp survivors as a subculture, noting that:

> [t]hey are such a specific group of people, who all went through this awful historical trauma together, and whose descendants carry that weight whether they like to admit it or not. I know for a fact that my own family members who survived the camps all suffer different forms of PTSD in some way or another. Their coping mechanisms differ but I like to recognize one that is close to my heart: communal crafting (Cheh).

Saldamando's appreciation for her aunt's communal crafting and recognition of crafting as an artistic influence in her own practice, also connects her to her family and their broader histories and lived experiences. For her, hosting the crafting workshop is a way to honor such practices.

Her aunt was just a child when was incarcerated at Rohwer. "I'm not sure if she worked with the same flower patterns I'll be using in my class, but I still think of this workshop as an homage to her and her love of craft" (Ibid.). The history behind the communal crafting at the camps along with the scarcity of materials speaks to the aesthetics of bits and pieces and rasquache. According to Suzanne Seriff and José Limón, bits and pieces is a Mexicanismo aesthetic characterized by "the way in which 'bits and pieces' are creatively put together to form

a coherent and meaningful whole …from the resources available at the moment of creation" (40). Rasquache, on the other hand, was an aesthetic popularized by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. He views rasquache as an attitude, a taste, a tactic for survival that is "rooted in resourcefulness and adaptability yet mindful of stance and style" (Ybarra-Frausto 5). For the Japanese American community incarcerated in the camps, crafting was a means of survival and a way to keep a sense of community alive. The Woolworth's flower-making patterns were probably originally intended to be used by housewives for home decoration. The incarcerated community took to the flower-making craft as a way to honor the dead with dignity despite having limited resources. In turn, as a textual poch@ with rasquache sensibilities, Saldamando continues this bits-and-pieces tradition while adding her own take on the craft and reinstating additional layers of meaning.

In the beginning of her paper flower practice, the flowers were originally intended to honor those who have passed but Saldamando reconfigures the trauma and the practice of crafting as an act of survival, honoring resilience and keeping the histories alive so that others never forget. From the time that she constructed the wreath until the present day, Saldamando has created additional wreaths and installations that have taken on new meanings and importance. She was part of the Smithsonian's APAC event, "CrossLines: A culture lab on intersectionality," that was hosted in the Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building on May 28th and 29th, 2016. The goal of the exhibition was to "explore identities in intersection …through artistic, cultural and historic encounters across race, class, gender, sexuality, and more" ("Crosslines: A Culture Lab on Intersectionality"). Saldamando used her knowledge and practice of paper flower wreaths to formulate an interactive workshop with visitors (fig. 16). The wreaths created in the workshop were meant "to call attention to the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment that is running rampant with our current administration" (Cheh). Saldamando is able to recognize the racial scripts at play and how they are being implemented onto immigrants and

refugees in the present day. Saldamando astutely points out, “Tragically, the paper flower project remains pertinent and timely not only because of the current political climate but because now, so many camp survivors are passing on and taking that history with them. I think it’s important to keep their legacy alive and always on our minds” (Ibid.).[42] Thus, while the paper flowers originated during a different time in which a group of people were targeted, persecuted, and incarcerated because of their ethnic and racial background, as current events make visible, the racial scripts continue to operate, seeking to replicate injustices with a new group.

Paper flower wreaths from Shizu Saldamando’s workshop at the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center’s *CrossLines: A Culture Lab on Intersectionality*, May 2016. Visible behind them are instructions from a Woolworth’s catalog that was found at Manzanar.

Figure 16. Shizu Saldamando, Paper flower wreaths, 2016. Washi paper, ribbon, wire, glue, graphite on paper, dimensions variable. Location unknown. www.i1.wp.com/blog.janm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Shizu-wreaths.jpg?w=640&ssl=1.

[42] As part of the *Transpacific Borderlands* exhibition, JANM hosted several events related to the show’s theme. One of these events, “Paper Flowers from the Camp Archives,” included a craft workshop with Shizu Saldamando to honor the survivors of the Japanese American incarceration camps.

I was able to observe and participate in one of Saldamando's paper flower workshops on Saturday, February 15, 2020, as part of the "Teen Arts Workshop" series sponsored by APAC at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM). The free workshop was open to teenagers and meant to coincide with the *Chiura Obata: American Modern* exhibit at SAAM.[43] Eleven teenagers showed up for the workshop, a few of them accompanied by their guardian. The participants were introduced to Chiura Obata's work through a short promotional video. They were then invited to explore the exhibit on their own but asked to reflect on the following questions: "What are your thoughts about incarceration in American history and today? How does Obata's art conflict with or affirm stereotypes about incarcerated people? How does his work make you feel about incarceration? What would you like to change about incarceration?" ("Art-making Workshop").

When the group reconvened, the teenagers discussed their thoughts on the exhibit, the art techniques that stood out to them, Obata's style and trajectory as an artist, and the history of Japanese incarceration. The teenagers were very receptive to both the art and the topic of discussion. After the debrief, Shizu Saldamando introduced herself, her artwork, and explained how her own family's history of incarceration during World War II intersected with Obata's life and the workshop activity she was going to teach them. Saldamando shared with the participants how she learned about the paper flower tradition through the JANM archive and also showed archival images of people at the camps coming together to make the paper flowers. While the guardians of the teenagers were invited to participate in the flower-making activity, the teenagers

[43] Chiura Obata (1885-1975) was a California-based Japanese American artist who began his art studies early in life and later refined them as a faculty member at UC Berkeley in 1930. When World War II broke out, Obata was forced into Tanforan Assembly Center and then the Topaz, Utah incarceration camp. The exhibit showcases over 150 paintings, sketches, woodblock prints, and personal belongings from various periods of Obata's life. Originally organized by the Art, Design & Architecture Museum at the University of California, Santa Barbara, with support from the Terra Foundation for American Art, the exhibit is being showcased at SAAM.

were seated in a separate section that allowed them more interaction with Saldamando as she instructed everyone on how to make the flowers. All the participants made steady progress. Shizu let the participants know that although they could make as many flowers as they wanted during the workshop, they would each have to contribute one flower to the communal wreath.

The origins of the paper flowers, the communal workshop setting, and the art exhibited in the Chiura Obata show tied in very well together. The organization of the workshop, along with the themes, helped highlight the importance of art, the value of art making during difficult times, and how histories, like the incarceration of Japanese Americans, still reflect the issues that must be grappled with today. Moreover, the fact that Executive Order 9066 mainly affected the Japanese communities living on the West Coast, that Obata and Saldamando are California-based artists, yet this workshop and art were presented to non-Japanese American teenagers living on the east coast, participating in an event hosted by a national institution in the U.S. capitol, has multiple significance as it bridges history across time, space, and generations. This is also a crucial moment for teaching about regional history in areas such as D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (regionally known as the DMV), where a majority of the history of the United States is presented in a celebratory fashion because it is the geographic area where the United States, as a new country, was established.

Part of what gives Shizu Saldamando's paper flower workshops impact is that they offer a creative opportunity where strangers can come together to create individual and group art while simultaneously learning about a period of United States history that still does not get fully addressed. Moreover, it provides an environment that facilitates intergenerational connections through the practice of communal art. The fact that Saldamando continues leading these paper flower workshops in prominent cultural institutions not only allows Saldamando the opportunity to share the practice of paper flower making with new audiences, but she also is able to continue

sharing the history of these flowers, their significance, and her family's history. Communal art, portraiture, and the history of Japanese American incarceration also come together in Saldamando's most recent bed sheet piece.

Airing Out the Dirty Laundry

Saldamando has drawn portraits on different media though many know her for her bed sheet portraits. She began her bed sheet series in 2005, drawing portraits with a ball point pen that mostly centered on couples of all genders in what could be described as moments of intimacy. The intimacy that Saldamando depicts in her series is further amplified by her use of bed sheets. As Raquel Gutiérrez points out, "Bed sheets, for example, create a sense of superbly intimate settings for subjects entwined and engaged in amorous quietude" (12). Moreover, bed sheets more commonly connote intimacy associated with the bedroom. The way Shizu Saldamando uses bed sheets also shifts how the fabric was originally meant to be used. In their new rendition, their purpose becomes to serve as a "placeholder of a secret affection transpiring between the couples" and in doing so, Saldamando transforms the bedroom "as a site of connection instead of one of consumption …The bedroom also poses an alternative to alienation …The private sphere of the bedroom is a place where many an awkward youth were rulers of their domain" (Ibid. 13). Her focus on youth subculture and affection between couples of different sexual orientations and racial backgrounds is a reclamation of intimacy and further illustrates how the power that these youth have over their bedrooms is transformed into having power in the public sphere to be open about who they are in certain [public] spaces.[44]

[44] Some examples of her bedsheet series include *Embrace Series, Grand Star Chinatown* (fig. 17 and fig. 18) and *Embrace Series, Ripples, Long Beach* (fig. 19 and fig. 20).

Figure 17. Shizu Saldamando, *Embrace Series, Grand Star Chinatown*, 2009. Ball point pen on bed sheet, 70” x 98”. Location unknown.
www.designcrushblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Shizu-Saldamando-2-Design-Crush.png.

Figure 18. Shizu Saldamando, *Embrace Series, Grand Star Chinatown* (Detail), 2009.
Ball point pen on bed sheet, 70” x 98”. Location unknown.
www.bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/ladowntownnews.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/5/a6/5a6a918e-da76-11e1-871f-001a4bcf887a/5016d61c36da5.image.jpg.

Figure 19. Shizu Saldamando, *Embrace Series, Ripples, Long Beach*, 2009. Ball point pen on bed sheet, 70” x 98”. Location unknown.
www.designcrushblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Shizu-Saldamando-3-Design-Crush.png.

Figure 20. Shizu Saldamando, *Embrace Series, Ripples, Long Beach*, (Detail), 2009. Ball point pen on bed sheet, 70” x 98”. Location unknown.
www.kcet.org/sites/kl/files/atoms/article_atoms/www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/images/ripples%2520shizu.jpg.

The bedroom, intimacy, and authority in private spaces are also present, but reconfigured, in Shizu Saldamando's most recent addition to her bed sheet series created for APAC's "'Ae Kai: A Culture Lab on Convergence" that has held in Honolulu, Hawai`i from July 7th through the 9th, 2017, at the Ala Moana Center. On APAC's website for the event, 'Ae Kai is described as "a thread which brings together elements stretching from mountain to ocean and serving as a gathering place for conversations and convergence to occur. Traditionally in Hawai`i, some of the most important conversations are held at 'Ae Kai when the sun is up and the waves are out" ("'Ae Kai: A Culture Lab on Convergence"). In the past, APAC has held two culture labs: one in Washington, D.C. and the other in New York City. What made 'Ae Kai unique is that it was "the biggest Culture Lab to date, most of 'Ae Kai's participants are based or rooted in Hawai`i, with the majority of artists identifying as Pacific Islanders" (Ibid). The purpose of the culture labs is to bring people together and have artists interact with community members to create new arts, crafts, and music. Shizu Saldamando was one of the invited artists.[45] The year 2017 marked the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 and various avenues throughout the United States (such as JANM and the National Museum of American History) made efforts to commemorate the event so that the public is aware of what happened and never forgets. Saldamando also paid homage to the Executive Order 9066 anniversary through the addition of communal art to her bed sheet series.

For 'Ae Kai, Saldamando drew a portrait of an Asian American toddler, named Rebel, wearing a beanie, hoodie, and sneakers (fig. 22) based on a photograph from a protest that was publicized through newspaper media (fig. 21). The toddler's eyes are looking at something in the distance, not visible to the viewer. However, the toddler holds up a protest sign that reads, "Japanese Americans against Muslim Registry." The Muslim Registry refers to Donald Trump's

[45] While Saldamando is not Pacific Islander, her connection to Hawai`i is through her partner, Len Higa.

aim of forcing all Muslim immigrants and Muslim Americans to input their information into a registry that would make it easy for the U.S. government to track and control them, thus, denying them civil liberties. Having access to such personal information is not only unjust and unconstitutional, but can lead to further violations given that the current U.S. administration has been, at times, unpredictable in its decisions. Many communities in the United States have protested and spoken against establishing such a registry. Some of the individuals in support of the Muslim Registry have argued that Executive Order 9066 serves as a precedent, and therefore making it legal for the government to hold information about certain communities and to use that information to take further action as it sees fit. With the anniversary of Executive Order 9066, Japanese Americans have been very vocal in speaking out against the Muslim Registry. Saldamando's piece is one example.

Figure 21. Maya Diamond, "Rebel," 2017. Digital photograph. Location unknown. www.facebook.com/TomorrowInshallah/photos/a.338210576539222/379348449092101.

Figure 22. Shizu Saldamando, *Farewell to Honouliuli* (Rebel Detail), 2017. Ball point pen on bedsheet, dimensions unknown. Location unknown. www.instagram.com/p/BWOsoFvAoL6/?igshid=4s2vxh566djo.

For ‘Ae Kai, Saldamando displayed her bed sheet portrait of Rebel and invited visitors to the culture lab to contribute to the creation of a communal lei. She asked visitors to rip up copies of Executive Order 9066, The Chinese Exclusion Act, and the Muslim Travel Ban and taught them how to make the lei pieces from the torn paper (fig. 23 and fig. 24). The shift from the paper flower wreath to a lei was very much intentional. Saldamando’s husband, Len Higa, is from Hawai’i. Specifically, he grew up in Honouliuli, on the island of Oahu. Honouliuli was the site of the largest Japanese Hawaiian incarceration camp in Hawai’i. It was also the only longest-running camp in the area. Not everyone who was of Japanese ancestry in Hawai’i was incarcerated (“Re: Communal ‘Ae Kai-APAC piece”). This was because “the ethnic Japanese comprised 37 percent of the population” so “Japanese labor was essential to the Hawaiian economy and defense industries” (Scheiber and Scheiber). Additionally, as Michi Nishiura Weglyn points out in her book, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America’s Concentration*

Camps, there was an emphasis on "retain[ing], *not detain[ing]*, Hawaii's Japanese population in a battle zone thousands of miles closer to the enemy mainland…and to do everything possible to encourage their loyalty so they would all stay at their tasks" (50). However, the United States military enacted control over people of Japanese ancestry, and everyone else in Hawai'i, through martial law. Freedom was restricted through curfews, blackouts, censorship, closure of language schools, inspection of identification cards, limited mobility, and other regulations (Ibid.). At the same time, community leaders and activists were specifically targeted and often were sent to incarceration camps. Higa's family was not sent to any incarceration camps because they were business owners. His family had a lei-making business and when he was younger, he would make leis with his grandparents. Thus, Saldamando chose to honor her husband's family history and the history of Japanese Hawaiian incarceration through the communal crafting of the lei. In her artist statement for this piece, Saldamando explains:

> The lei is a lasting symbol of welcome to travelers to the Hawaiian islands —a welcome in stark contrast to the anti-immigrant sentiments so pervasive through American history …An homage to the Japanese family businesses that have grown and sold ilima leis in Hawai'i. Farewell to Honouliuli is also a way to begin a conversation about the experiences of the Hawaiian Japanese incarcerated in Honouliuli during WWII (Ibid.).

Figure 23. Shizu Saldamando, Lei Workshop, 2017. Digital photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 24. Shizu Saldamando, *Farewell to Honouliuli* (Progress Shot), 2017. Ball point pen on bed sheet, paper, additional unknown materials, dimensions unknown. Location unknown. www.instagram.com/p/BWTylrOgEXP/?igshid=1hbx9edbebzn1.

Farewell to Honouliuli was completed after two and a half days. The lei included black ribbons and was draped over the bed sheet portrait (fig. 25). The installation piece was temporary but the opportunity to bring in visitors to create an art piece related to the history of the larger Asian American community and repurpose papers that were meant to deny rights to the people of Japanese ancestry might have helped some visitors think creatively of how to use tools meant to disempower, as a means to speak out. Unfortunately, there are not any sources available that document how visitors and participants felt about the installation and/or whether or not their families were affected by Executive Order 9066, the Chinese Exclusion Act, or the Muslim Travel Ban. Nevertheless, the piece and installation show the power of Saldamando's portraiture practice, communal art, and creativity to highlight obscured narratives and draw connections between different communities that are affected by the same racial scripts at different points in time.

Figure 25. Shizu Saldamando, *Farewell to Honouliuli*, 2017. Ball point pen on bed sheet, paper, additional materials unknown, dimensions unknown. Location unknown. www.instagram.com/p/BWUYWEgAwJu/?igshid=195uajha7qwfi.

At the same time, this specific piece reconfigures the intimacy originally associated with Saldamando's bed sheet series. In the case of *Farewell to Honouliuli*, the use of the bed sheet and communal lei to discuss the histories of exclusion and persecution through bans, executive orders, and acts brings an element of the domestic —something that is used in the home as well as the idea of domestic safety and warfare in terms of the state. Considering how the Japanese Americans and Japanese Hawaiians who were incarcerated had to leave behind their homes and domestic tools, the bed sheet alludes to the unfortunate choice they had to make as to what they would take with them from their home to the incarceration sites, and how the objects they selected would help re-create a sense of home as they experienced displacement. After incarceration, many members of this community did not want to talk about their experiences and

rarely discussed that period of their life among their family members or with their future kin. Hence, the intimacy associated with the bedroom takes a turn towards privacy and having control of what personal experiences make it into the public sphere. Moreover, the fact that the portrait on the bed sheet is of a young Japanese American toddler who is standing up for the rights of the Muslim community in solidarity (based on her own family's history), also speaks to the idea of refusing to be silenced about the Executive Order 9066, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the Muslim Registry. By remembering and protesting, the affected and allied communities can "air the dirty laundry" of the domestic violence enacted upon targeted groups that the United States government tries to hide. Thus, Saldamando's work redefines intimacy, the convergence of cultures, and the historical amnesia surrounding the racial scripts the state perpetuates.

Bridging Worlds as an Undercover Textual Poch@

In this chapter, I brought attention to Shizu Saldamando's multifaceted artistic portfolio by analyzing three of her multimedia pieces that speak to Japanese American incarceration experiences in the United States during World War II. When viewing these pieces through a textual poch@ lens, Saldamando's reconfiguration of art processes and aesthetics demonstrates how her work simultaneously documents Japanese American history and histories of solidarity between different communities of color. Drawing from Natalia Molina's racial scripts concept, Saldamando's visual dialogues bring attention to the ways in which art can depict and encourage coalition-building between different communities of color who have been subjected to various racialization projects in the United States. Her work not only calls attention to these histories as a way to keep them in public memory, but also encourages continued solidarity between communities of color to prevent further injustices from taking place.

Additionally, because of her positionality as a textual poch@, Saldamando has been able to speak back to the way she and her work are classified. Her Chicana/o/x and Japanese

American ancestry means that she is often asked to participate in ethnic-specific spaces. As noted earlier in the chapter, Saldamando does not appreciate being reduced to such qualifiers because it limits how she and her work are perceived. Instead, Saldamando uses these spaces as an opportunity to exercise her creative freedom. She does this by presenting artwork that only fits into the category such events place her in, but simultaneously challenges the limited narrative. The Japanese American artworks featured in this discussion are just one example of Saldamando's textual poch@ sensibilities as she draws from various influences and practices in an effort to create something unique to her and her vision while avoiding essentialism. As such, her work as a textual poch@ and the way her art is indirectly in conversation with the larger goals of relational ethnic studies —that is, focusing on how different racial and ethnic groups' identity formations are products of their interactions with each other— means she is able to provide counternarratives about people's lived realities and experiences, challenge outmoded ideas and misconceptions, all the while providing a space for visibility and representation.

It is Saldamando's tenacity in questioning what qualifies as Chicana/o/x, U.S. Latina/o/x, Japanese American, and Asian American art and the way that art can speak to different conceptualizations of cultural history that set the stage for Night tha Funksta, a textual poch@ situated in the transpacific borderlands.

Chapter 3
El Night: Textual Poch@ Japonero

On Saturday, April 30th, 2016, Osaka-based artist, Night tha Funksta had his first solo exhibition in the United States.[46] Titled *On the Outside Looking In*, the exhibition was curated by Richard "Rich WestKoast" Castor, creator and editor of *Originals* magazine, and showcased at Espacio 1839 in Boyle Heights. The one-night art show was billed as "an intimate view of a Japanese artists' [sic] interpretation of Chicano culture and art" (Muñoz). The idea of Night being an external spectator to Chicana/o/x culture was exemplified in the customized artwork he painted directly onto the main gallery wall where the rest of his artwork was hung (fig. 26). The image shows Night's head, and arms draped over a chain-link fence. He is wearing a baseball cap, rim flipped up, with the word "Japonero" written across it as he gazes to his left. The rest of his body is not visible, suggesting that Night either wishes to stay on his side of the fence or wants to see what is on the other side first, before jumping over. While his right hand grips the top of the fence for balance, in his left hand he holds the tools of his trade: markers, pens, and brushes. Over this side of the image are the words, "Ese Night's." Meanwhile, to the right is the rest of the exhibition's title, *On the Outside Looking In*, except that the "Looking In" portion has been cleverly incorporated onto a street sign, complete with an arrow pointing to the right, directing visitors to the pathway of the show. Overall, the image highlights Night's positionality (outsider, Japanese, observant to the Chicana/o/x culture). At the same time, as a racial, ethnic, and geographic outsider to Chicana/o/x culture, Night has devoted the majority of his life to learning as much as he can through any medium available. As he shared in an interview with Jose M. Valle for *Teen Angels* magazine, "What inspires me is the tracing back to our roots" (Night tha Funksta Interview by Jose M. Valle). The idea of "tracing back to our roots" is

[46] Hereon after referred to as Night.

something that is always present in Night's art —from the artists he decides to pay homage to, to the themes and scenes he chooses to depict.

Figure 26. Night tha Funksta, *On the Outside Looking In*, 2016. Materials unknown, dimensions unknown. Espacio 1839, Los Angeles, CA. www.instagram.com/p/BE2Mud2IGoQ/?igshid=11ow7cun5f6p.

Night is one of numerous Japanese people who has a passionate and dedicated interest in Chicana/o/x culture. This "phenomenon" has been going on in Japan since the late 1970s and while it has periodically caught the interest of the global public on occasion, the majority of the popular media produced on this topic fails to explore the significance of Chicana/o/x cultural practices in Japan by placing more focus on how people view these practices as instances of cultural appropriation.[47] Thus, I do not focus on discussions of cultural appropriation because, in doing so, the larger cultural work that is operating is overlooked. Instead, through an analysis of selections from Night's artwork, his influences, his interview with *Teen Angels* magazine, and

[47] See online pieces such as "Chola Japonesa," "Japanese 'Cholos': Chicano Subculture Finds a Home in East Asia," and "When East Los Meets Tokyo: Chicano Rap and Lowrider Culture in Japan."

Instagram posts, I am interested in addressing how non-Chicanas/os/xs enact textual poch@ practices and how this work can be situated within the field of relational ethnic studies from a transnational perspective. Relational ethnic studies seeks to examine how communities of color in the United States develop their sense of identity in relation to other people of color. However, with concepts like Maria Jose Plascencia and George J. Sanchez's transpacific borderlands, along with Night's work, perhaps a transnational approach to relational ethnic studies can help inform new ways of how relational identity formation occurs.

My purpose in this chapter is twofold. First, I provide an overview of Shin Miyata, founder of Barrio Gold Records in Japan, because he has had significant impact on Night and other Japanese nationals who have an interest in Chicana/o/x culture. Miyata is often referred to as an ambassador of Chicana/o/x culture and continues to be an influential figure among the community of Japanese people who are invested in Chicana/o/x culture. It is important to acknowledge Shin Miyata's contributions as they illustrate that the appeal of Chicana/o/x culture in Japan goes beyond limited misconceptions of cultural appropriation. The second part of the chapter focuses on Night's artistic influences and depictions of what he considers to be visual genealogies of Chicana/o/x cholo culture. Night's positionality as a textual poch@ —that is, an individual who deviates from their society's dominant narratives in order to piece together new cultural productions that speak to their varied influences— operates a little differently than in the work of Rio Yañez and Shizu Saldamando. Night's work does steer away from Japanese society's expectations but at the same time, depicts dominant understandings of how Chicana/o/x cholo culture has been depicted in mass media. However, in exploring Night's depictions and artistic influences, his art also illuminates the overlooked non-Chicana/o/x roots that have been present in Chicana/o/x culture for years and the need to acknowledge these histories in an effort to de-essentialize what is understood to be Chicana/o/x or where and how Chicana/o/x culture

can take place. I end with a recent exchange on Night's Instagram page that shows why relational ethnic studies scholars should consider adding a transnational lens and how this approach can open the door to allyship in unexpected places.

Borderlands Go Transpacific and Lead Back to El Shin-gón

In 1987, Gloria E. Anzaldúa published her experimental text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza Consciousness*, which re-conceptualized the United States-Mexico border from a geopolitical space, to one where cultural productions take place as a result of lived experiences of being in-between. Anzaldua's borderlands and the border culture it discusses is solely concerned with Chicanas and the United States-Mexico border area. However, recent engagements with the idea of the borderlands both expand the spatial and regional focus. For example, Maria Jose Plascencia and George J. Sanchez provide an overview of the long history of Asians in the Americas and present the concept of transpacific borderlands —which builds on the existing understanding of borderlands in Chicana/o/x studies. They write:

> [Transpacific borderlands aims] to encompass the range of cultural dynamics present in the transnational migrations and settlements of Japanese-origin peoples across the Americans. If living in the 'transpacific borderlands' can be understood to be "betwixt and between" the cultural poles of Japanese, Latino, and American, we hope that greater insight will result regarding the various cultural directions and diversities implied in the concept of "Japanese Latino" (6).

Hence, Plascencia and Sanchez's reconfiguration of the borderlands consciously brings in the Pacific Rim region into the conversation. This spatial and geographic tactic not only interrupts discourses of where borderlands culture literally takes place, but also brings into question the cultures and countries that can participate in this exchange. As such, the reconceptualization of

the borderlands into the transpacific borderlands helps situate how Chicana/o/x culture, for example, can also be carried out and developed in new directions in places like Japan.[48] The cultural work that people like Night and Shin Miyata produce is part of this transpacific borderlands network and examining these types of productions can expand understandings of how and where Chicana/o/x culture is situated.

Much of the curiosity surrounding the popularity of Chicana/o/x culture in Japan focuses on how these specific Japanese subcultures became aware that the Chicana/o/x community existed. Extensive research on the travels of contemporary Chicana/o/x culture in Japan still needs to be conducted but, based on the resources currently available, all roads lead back to one man: Shin Miyata.[49]

Miyata is the founder and owner of Barrio Gold Records, a Tokyo-based record label that specializes in re-issuing and distributing Chicana/o/x soul, Chicana/o/x rap, and funk music in Japan (San Roman). According to an interview conducted with Maria Jose Plascencia and George J. Sanchez for their piece, "Living in the Transpacific Borderlands: Expressions of Japanese Latino Culture and Identity," Shin Miyata first learned about Chicana/o/x culture in the 1970s when he was majoring in Spanish as a university student in Japan. He watched films like *Corvette Summers* and the television programs, *CHiPS* (15). These types of popular cultural productions developed his interest in caló and lowriders. In turn, caló and lowriders led him to

[48] The exploration of Japanese Latinas/os/xs and Japanese Chicanas/os/xs in terms of mixed raced individuals is not the focus of this chapter although I do recognize that Plascencia and Sanchez are also suggesting the need to highlight the histories of migration and settlement between Asian and Latina/o/x countries. For the purposes of this chapter, I am more interested in the migration of culture, so to speak.

[49] Shin Miyata's story is well-known and is even the subject of a short documentary by Akira Boch. Released in 2017, *Our Man in Tokyo (The Ballad of Shin Miyata)* has been screened in California, Mexico, and Japan. In the documentary, however, Miyata claims that he learned about Chicana/o/x music while working at a used record store in Tokyo (Flash Disk Ranch) where the owner, Mr. Tsubaki, would take buying trips to Los Angeles every 2 to 3 months. Mr. Tsubaki introduced Miyata to bands like Tierra.

purchase Ruben Guerrero's compilation album, *Los Angeles: The Eastside Renaissance*, in 1983 and continue to learn about Chicanas/os/xs through music (Ibid.). He simultaneously was influenced by David F. Gomez's 1973 text, *Somos Chicanos: Strangers in Our Own Land*, which he would read while also listening and absorbing Chicana/o/x music (Boch). Miyata's fascination with Chicana/o/x culture grew stronger and his commitment to learn more about Chicanas/os/xs led him to relocate to the City Terrace neighborhood in East Los Angeles in 1984 where he undertook "a search of the sacred Chicanada of varrio life" (Night tha Funksta Interview by Jose M. Valle).[50] While in Los Angeles, he enrolled in East Los Angeles Community College (ELACC) and took a few courses in Chicano Studies. However, Miyata did not limit his education on Chicanas/os/xs to the classroom. He also lived with a Chicana/o/x family and met people in the East Los Angeles community of Boyle Heights who helped him learn more about Chicanas/os/xs. When Miyata returned to Japan, he shared his knowledge of Chicanas/os/xs through media articles and after working for BMG, a record company, he founded his own label, Barrio Gold Records (Plascencia and Sanchez 15). Through his work with Barrio Gold Records, Miyata has continued to make Chicana/o/x music available in Japan. Additionally, he helps Chicana/o/x musicians tour in Japan and assists with the promotion and logistics. Miyata continues to visit the Los Angeles area and will occasionally guest DJ community events.

The popularity of Chicana/o/x culture in Japan (particularly in places like Nagoya, Osaka, and Tokyo), has led to what Miyata refers to as the Japanese Chicano Movement that particularly focuses on three different aspects: fashion, cars, and music (Ibid. 16). Meanwhile, people like

[50] The correct spelling word is "barrio" with a "b" but in some instances, Chicanas/os/xs have spelled it with a "v" instead. Unclear as to whether this use of the "v" is intentional in every instance but as will be discussed later in this chapter, a mural artist uses "v" to spell barrio because it is meant to allude to "v for victory."

Jose M. Valle, founder and director of the Souleros Ball Revue, a "collective of rare low-rider Oldies record collectors, car club members, artists, organizers and old schoolers that are passionate about our culture, our youth and our community," views the presence of Chicana/o/x culture in Japan as having occurred over three eras (SBR). The first era began by "a few Japanese homeboys who loved U.S. culture [,] custom cars [,] and music. These homeboys are now considered world renowned veteranos and are still low riding [sic] the calles of Japone [sic]…" (Night tha Funksta Interview by Jose M. Valle). Miyata, because of his interests and time period, would fall into this era. The second era is the "most influential" as it saw a growing interest in "Chicano rap groups like L.S.O.B. [Lighter Shade of Brown], Kid Frost, Mellow Man Ace and Slow Pain during the 90's [sic]" which turned "the interest of only a few into an actual Chicano scene in Japan" (Ibid.). Lastly, the third and ongoing era is "more alive then [sic] ever with consistent Chicano Rap Concerts, Low-rider car shows and Oldies Dances similar to the Souleros Ball" (Ibid.). While I appreciate the identification and breakdown of the three different eras by Valle, I will continue with Miyata's conceptualization of a larger movement with three key interests since this view provides a more holistic understanding of the Japanese Chicana/o/x community and allows the ability for people and eras to overlap. Despite fashion being the most visible of the three, followed by lowrider culture, Chicano music is "the most widespread aspect of the Chicano movement in Japan because it teaches Chicano philosophies and lifestyle" given that lyrics, for example, provide more context (Plascencia and Sanchez 16). Unlike other imported trends present in Japan, Miyata believes that the Japanese Chicano Movement is not a temporary phase but rather an identity movement:

> [He] explained that most of the individuals who are committed to the Japanese Chicano Movement are from the countryside and connect to the roots of what it means to be Chicano. They find comfort in the music that talks about the

> struggles of being oppressed by American society, or the pressure to fit in into a category defined by others who do not understand your story …these Japanese do not feel like they fit into the dominant Japanese narrative of discipline, uniformity, and economic comfort, which so often characterizes post-modern Japan (Ibid. 17).

Thus, the popularity of Chicana/o/x culture among the Japanese can partially be attributed to feelings of not belonging to the larger, national narrative and the lack of visibility of their own experiences among the dominant perception of Japanese life. People like Shin Miyata believe Chicana/o/x culture resonates with some people in Japan because of similarities in values. In the short documentary, *Chicano*, shot by British film directors Louis Ellison and Jacob Hodgkinson, Miyata explains, "We feel sympathy towards them and connect in the way they express their opinions, love their crews, family and work hard on the things that they love. In my opinion this is what brings the Chicano and Japanese cultures together." As such, within this context, the Japanese nationals who find Chicana/o/x cultural appealing are textual poch@s. Their lifestyles and livelihood deviate from the dominant ideas of success in Japanese culture. Moreover, they interpret the Chicana/o/x experience in the United States as a reflection of the rejection they encounter from dominant Japanese society, particularly along the lines of working-class experiences.

For the Japanese community involved in Chicana/o/x culture appreciation, the most common form has been emulation through fashion and car customization via lowriders. However, the authors also mention artists in the context of music and tattoos, pointing out that people like Mona AKA Sad Girl have filmed their music videos on location in Los Angeles while Japanese tattoo artists have embraced Chicana/o/x tattoo culture as a way to challenge

taboos around tattoos in Japanese society (Plascencia and Sanchez 19). "Indeed, some of the most talented Japanese Chicano tattoo artists have themselves migrated to East Los Angeles to begin businesses in the 'motherland' of Chicano graffiti and visual art through body ink" (Ibid).[51] Tattooing is certainly a visual art. However, visual art in the form of drawings is also present among the Japanese Chicana/o/x community, even though it is not one of the more popular approaches or method of expression.[52] Because of this, the artistic endeavors of Night are all that much more important to acknowledge and study, especially since they are part of the cultural productions happening in the transpacific borderlands.

The Funksta's Technique

Born Kazuya Naito, Night is a 37-year old graphic artist based in Osaka, Japan.[53] He has built a worldwide following of fans and collaborators through his interpretation, practice, and depiction of Chicana/o/x chola/o culture in both his art and lifestyle. Night showcases his artwork on social media —primarily through Instagram.[54] In addition to posting pictures of finished and in-progress artwork on the social media platform, Night often uses the livestream option so that users can watch him work on his art. He also makes use of different features, such as the question-and-answer component of Instagram stories. These tools help him engage with

[51] Now that tattooing is legal in Japan, it is unclear how this will affect Japanese artists' desires to relocate to practice their craft.

[52] To clarify, I use Japanese Chicana/o/x to refer to Japanese nationals who participate in Chicana/o/x culture. Though not the best descriptor, it serves its purpose for now. I hope to come up with better terminology by the time this dissertation is prepared as a book manuscript.

[53] Age is approximate and based on limited information Night occasionally shares on social media.

[54] I will only focus on Instagram in this chapter since Night is most active on this social media platform and does not have a personal website.

his audience around the world, especially given that he usually does not exhibit his art anywhere —with *On the Outside Looking In* being an exception.

Biographical information on Night is limited since he has not shared an official biography. Much of what is known about him is based on what he is willing to share with his audience via social media. Night is a classically trained artist and graduated from a fine arts school. His day job is a graphic designer but as Night, he explores different aspects of his style through his depiction of Chicana/o/x cholo culture and everyday life. He depicts aspects of Chicana/o/x cholo culture through cartoon drawings reminiscent of the artwork seen in the well-known publication, *Teen Angels* magazine.[55] Like the artwork in *Teen Angels*, Night's art often shows Chicanas/os/xs partaking in vernacular activities such as going to dances, hanging out, getting ready to go out with the homies, and lowrider car shows.

His art is almost exclusively black-and-white. He tends to draw his sketches in pencil and then outlines them in black, using a variety of tools (ballpoint pen, markers and pens with different tips and gauges). This allows Night to experiment with fine lines and linework, broadly. Other techniques he experiments with include etching on vinyl records storage cases, sunglasses, and car windows, sewing and embroidery (he customizes much of his clothing), cooking, and most recently, tattooing with a homemade machine. The tattoos he has posted on Instagram are original designs that he has tattooed on himself. Like Shizu Saldamando in the previous chapter, Night's art training and specialization in linework lends itself to the tattooing medium where black-and-grey pieces as well as clean lines are key components for best looking and longer-lasting tattoos. However, the pieces analyzed in this chapter are all black-and-white drawings on white paper. Night has not officially named his style of art but, he has developed a specific

[55] Shizu Saldamando, the artist who is the subject of the second chapter of this dissertation was also influenced by *Teen Angels* magazine. See the previous chapter to learn more about the magazine's impact on her artistic development.

aesthetic that helps viewers, who are familiar with his work, recognize that a piece is his. He always manages to add his own twist based on the multiple influences present in his art style.

The final issue published in 2014, #234, of the highly acclaimed and influential *Teen Angels Magazine*, includes Night's interview with Jose M. Valle. Night explains that he first learned about Chicana/o/x culture through Chicano rap but over time, became interested in all aspects of Chicana/o/x culture —from food, history, manners, and customs to lowriders, caló language, and the focus on family. He is well aware of his positionality as an outsider to Chicana/o/x culture and despite his love for Chicanas/os/xs, he still maintains a strong Japanese identity. On social media, he has even described himself as an international student of Chicanas/os/xs and Chicana/o/x culture. In the excerpt below, Night explains how his understanding of Chicana/o/x culture is limited by other factors:

> Since we have a language barrier, there are some things I can't exactly recognize in your culture. I'm not Chicano but I learned about Chicanos from the movies, and I still want to embrace my Japanese heritage …I have a deep respect and love for the veterano cholo style from the 70's and 80's just as I do with Samurai and Kimono, you know the veterano style from Japan. Lol. These are forgotten styles and histories. To me it's all the same, tracing back our roots (Night tha Funksta Interview by Jose M. Valle).

Night's understanding of Chicana/o/x culture reflects both the rasquache aesthetic and textual poch@ practices in several ways. First, the traditional understanding of the term "pocho" would apply to Night because of the acknowledged language barrier. He does not specify whether the language barrier is due to Spanish or English but notes how the limited language ability determines what he is able (and unable) to understand through his consumption of films and

music. On Instagram, he also occasionally posts images of the books on Chicanas/os/xs he is reading —which, by the way, include texts I have read for my own Chicana/o studies courses. Additionally, he fuses the bits and pieces he does understand from Chicana/o/x culture by drawing comparison with elements from his own Japanese heritage, as seen in his reference to samurais and kimonos. As a textual poch@, he is open to merging his Japanese background with his love of Chicana/o/x culture in order to create something new through his multiple interpretations, which can be seen in the cultural productions he shares on his social media platform —namely, art.

Ese Teen Angel, Ese Night

Night says that his approach to art is influenced by artists David "Teen Angel" Holland and Angel "El Angel of the Bay Area" Diaz.[56] Teen Angel, originally an artist for *Lowrider* magazine, became well-known for his cartoon-style renditions of Chicanas/os/xs, "depicting the [lowrider] lifestyle in a fun whimsical way with his 'Bubble Head' figures and colorful art" (De Baca).[57] His depictions of everyday life (cruising, gatherings, family, hanging out) had cartoon elements. His figures' "bubble heads" included large eyes, happy expressions, and youthful looks. David Holland grew up in San Jose, California and was initially exposed to art through his parent's restaurant (Castor).[58] Additionally, he grew up seeing Mexican murals in the area and it was the attention to detail in these murals that caught his eye. His appreciation for art then

[56] I was unable to confirm the work of Angel Diaz. I found one artist's Instagram profile who goes by the name Angel Diaz. However, Night does not follow this artist and the artist does not refer to himself as "El Angel of the Bay Area." Therefore, in terms of focusing on Night's artistic influences, I will only be discussing David "Teen Angel" Holland.

[57] An extensive focus on the origins of *Teen Angels* and David Holland is important to include in this chapter since it is still not common knowledge who the man behind *Teen Angels* was.

[58] It is unclear what type of restaurant his parents ran but I imagine how they chose to decorate the restaurant had a long-term influence on Teen Angel's aesthetics.

extended to kustom car culture, (military) tattoos, Chicano culture, and gangs (Coleman). These interests led him to his art practice and he began to paint murals for car garages and buildings, and, later on, cars. As his popularity in the lowrider community grew, he began to create artwork for *Lowrider* magazine when it was released in the late 1970s. It was his experience with *Lowrider* that led him to create a new magazine, *Teen Angels*, because he wanted to have the opportunity to focus on "politics, fashion, commentary and art" in addition to lowrider culture (Ibid.). The first issue debuted in 1981. *Teen Angels* was "dedicated to cholo culture in full. He wanted to explore it all, not just via art. He was into writing about hairstyles, bicycle trends …and [what] wasn't being covered elsewhere. He was a self-styled historian of the culture" (Ibid.). The magazine also heavily featured content created by the community, not just Holland's original pieces. As Richard Castor notes, *Teen Angels* became known as the "voice of the varrio" since its production and content "was made up mainly [from] submissions of pictures, poems, art, and dedications …it was the internet before the internet …unfiltered and self-published, the magazine documented the true nature of the culture." Christian Archer, designer for *Print*, likens *Teen Angels* to "something between a fanzine and a not-for-profit community organization" that gave "a medium and a voice to people who may not have had a way to get their art, poems, and writings out to an audience. It no doubt also gave inspiration to countless kids within that lifestyle to express themselves …or provide a model that was acceptable" (Anderson). Indeed, the magazine provided a platform for community members from all walks of life, even those who were incarcerated.

Teen Angels also offered a way to stay informed and in communication. "When it began appearing in convenience stores and mom-and-pop liquor stores throughout the region, *Teen Angels* was an affordable way for young Latinos to stay connected with what was happening in nearby communities that they might not otherwise be exposed to" (Coleman). Over time, *Teen*

Angels' distribution expanded into the rest of the Southwest, other regions of the United States (including the east coast), and even reached audiences in Europe and Japan (Castor). Holland stopped being involved with the production of the magazine but passed the legacy on to his sons. Despite not being directly responsible for the rest of the magazine's issues, Holland continued to create artwork. The last issue of *Teen Angel* was published in 2014. Holland passed away on March 29, 2015.

Prior to his passing, only a handful of people were aware that the man, the original Teen Angel, was actually not Chicano but white. *LA Weekly*'s Jonny Coleman interviewed Holland's long-time friend and fan, David de Baca, two years after the artist's death. De Baca was a fan of *Teen Angels* since he was a kid but it was not until 2005, when he was browsing stalls at an Americana art fair, that De Baca came across Holland's art again. De Baca recognized the *Teen Angel* style in the pieces being sold by Holland's stepson, who confirmed that Holland was indeed the man behind *Teen Angel*. While his initial efforts to connect with the artist were not successful —Holland claimed to have not left his home in the past 15 years— De Baca was able to earn the artist's trust after gifting him a '53 Chevy car model (Coleman). Slowly, De Baca was able to get to know Holland (up until his death) and learn more about his life and family. He hopes to write a book based on their friendship and has collaborated with his sons on several occasions.[59]

The legacy and influence of Teen Angel and his magazine is undeniable. The fact that Holland was not racially or ethnically part of the Chicana/o/x community but clearly understood the culture and helped promote it parallels the cultural work that Night (and even Shin Miyata) are carrying out now. It is not surprising then, that despite the mystery of Teen Angel's real

[59] In the article, it is mentioned that De Baca would like to write a book on his friendship with the Teen Angel but as of the time of this writing, no such work has been published yet.

identity for so many years, Night is specifically indebted to this artist for his style and content. As such, Night pays homage to the artist in his "Lost Angels" series —which is also influenced by pinta arte (jail art), Chicana/o/x murals, and placasos (Chicano graffiti) (Night tha Funksta Interview with Jose M. Valle). For Night, the Chicana/o art presented in publications like *Teen Angels* is "in between Fine Art and Street Art" and as such, he wishes to keep "the O/G toon style" alive through his own work (Ibid.). He sees himself as an artistic inheritor of the visual style and incorporates it in his art while also using his work as an opportunity to show his love and respect for Chicana/o/x culture. This influence can be clearly seen in Night's piece, *La Movida Por Vida*.

Las Movidas de Night

Based on a photograph from an issue of *Teen Angels* documenting the 2014 Souleros Ball (fig. 27), *La Movida Por Vida* shows a cartoon rendition of four Chicanas whose style reflects 80s and 90s Chicana chola culture —feathered hair, fedoras, pressed trousers, pendletons, and phrases like "Oldie but Goodie" featured on their tank tops in Old English lettering (fig. 28).[60] In the original image, the four chola homegirls, who appear to be in their 40s, are standing in front of a white-painted brick wall.[61] Given their ages and interests, these women can be considered "veteranas," homegirls who have been part of the chola, oldies, and Chicana/o/x culture since their youth. The woman on the far left, Chola Nona, has long, straight black hair that reaches her knees while the other three women wear their hair in the other traditional chola style of feathered

[60] Souleros Ball is an event put together by the Souleros Ball Revue where people from the Revue as well community members gather to listen to music, hang out with old friends, and partake in various other activities.

[61] The original image I am referencing is not from *Teen Angels* but from the Instagram account of one of the women featured, Winnonah Sarah, who goes by the name Chola Nona. She is the woman on the far left. The rest of the women are unidentified in the image posted.

and wavy locks. The content on Chola Nona's t-shirt is not clearly visible but the shirt of the two women on the right side read "Teen Angels" and "Souleros Ball," respectively, in Old English lettering. "Teen Angels" is an obvious reference to the magazine while "Souleros Ball" refers to the event they are attending. The image itself has been edited with a filter that has changed the photograph's original lighting and colors to a slightly blurred, sepia tone. There is a brown granite border framing the picture while the title lyrics from Della Humphrey's song, "Don't Make the Good Girls Go Bad…" have been added at the bottom of the image in white lettering, covering the women's feet and the sidewalk they are standing on. The far bottom right corner features a "Soulera" watermark, suggesting that the image might have been edited by the Souleros Ball Revue. The image's editing, however, goes beyond aesthetic choices. The selection of the sepia tones and reference to an oldies song is meant to suggest that these women have long been part of the homegirl culture in their style, fashion, as well as friends. The Souleros Ball Revue, a community these homegirls are part of, prides itself on "preserving, reviving, and celebrating the music, art, culture and history of the Low-rider Renaissance." They have coined this revival movement "La Movida."

Figure 27. Screenshot of "2014 Souleros Ball" image from Cholanona's Instagram profile. www.instagram.com/p/k0qsOrgVtD/?igshid=1s5jhyiuvk42q.

Figure 28. Night tha Funksta, *La Movida Por Vida*, 2014. Materials and dimensions unknown. Location unknown. www.i1.wp.com/www.lataco.com/wp-content/uploads/TACO-NIGHT-03.jpg?w=1000&ssl=1.

Night's knowledge of the Soulero Ball Revue, along with his titling the image, *La Movida Por Vida*, indicates that he, too, admires and respects the efforts behind the "Low-rider Renaissance." In his rendition of the four veteranas, the wall they are standing in front of is covered in placas. The title of the piece, along with the phrase "Califaztlan" and "C/S" are featured on the top portion of the artwork.[62] Below the Chicanas' feet, the phrases "Cholas y Cholos" and "Back to Basics" are also included. In this case, the basics are the original and early practices of chola/o style and lowrider and Chicana/o/x culture. While not all the placasos on the wall can be fully seen, bits and pieces suggest that the placas read phrases likes, "Chicano Power," "Soulera," and "Souleros Ball Revue." The use of these words as placas is also giving

[62] "Califaztlan is a fusion of California and Aztlán, the mythical homeland of the Aztecs. Meanwhile, C/S refers to "Con Safos," a calo term used to evoke protection and defiance.

an insider nod to the viewer who might not have seen the original image, but the signifiers — through the style of the homegirls depicted and the references used— would be well aware of what Night is referring to as La Movida. Meanwhile, the style of clothing in Night's rendition of the homegirls is the same with slight modifications. Chola Nona's shirt reads "Teen Angels" and the figure on the far right's top reads, "Oldies but Goodies." The veterana in the baseball jersey explicitly features Night's own placa, "Lost Angel," referencing not only the name of the artist's ongoing series but also suggesting a "retrieval" of the culture that Teen Angel and his magazine documented, along with the Souleros Ball Revue to continue La Movida towards a "low-rider renaissance."

La Movida Por Vida also echoes the artwork featured on the cover of the very first issue of *Teen Angels* (fig. 29), also a black-and-white image. In the *Teen Angels* piece, *Las Wannabees*, Chicanas are also depicted with feathered hair, fedoras, and clothing with Old English lettering. Their black tank tops feature their chola nicknames in Old English lettering: La Dimples, La Giggles, Lil' Tiger, Lil' Shygirl, Sleepy, and La Lil' Teardrop. Sleepy also holds a jacket customized with their crew's name, Las Wannabees with the phrase, "Cholas y Que" placed directly below the image of the bee featured on the jacket. *Las Wannabees* are drawn in Holland's trademark cartoon style: youthful faces with large eyes, feminine features like shiny hair, make-up (lined eyes, blush, lipstick), and petite figures. Whereas Night's piece does not suggest the Souleras ages, their facial features are drawn a bit rougher. The women are not smiling but are still drawn with feminine characteristics like shiny hair, lined eyes, and lipstick. Yet, their eyes are not large and lively like Las Wannabees. Instead, they are dark, smaller, ant are each outlined with near-full circle in a thinner line. Considering that this is one of Night's earlier pieces (possibly created in 2014, the same year as the picture it is referencing), he is still defining his style in his image.

Figure 29. David Holland, *Las Wannabees*, 1981. *Teen Angel* magazine cover. www.jalopyjournal.com/forum/media/teen-angels-1.420779/full?d=1399655363.

In the *Las Wannabees* piece, it is unclear as to whether or not they were a real chola crew and as such, viewers are unable to determine which place Las Wannabees might have been from. In this sense, the missing information on location may have helped the readers imagine that this group of homegirls could have existed in any community where the magazine was sold. In his *Teen Angels* interview, Night clarifies that the placasos featured in his artwork reference the places the depicted Chicanas are from. He explains, "I want to recognize Chicano culture and convey it correctly here in Japan, so I included the homegirls placasos and their cities in my art piece. Nona de San Jo, Gata mas Firme de Santa Rosa, Flaca de HWD and Soulera de Fremonte" (Night tha Funksta Interview by Jose M. Valle). This observation and attention to detail demonstrates that Night has an understanding that Chicanas/os/xs and their culture are not limited to the Los Angeles area despite the Los Angeles-centric narratives depicted in popular media through films like *Mi Vida Loca*, *Blood In, Blood Out*, *American Me*, and *Zoot Suit*. The

knowledge of the regional expansion and presence of Chicanas/os/xs is something that has been consciously shared by Japanese Chicana/o culture aficionados. According to Night:

> Mr. Shin Miyata and other veterans [of Chicana/o/x culture] in Japan have been recognizing [that Chicana/o/x culture] came from several varrios, and have been educating the younger generation to spread it. San Jo, the Bay Area, East Los, SD, San Anto and Chuco Town in Tejas are all equal Meccas in Chicano culture (Ibid.).

In this sense, Night not only wants to acknowledge the presence of Chicanas/os/xs throughout the Southwest, but in explicitly naming the women depicted in his piece, along with their places of origin, it again demonstrates that even though he is bringing his own take on Chicana/o/x culture and the image he is basing *La Movida Por Vida* from, as a textual poch@, he is still significantly invested in acknowledging the roots and origins of his influences and where he is getting his information as an international student of Chicana/o/x studies. The locations listed off by Night are all based throughout California and Texas. As such, it is unclear (in the context of the interview) as to whether or not Night or Shin Miyata are aware that Chicanas/os/xs live in places beyond the Southwest. However, for Night, geographic location is a key feature in most of his work. Perhaps this sensitivity to location is further highlighted by his own experiences an Osaka Japonero who continues his interest in United States' Chicana/o/x culture. As will be seen in the next piece, geographic location might not always limit mobility or influence.

Traversing Chicana/o/x California

One of the pieces Night chose to display for his *On the Outside Looking In* exhibition was untitled image that I will refer to as *Del Norte al Sur* (From the North to the South) (fig. 30).

Considering Night's location in "East Asia" (Japan) and his exhibition's placement in "East" Los Angeles, "Del Norte al Sur" literally presents a new sense of direction. The image itself focuses on the state of California and the Chicana/o/x culture(s) that can be found vertically (north to south) throughout the state. However, the black-and-white drawing is presented as a horizontal triptych. Night's triptych is a black-and-white illustration, on paper, and outlined with a dark, black marker and additional black in pens and finer tip markers. As noted, the bulk of Night's work focuses on fine lines and experimenting with linework in general. Night's "Del Norte al Sur" represents specific regions of California: north (San Francisco Bay Area), south (San Diego's Barrio Logan), and center (East Los Angeles).[63]

Figure 30. Night tha Funksta, *Del Norte al Sur*, 2015. Materials and dimensions unknown. Location unknown. www.i1.wp.com/www.lataco.com/wp-content/uploads/TACO-NIGHT-02.jpg?w=1000&ssl=1.

[63] The title of the piece, *Del Norte al Sur*, means "From North to South." However, based on the way the panels have been illustrated, the direction is actually from South to North.

The panel on the far left is meant to represent San Diego, specifically Barrio Logan, a predominantly Chicana/o/x neighborhood located in the south-central area of the city. Viewers who are familiar with the neighborhood can tell the image is based in Barrio Logan by the panel's background. Located in Barrio Logan, Chicano Park is an important landmark and community space. The park (and neighborhood) is intersected by the support pillars for the interstate 5 highway and the San Diego-Coronado Bridge. Despite the disruption of space by the roads and pillars, the residents of Barrio Logan reclaimed their space in the 1970s with art, by painting murals on all the pillars that reflect Chicana/o/x and Mexican history. There are currently over 60 murals in Chicano Park. However, the mural that is referenced in Night's Barrio Logan panel is one titled, *!Varrio Si, Yonkes No!* (fig. 31) that was painted in 1977 by Raúl José Jacquez, Alvaro Millan, Victor Ochoa, and Armando Rodriguez (Cataño).[64] The phrase, which translates to "Neighborhood Yes. Junkyards No!" is a response the community conveyed to the city's local government to get rid of the junkyards in their neighborhoods (Ibid.). The original mural is fully in color with the iconic phrase painted across the pillar in white and outlined in red, with the exception of the letter "V" which has been painted red but outlined in white. There is a bright yellow sun in the background of the phrase with its rays extending outward, simulating growth and fire. On the main body of the pillar, the mural's artists included figures like Emiliano Zapata, a mother with her children, field workers, and an indigenous man. Some of the figures are holding protest signs that read, "Raza Si Migra No" and "La Union Hace Nuestra Fuerza." In the background, the right side depicts a factory releasing harsh chemicals and pollution into the air while the right side shows police forces in riot gear while protestors face them. Night's version of the mural is only partial since the panel depicts half of the pillar.

[64] According to one of the mural's artists, Ochoa, the use of the "V" to spell barrio is intentional since it is mean to allude to the "V" for "victory."

The only referential points of the mural are parts of the phrase ("ES NO!" is visible), the sun rays behind the phrase, the woman holding a child, Emiliano Zapata, the two protest signs, and part of the polluting factory and protestors. It makes sense that Night only included part of the well-known mural since the mural is mainly meant to serve as a signifier (Those familiar with the Barrio Logan murals will recognize the mural Night is working off of and understand that the panel is an ode to Barrio Logan and Chicano Park). The mural/pillar serves as part of the panel's background but is mostly placed towards the left side of the panel, with the top of the pillar that extending towards the right, in an upward angle. In front of the mural/pillar —but still serving as part of the panel's background imagery— is a parked classic car that resembles the Chevrolet Deluxe models from the 1940s and 1950s. The car is black but the shading suggests it is shiny while the white wall tires further suggest that the car is clean and cared for, serving as a sense of pride and good taste. The car is the only figure in the panel that is technically incomplete because its left side, along with the hood of the car, travels into the center panel. The car's customized license plate (which I will return to later) is visible in the center panel and reads, "Legends NVRDIE".

Figure 31. Raúl José Jacquez, Alvaro Millan, Victor Ochoa, and Armando Rodríguez, *¡Varrio Si, Yonkes No!*, 1977. Materials and dimensions unknown. Chicano Park, San Diego, California. www.remezcla.com/lists/culture/here-are-the-stories-behind-10-murals-in-san-diegos-chicano-park/.

Within the left Chicano Park panel, the main focus is the pachuca in the foreground. She stands, with her hands in her pockets as her body is angled towards the left side of the panel while her gaze is directed towards the viewer. The Chicana is coded as pachuca based on her hair style and clothing. The pachuco culture emerged in the World War II time period and is heavily considered to have originated in El Paso, Texas as well as the Los Angeles, California area. Night chose to show the San Diego Chicana as a pachuca, her black, shiny hair is styled into a bouffant pompadour while a few baby curls fall near her ear. She wears a white, buttoned-up collared, long-sleeve blouse that is fitted to her upper body torso. Her gingham trousers on the other hand, are billowy, reminiscent of the flowy, draped pants pachucos wore, while her heeled Mary Janes add femininity to her tailored look. The pachuca's head, aided by the height of her hair, appears to be slightly larger than her body —alluding to the bubble head style of Teen

Angel. Her facial characteristics not only show Night's evolution as an artist who has been finding his style over the years, but also the growing influence of Teen Angel and other factors. Unlike the homegirls depicted in *La Movida Por Vida*, the pachuca has a more youthful appearance that is suggested by larger eyes and less linework on her face. Her large eyes are lined and feature eyelashes on the top and bottom eyelids. Though the eyes have increased in size, Night has still kept the semi-circles around them, characteristic of his style. He has also shaded the tip of her nose and top lip. Similar facial characteristics can be seen on the Chicana featured on the far-right panel.

Night's interest in geography and the iconography associated with a specific place continues in the far-right panel of the piece. The panel is composed in a similar fashion to the Chicano Park depiction. In the broader background, the viewer can see the iconic San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge, letting them know that this panel focuses on the North via the San Francisco Bay Area. Whereas the mural/pillar on the left panel is placed on the left side, going towards the center, the Golden Gate Bridge is also placed on the left side of the panel, but it is significantly larger on the left and becomes smaller and distant as it extends towards the right. Still, the placement of the bridge suggests to the viewer a sense of connectivity. Behind (and beneath) the Bridge, the viewer can see the river as well as the mountains nearby. Part of the background includes a "No Parking" sign covered by indecipherable graffiti on it. Behind the Chicana figure, but in front of the Bridge, is a parked lowrider that has been stylized and decorated in detail —as most lowriders tend to look. The lowrider model is similar to the style of Cadillac DeVilles from the 1970s. Like the other classic car, the front of the lowrider, including part of its hood, is displayed in the center panel. The Chicana in the foreground, and the main focal point of the panel, is dressed like a chola homegirl from the late 1970s/early 1980s. Her hair is feathered and shiny, similar to the hair Night drew on the homegirls in *La Movida Por*

Vida as well as the hairstyles featured in the *Las Wannabees Teen Angel* cover. She, too, has a youthful face with large, lined eyes defined by thinner lines suggesting a circle. Her nose is shaded as well as her lips. Unlike the pachuca, the chola is smiling and fully facing forward with her hands resting on her hips. She wears a black tank top that reads "Lost Angel" in Old English lettering. The phrase, once again, serves as a reference to Night's ongoing series. Her left hand is accessorized with intersecting black jelly bands (known as chola bands) that homegirls twist into intricate patterns and use as both bracelets and rings. Draped over her left forearm is a white t-shirt with Old English writing on it. Upon closer look, the viewer becomes aware that the phrase on the shirt reads, "In Memory of Teen Angel."[65] In this instance, the memorialization of Teen Angel on the white t-shirt is a reference to Holland, the artist, and the culture that he successfully documented and promoted. The fact that the homegirl is wearing a top referencing Night's series and style but also holding another article of clothing that acknowledges the other Angel is Night's way of paying homage to the artist to whom he is indebted and giving credit to the man who helped him trace back the roots of Chicana/o/x cholo culture.

Also, showing Night's attention to place, the middle panel focuses on one of the major landmarks of Chicana/o/x cholo and lowrider culture: Whittier Boulevard. In comparison to left and right components of the triptych, the center panel looks smaller in size due to the larger use of negative space by Night. The top half of the panel reads, "Del Norte Al Sur" and "In Loving Memory of OG" in different styles of lettering, along with a small outline of the state of California. In the bottom section of the panel, the front hoods of the cars from San Diego and San Francisco come into the middle panel, helping connect (literally and figuratively) the panels and larger image. Juxtaposed between the car hoods and serving as the foreground, is a single

[65] White t-shirts with images and phrases in Old English lettering or decorative script (like airbrushing) are the preferred style and aesthetic for clothing used to commemorate close friends and family in the Chicana/o/x culture.

rose. Unlike the rest of the imagery in the triptych, the rose, whose style is reminiscent of tattoo art, has been drawn with finer tipped pens, giving it a softer look. A banner reading "Puro Chicanismo EN VIVO" wraps around the rose's stem. Given that the middle panel in triptychs served to depict the primary deity of worship, it is no surprise that Night selected one of the major landmarks of Chicana/o/x cholo and lowrider culture: Whittier Boulevard. This long strip dates back to the times of the Spanish missionaries, as a section of the present-day boulevard was once part of El Camino Real. Viewers of "Del Norte Al Sur" are informed that the palm-tree-lined street they are staring at, complete with strip malls on both sides, is Whittier Boulevard because of Night's strategic use of another well-known landmark, the Whittier Boulevard arch. The arch is a staple icon of east Los Angeles because it proudly alerts all to the historic neighborhood, serving as a gateway to what popular Chicana/o/x culture is perceived to be, thanks to multiple films and interest in Chicana/o/x culture. Many lowriders and car clubs cruise on the weekends on the famous strip, as it provides the space and opportunity to both honor a traditional pastime (cruising) and use one of the most famous runways on which to show off the hard work, labor, money, and time that have gone into creating these, like the triptych, movable masterpieces.

As a symbol of East Los Angeles Chicana/o/x culture, the highlighting of the Whittier Boulevard arch conveys Night's understanding of historical Chicana/o/x spaces. Located at the intersection of South Arizona Avenue and Whittier Boulevard in east Los Angeles, the 65-foot, 5-story arch (or "arco" as referred to by some locals) was erected in January 1986, with an official dedication ceremony held on January 18th (McGraw). The arc was the first physical manifestation of the redevelopment project spearheaded by the Whittier Boulevard Merchants Association of East Los Angeles (Ibid.). The redevelopment project aimed to bring pride to the neighborhood and honor its Mexican and Chicana/o/x history through projects like the Hispanic

Walk of Fame that would commemorate key figures and events. Coincidentally, the sculptural design of the arc is said to be Spanish Colonial, a move that also, perhaps unintentionally, alludes to the Spanish past of the area and the boulevard itself (Ibid.). Rather than depicting another Chicana/o/x figure depicted in the center panel, Night selected what he views as one of the pinnacles of Chicana/o/x history and culture, the Whittier Boulevard arch.

Overall, the underlying message of *Del Norte Al Sur* can be read as the multiple gateways to Chicana/o/x culture when viewed from a California lens and experience. This is exemplified in the way that, as textual poch@ and student of Chicana/o/x history and culture, Night has been able to merge his knowledge and interests freely, without remaining beholden to ideas of space, time and geographic location. The viewer of the piece can easily make their way from the south part of San Diego, travel to Los Angeles, and end up in San Francisco just by allowing their eye to roam across the piece and back and forth again. Additionally, the travel of Chicana/o/x culture is suggested by Night's use of cars and bridges. As noted before, the Chicano Park murals are painted onto pillars that support the structure of the Coronado bridge and the interstate 5 highway. The interstate 5 highway can be driven all the way north and the traveler can use it as a way to reach the Whittier Boulevard arch. The interstate 5 would also be the main highway a traveler must drive on in order to end up at the Golden Gate Bridge. The Bridge has long been seen as the western gateway to United States, often compared to Ellis Island since many immigrants (mainly Chinese) were able to access California via sea through this port. The roads not only signify travel, but also help the different locales of Chicana/o/x culture converge as the central panel, with the arch, provides a connecting point, a bridge. Moreover, the fact that Night chose to depict part of each vehicle appear in the middle panel also suggests convergence and ease of connectivity.

The depiction and inclusion of San Diego (as the southern tip) and San Francisco (as the northern tip) as being representative of Chicanas/os/xs culture are important despite the Los Angeles-centric message of the image. While the depiction is geographically confined to the California region, the illustration's composition and elements tell a different story. First, the physical distance between key epicenters of Chicana/o/x culture is defied by the proximity of the triptych's panels to each other. As previously noted, the San Diego (left) panel and San Francisco (right) panel converge with the East Los Angeles (middle) panel. In doing so, the close proximity of these Chicana/o/x satellites and epicenters highlights that there may be more commonalities than differences. Despite being in different locations, Chicana/o/x culture is operating in various forms, periods of time, and throughout the state (and outside of it). Additionally, to an extent, the piece also defies the conceptualization of linear time. The San Diego Chicana dressed as a pachuca is representing the well-known pachuco culture of the late 1940s. The allusion to this period, in addition to her style of dress, is further connected with the inclusion of the classic car and emphasized by the "Legends NVR die" license plate, suggesting that the styles of Chicana/o/x expression are classic (like the cars) and legendary (like the long presence of people of Mexican descent). Meanwhile, the Bay Area Chicana is dressed as a homegirl from the 1970s/1980s, a style usually identified with East Los Angeles.

While the styles of the Chicanas are different in terms of fashion and time periods, they are both important representations of Chicanas throughout subcultural history, especially in the context of Night's interpretation. For Night, these specific figures help trace the roots of Chicana/o/x culture and pay honor to these long-held practices in their own way. Thus, Night's use of the triptych format to depict the connectivity of Chicanas/os/xs and pay homage to the roots of the Chicana/o/x lineage as he understands is also helpful in pushing Chicanas/os/xs, for example, to reflect on how textual poch@s in the transpacific borderlands conceptualize aspects

of Chicana/o/x history. Or, as will be seen in the next piece, how essentialized notions and depictions of Chicana/o/x culture can simultaneously represent and disrupt how origins of cultural figures have been understood.

Night a lo "Mexicano"

Most recently, Night has explored artistic influences that are present in Chicana/o/x art but were not originally Chicana/o/x. One such influence is the work and style of Jesus Helguera. While many people have seen Helguera's art, it is highly likely that those same individuals would not be able to name the artist let alone details of his life. Helguera is the man responsible for the popular iconography and romantic depiction of Mexican history and identity that he originally created on commission for the Imprenta Galas de México and graced the pages of many panaderia calendars since the 1940s (Espinosa 48). The imagery behind the calendars not only served to inform the Mexican public of Aztec legends and figures such as Popocatepetl, Iztaccihuatl, and Cuahtehmoc, but it also dictated the idea of what the people of Mexico looked and acted like based on the paintings he created to commemorate quotidian life. The elements and composition of Helguera's work, along with his attention to detail, have been key in informing Chicana/o/x artists and cultural workers. Yet, given how little the public knows about Helguera, it may come as a surprise that he spent the most formative years of his life growing up in Spain. In this section, I look at Night's rendition of Helguera's work and suggest how, similar to Teen Angel, Helguera's identity and background are overshadowed by his artistic influence. Teen Angel and Helguera have been formative figures in Chicana/o/x art despite not being Chicanos themselves and Night, as an outsider to Chicana/o/x culture, may prove to be the next non-Chicana/o/x artist who can simultaneously contribute to Chicana/o/x aesthetics and impact how Chicana/o/x art is perceived, remembered, and practiced.

Born on May 28, 1910, in Mexico City to a Spanish father and Mexican mother, Jesus Helguera and his family fled to Spain because of the Mexican Revolution (Ibid. 50). Thus, the majority of Helguera's upbringing and artistic training took place in Spain. After he completed his artistic studies, Helguera became an artist who completed works for companies that sold goods such as cigarettes (Ibid. 50-51). Given the time period (Spanish Civil War) and the social class the products were marketed towards, Helguera was relegated to illustrations that involved elements of fantasy —whether that be sensual women by themselves or scenes of dance where women were the sexual object of focus (Ibid.). The element of fantasy never left Helguera's work, even as he moved and worked in Mexico. In fact, he used his experience painting fantastical elements in the manner he conveyed Mexican history and legends. Helguera's European-based arts training, coupled with his middle and upper-class background, comes through in his depictions of Mexican and indigenous people as being light-skinned individuals whose appearance conforms to idealized European beauty standards. While the content and location might have changed, Helguera still brought the style and techniques he grew up with to the work he created in Mexico, which later became the standard and thus, is now considered quintessentially Mexican as it continues to be reproduced even today through calendars, murals, and other media. His work is known for soft colors and light, and dreamlike environments. Even when depicting imagined scenes of war, Helguera still managed to convey a sense of serenity in his choice of colors and light. In a similar vein, because Night draws in black-and-white and is explicitly interested in rendering the figures he draws in a cartoon style (like Teen Angel), his depictions of Chicana/o/x life also have an element of fantasy to them, even if the rest of the details are realistic and historically accurate.

On December 21st, 2018, Night posted his rendition of one of Helguera's most well-known pieces, *Serenata, poco a poquito* (fig. 32). In Helguera's piece, the main protagonists are

a Mexican woman and her suitor. The woman is light-skinned with long, black hair that has been styled into two braids. She wears a white blouse and a long green skirt. Her outfit is accessorized with a cloth belt (usually work by indigenous women) and a silver cuff on her left hand. She is slender and her proportions suggest that she is tall, even though she is sitting and reclining against a rock. She rests her face on her hand, keeping her eyes closed as she is serenaded by a mysterious charro. The charro is crouching but still positioned at a higher level than she. He is strumming a guitar in his hand. The viewer is unable to see his face because it is mostly covered by a white sombrero which only allows part of his nose, mustache, and chin to peek through. The charro wears a white, long-sleeved shirt and orange and brown trousers with a red rebozo draped over his left knee. The couple are outdoors as is suggested by the blue skies, white clouds, maguey plant and water jug. However, they do not appear to be in any discomfort as it is the ongoing courtship that is really the focal point of the image. The title of the work, *Serenata, poco a poquito* (little by little) may refer to the courtship itself. Clearly the charro is interested in the woman because he is serenading her and looking down as she reclines, eyes closed, listening to the music. While the position and proximity of the bodies suggests interest from both parties, physical contact is not actually shown, meaning that the relationship has not been solidified beyond the exploratory interest. The use of soft light also is characteristic of Helguera's aesthetic, further giving the image a dreamlike quality, romantically depicting early love.

Figure 32. Jesus Helguera, *Seranata, poco a poquito*, 1940. Materials and dimensions unknown. Location unknown. www.artnet.com/artists/jesus-helguera/serenata-poco-a-poquito-JwCQIs31aYe-hY21qOdj4Q2.

Night's rendition, *Poco a Poquito*, mirrors Helguera's composition but deviates from the European influences. Instead, Night incorporates his black-and-white, cartoon bubbleheads (developed from Teen Angel's style), adding another layer to Chicana/o/x and Mexican art aesthetics. Night's *Poco a Poquito* (fig. 33) includes the couple in similar positions and clothing. Night's piece pointedly centers on the couple, with their depiction only accented by the maguey plants, cántaro (water jug), rock boulder, and dirt. What is striking about both Helguera and Night in relation to this image is that both artists are attempting to depict what they perceive to be quintessentially Mexican. As previously noted, for Helguera, the influence of European art

and ideas of beauty were always present in his work. Meanwhile, for Night, it can be argued that given his cartoon style and preference to depict his artwork in black-and-white, his figures are racially ambiguous —which is worth considering since he is not Chicana/o/x. Thus, what other factors does Night use to convey the message that the subjects of his artwork are of Mexican descent? He relies on signifiers in the form of clothing styles (sombrero, braided hair, woven belt, maguey, and the cántaro) to relay to the viewer that the figures are Mexican and this image is a reference to Helguera's work. At the same time, these signifiers are mainstream components that audiences understand to be Mexican based on long histories of popular culture. The same can be said for the signifiers he uses in his other drawings. These signifiers are meant to alert the viewer that they are looking at a piece of art that is Mexican or Chicana/o/x, even if the subjects (such as the "Poquito a Poquito" couple) cannot be phenotypically read as Mexicans or Chicanas/os/xs.

Figure 33. Night tha Funksta, *Poco a Poquito*, 2018. Materials and dimensions unknown. Location unknown. www.instagram.com/p/BrriCUvlUXl/?igshid=1atbxk8ac31u0.

In Night's piece, he has also added lettering at the top of the drawing that reads, "Poco a Poquito." This phrase references the title of Helguera's piece while also serving as the title of his own. However, while the title specifically fits the courtship process that Helguera depicted, in Night's case, another way to view the title and the piece is more in line with Night's artistic practice. The piece was uploaded onto Night's Instagram profile as a work-in-progress on December 21st, 2018. At the time of this writing, an updated version of the drawing remains to be seen. The English-language version of the caption reads:

> "Poco A Poquito" A Drawing for Practice my style & learning from Legendary piece. Original piece was drawn by Legendary Mexican artist Jesus Helguera (1910-1971) His paintings inspire & influence to not only a lot of Artists, but also Mexican, Chicanos and even lowriders! I think you can find them [on] posters/murals/ and graphics on Lowriders. So I want to show my love & respect to the legend and tell not gang related style, sub-culture and stereo types but puro Mexican/Chicano culture to Japanese ppl who loves these culture. I done it, but it's not final tho. I'm sure having more brush up for best final. Stay tuned holms [sic] (*Poco a Poquito*).

Based on the Instagram post showcasing an unfinished piece, along with the explanation provided by Night, "Poco a Poquito" is also a proper description for his progress as an artist. Not only in reference to finishing the drawing but also, his improvement in linework, shading, composition, and working off of an original Mexican piece, learning from the style and artist, and learning and sharing his own knowledge about Chicana/o/x art and the Mexican art that has played a role in developing Chicana/o/x aesthetics. In particular, Night informs his followers that he wants to educate his Japanese peers and audience that there are many facets to Chicana/o/x

and Mexican culture —that it is not just about the cholo culture he admires. At the same time, he notes that Helguera's art is legendary and important to Mexicans and Chicanas/os/xs, important enough to be replicated in various ways (posters, murals, and lowrider art —he happens to leave out the popularity of these images on calendars, but it is unclear whether or not he is aware of the calendars or if he just didn't list them specifically for whatever reason).

Analyzing Night's interpretation and reading of Helguera's work can be complicated because of the lack of additional context from Night's perspective. As a textual poch@ in the transpacific borderlands, Night believes Helguera's work is not stereotypical but rather a positive depiction of Mexican (and in turn, Chicana/o/x) culture. Yet, at the same time, Night's appreciation and respect for Helguera's art may also push viewers to consider the heavy European aesthetic influence in Helguera's work, which is slightly different from how these depictions have been perceived. It was the popularity of, and easy access to, Helguera's art that led to its accessibility for Mexican communities in the United States to keep his art in their homes in the form of calendars, where it could be seen and learned from by Chicanas/os/xs as a connection to their Mexican roots. In turn, these images have been incorporated into various Chicana/o/x cultural productions (as mentioned by Night in his caption), which has resulted in the Japanese associating the images specifically with the Chicana/o/x community. And when people, like Night, learn and interpret once again, creating their own take on art and imagery that has a long history and multiple influences that may not be explicitly apparent upon first glance, it pushes viewers, producers and consumers of Chicana/o/x culture to re-examine and reconsider our own knowledges.

"He Doesn't Even Go Here!"

Around early June of 2020, Night shared on Instagram that one of his images had been stolen and used to sell a cosmetic product by an independent Latina/o/x makeup business based

in California. The image had been copied onto the cover of an eyeshadow palette with the only modification being the name of the makeup brand. Night reached out to the business owner and graphic artist and asked them to stop using his drawing. However, several people commented on this particular post, telling him he did not have the right to claim that his image was stolen when he "steals" so much from Chicana/o/x culture to create his art. One user wrote, "But aren't you stealing teen angles [sic] style and stealing our Chicano culture for your benefit no mames cabron smh" (mekanikal_distortion).

Despite Night's efforts to continuously remind his audience that he does not claim to be Chicana/o/x but rather someone who appreciates and is influenced by the culture, several Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x Instagram users will comment on his posts dismissing his work and accusing him of theft or cultural appropriation, even though he produces his own art.[66] While these comments are unfortunate and miss the point of what Night's artwork is trying to do, these comments also highlight how misinformed people who claim to be part of the Chicana/o/x community are as to the origins of what they perceive to be authentic Chicana/o/x culture and imagery. They latch on to essentialized representations of Chicana/o/x culture without realizing that the same images they hold in high esteem are an amalgamation of cultural influences that are oftentimes not even Chicana/o/x or Mexican in origin. It is precisely because of these misconceptions that Chicana/o/x culture and imagery exists in a sanitized bubble without external influences that it is important to be aware of how Chicana/o/x culture travels to places like Japan and how textual poch@s like Night, who live and create new work in the transpacific borderlands, can actually teach Chicanas/os/xs to be critical of their own epistemologies and interpretations. As such, relational ethnic studies scholarship, with an added transnational

[66] The reasons as to why these Instagram users feel compelled to come after Night is not known. It may or may not be connected to current "cancel" or "woke" culture.

component, can assist in informing different communities of color (like Chicanas/os/xs) how identity formation is informed on a global scale.

Moreover, in an era when communities of color in the United States are constantly dismissed and their histories are actively omitted, it is crucial for Chicanas/os/xs to be open to the presence of allies in unexpected places. Perhaps the shift from borderlands to the transpacific borderlands, culminating in relational ethnic studies, that can help the Chicana/o/x community give credence to the textual poch@s outside of the immediate community and recognize the opportunities for expanding ideas of what Chicana/o/x history and culture are.

Conclusion

The concept of the textual poch@ was put together, rasquache-style, from the bits and pieces of scholarship I have been exposed to throughout my interdisciplinary training. Drawing from literary studies, fandom studies, and Chicana/o/x art scholarship, I made do with what I had in order to find the language that not only spoke to my experiences and research interests in identity formation and cross-cultural influences in the arts and popular culture, but also describes others who I perceive to be operating on a similar wavelength. My interests do not lie in representations of singular ways of being but rather what can be created when a textual poch@'s creativity can exist without limits (self-imposed or otherwise). As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, cultural studies scholars like Stuart Hall have ascertained that "the struggle [for representation] moves forward and assumes new forms" because the issue then is the need for "the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subject positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category '[B]lack'" (443). This dissertation has attempted to do something similar, albeit with the categories of "Chicana/o/x" and "Chicana/o/x art," through the exploration of the concept, textual poch@. The idea of the textual poch@ aims to celebrate those people who look for ways to merge their influences and affinities in a manner that best represents their amalgamated selves. Additionally, the cultural works that emerge from these efforts can spur new directions and conversations in, and outside of, various academic fields. This dissertation, and the artwork featured in it, are also examples of how such conversations can take place, particularly in the area of relational ethnic studies.

In the introduction to this dissertation (and in each chapter), I reiterated that relational ethnic studies is an academic effort to research how different communities of color in the United States have formulated their identities, cultural practices, and sense of selves in relation to other groups of color they interact with. The relational approach to ethnic studies contributes to more

fruitful and holistic understandings of identity formation, helps acknowledge overlooked connections between people of color, and rejects the idea that construction of whiteness is the only marker that impacts how people of color see themselves. At the same time, the dissertation's focus on the interactions between Chicana/o/x, Japanese American, and Japanese nationals is an effort to expand relational ethnic studies in the sense that the field does not need to limit itself to the United States. Instead, scholars in this area should be open to considering the possibility of a transnational approach to relational ethnic studies. As demonstrated in this dissertation, the visual arts can help in these re-envisionings.

The artwork produced by Rio Yañez, Shizu Saldamando, and Night tha Funksta has provided the visual backdrop throughout this work to discuss the artists' textual poch@ positionality and how each textual poch@ speaks to relational ethnic studies' goal. Rio Yañez, the Bay Area-based artist whose work opens this dissertation, was the catalyst for the textual poch@ framework and my learning about Chicana/o/x culture's presence in Japan. His fascination with Japanese popular culture through comic books and Godzilla, and creating art that addressed gaps in Chicana/o/x representation, served as the foundation for his openness to explore new media art. It was through his new media art and participation in convergence culture that Yañez began his engagement with Chicana/o/x chola/o subculture in Japan and the youth who participate in this community on the internet. Thus, his digital art portraiture series, "Tokyo Cholos," not only brings attention to the Chicana/o/x chola/o subculture in Japan but also provides a contemporary example of how the genre of portraiture can document the performativity of identity as it takes place in online communities. As such, Yañez's portraiture series pushes viewers to engage with how to read and interpret images, and reflect on what makes the portraits Chicana/o/x art and the subjects Japanese, the racial ambiguity of the art, and how mainstream Chicana/o/x media has influenced the visual signifiers the youth use to give a

nod towards Chicana/o/x culture. For Rio, it is not about dismissing these youths as cultural appropriators but rather, how Chicana/o/x chola/o culture is interpreted and stylized online, and how this depiction is then reciprocated through the new cultural productions created by Chicanas/os/xs like him. Additionally, because these exchanges are mediated through online communities, Yañez's work also brings up how relational identity formations between people of color can happen in a global and digital environment.

Meanwhile, San Francisco-born Los Angeles-based artist Shizu Saldamando subverts categorization as a mixed-race artist by reconfiguring her approaches to representation through her portraiture work. Saldamando has gained prominence in the art world because of her photorealistic depictions of people of color who participate in punk, goth, and queer spaces. While this is the work for which she is most well-known, her chapter focuses instead on the artwork she has created that speaks to the Japanese American experience of incarceration during World War II. Her paño portraits and paper flower pieces —*Farewell to Rohwer*, *Free All Political Prisoners*, and *Farewell to Honouliuli*— are all artworks that reckon with the injustices faced by the Japanese Community. But upon closer inspection, we see that Saldamando's textual poch@ practices —from aesthetics to subject matter in these pieces— also challenge historical amnesia by highlighting the ways that Japanese American experiences are connected to the struggles of other communities of color in the United States, using her art to speak about instances of coalition-building between communities of color. Thus, her artworks are visual representations that can be discussed through the relational ethnic studies concept of racial scripts. Her artwork also serves as a reminder that racial injustices can be easily replicated and inflicted on different communities of color in this country and, therefore, it is important to pass on this intergenerational knowledge so that new iterations of racial projects and injustice can be called out and prevented.

Lastly, Night that Funksta, the Japonero textual poch@ from Osaka, shows readers how a textual poch@ who is "on the outside looking in," can still present his own interpretation of Chicana/o/x chola/o culture in a manner that does not rely on cultural appropriation. Night is one of many Japanese nationals who engage with Chicana/o/x art, history, and culture, and create new cultural productions influenced by these factors. For Night, his fascination with the historical origins of Chicanas/os/xs (through art) ties in with his own commitment to Japanese heritage and roots. In particular, it is his preference for chola/o culture and how he interprets Chicana/o/x history through this subculture, that allows him to create art influenced by key figures like Teen Angel and Jesus Helguera. This is evident in his pieces, *La Movida Por Vida*, *Del Norte Al Sur*, and *Poco a Poquito*. In doing so, his visual interpretations push viewers to reconsider who can create Chicana/o/x art, what makes art Chicana/o/x, and what can Chicanas/os/xs learn about themselves if they examine their culture from the stance of someone who inhabits and interprets within the transpacific borderlands. Working with the idea of the transpacific borderlands not only creates a geopolitical shift in relational ethnic studies and Chicana/o/x studies, but it also opens up the opportunity to explore how the history and culture of Chicanas/os/xs have traveled and been understood in places like Japan.

This dissertation is the first in-depth study of the aforementioned artists as well as the first to engage with Asian and U.S. Latina/o/x connections in the visual arts from a relational ethnic studies lens, along with the introduction of the textual poch@ concept. Building on this research, I plan to expand my focus on the arts to include music, while maintaining the idea of the textual poch@ and relational ethnic studies in the transpacific borderlands, in order to explore the next iteration of Japanese, Japanese American, and Chicana/o/x connections and cross-cultural influences in the arts. I believe creative practices in music may present new findings that will once again help reconfigure relational ethnic studies and perhaps even help

inform a different version of the textual poch@. Specifically, I hope to focus on music and the sonic spaces of community that it creates globally. Music, like visual art, may be an obvious area where cross-cultural exchange happens because of sampling, touring, and the international distribution to which record labels have access. Nevertheless, the adaptation of Chicana/o/x and Mexican music in Japan is a nascent area of study that has not been fully explored in ethnic studies, area studies, or ethnomusicology. For example, within the Chicana/o/x cholo subculture in Japan, several participants have emerged as DJs who curate playlists that serve as an homage to California lowriding culture. What does it mean, then, to attempt to recreate the ambience of a geographically specific practice in another country and what type of atmosphere does this channel? Meanwhile, there are various musical groups in Japan who cover traditional genres like mariachi, conjunto, and cumbia. These groups cover well-known songs but also work with the genres and aesthetics to bring their experiences as Japanese people into new songs. It will be worthwhile to research how these sounds and aesthetics have been understood, appreciated, and transformed in the transpacific borderlands. Or better yet, learn if there is a soundtrack to the textual poch@ way of life.

In addition to introducing the textual poch@ concept and exploring its applicability to artistic production and relational ethnic studies, this dissertation has also demonstrated the need to broadly explore and expand scholarship that centers on Asian and U.S. Latina/o/x connections. By comparison, there are more works on the cross-cultural interactions between Asian and Black communities, and Black and Latina/o/x communities. Therefore, the gap between Asians and U.S. Latinas/os/xs must be addressed. As mentioned in the introduction, the majority of existing scholarship that exclusively focuses on Asian and U.S. Latina/o/x communities has revolved around the similarities both groups have experienced under United States immigration policy and shifting notions of citizenship. Other academic pieces, including anthology chapters and journal

articles, have discussed Asian and Latina/o/x foodways, suburban spaces, and mixed-race Asian Latinas/os/xs. With the exception of Long Le-Khac's *Giving Form to an Asian & Latinx America* (published in 2020), which focuses on literary aesthetics, much work remains to be conducted at the intersection of the humanities, Asians, and U.S. Latinas/os/xs. It is my hope that this dissertation contributes to the expansion of this particular area.

My interest in and push for scholarly engagement with Asian and U.S. Latina/o/x communities is also part of a larger effort towards relational ethnic studies scholarship that scholars like Natalia Molina and Luis Alvarez have conducted. Comparing one group to another does not fully grapple with the intricacies present between these communities and perpetuates the myth that these groups existed in silos. As shown in this dissertation's case studies, a relational lens helps excavate forgotten histories and influences, and offers opportunities to consider a coalitional future. In particular, the events of this past year (2020), have shown how communities of color continue to be affected by the state's racialization projects and how this racialization trickles down at the individual level. The Covid-19 pandemic has generated anti-Asian sentiment in the everyday public sphere, and the lack of response by the U.S. government has disproportionately affected the health of Black, Latina/o/x, and Native American communities. Members of Black communities continue to be murdered by the police while Latina/o/x immigrants are subjected to cages and forced sterilization. These unfortunate, unjust circumstances demonstrate not only the relevance of the field of relational ethnic studies, but also how it can be mobilized through scholarship to continue highlighting the links between different communities of color and to ensure that these legacies of connection are not get lost to historical amnesia.

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