

TOURING *Pertenecer: Chicax Artists on Belonging*

NOVEMBER 23, 2019 – JUNE 28, 2020

This touring packet emphasizes experiential inquiry-based learning by asking questions to help visitors first connect personally to the work which then leads to deeper thinking about the exhibition.

Blue text can be spoken. **Blue** text are questions.

WITH VISITORS

**DIRECT:** Close your eyes and envision a space personally significant to you. This space can be a physical structure (home, work, church, school, etc.), a landscape (from a hike or a road trip), or an imagined space (spiritual space, dream space, etc.). Take a moment to silently navigate this space. (Give visitors time to visualize).

**ASK:** **What is your role within this space? Where do you belong?** (visitors do not need to share their space, just consider it on their own)

**INFORM:** “Pertenecer” is a verb in Spanish that translates to “to belong” in English. As the title of the exhibition denotes, these Chicax artists explore and navigate what it means to belong in various spaces and to create identities that are connected to place.

Chicano/Chicana refers to someone who is native of, or descends from, Mexico and lives in the United States. The “x” in Chicax is about intersectionality (interconnectedness of social categorizations such as race, class, gender). Because the term Chicax represents a form of intersectionality, or an interconnectedness of social categorizations (race, class, gender), these Chicax artists present the realities of finding a sense of belonging within various communities as well as various spaces. While we explore this exhibition, consider your own sense of belonging in the various spaces you are a part of.

**DIRECT:** View the artworks in this first gallery space (main gallery space).

**ASK:** While you walk, consider: **What types of spaces are presented in these works? How are individuals presented within these spaces?**

- Ex: The maps reflect a much larger space possibly commenting on a person's nationality or homeland.
- Ex: These artworks focus on the aesthetics of the community connecting people to the physical spaces.
- Ex: Tony Ortega uses cars to express a form of identity. The cars almost become a form of clothing expressing identity connected to place.

**INFORM:** There is an assortment of photographs within these gallery spaces utilized in different ways. Miguel Gandert, one of the artists featured in this exhibition and one who you just explored, says “**Photography is an attempt to gather new knowledge – it's an attempt to affirm a cultural existence of other people...it's about telling stories for people whose stories aren't being told.**” As we move into this next gallery space, consider the way that photography is used compared to other works in this space.

**ASK:** **How do the various artworks connect to one another? How do these connections establish a sense of belonging among them?** (visitors pair share and then share out and discuss any ideas - TLs to listen to the connections the visitors find)

**INFORM:** Adding a further layer of connection, you may have noticed various texts placed throughout the gallery spaces. Included in this exhibition are a series of writings by Gabriel Melendez, a professor of American Studies and a literary, social, and cultural critic focusing on cultural autobiographies. These writings in conjunction with the artworks focus on three different regions as they reflect in their titles: Espanola, Barelás, and Mora as the artists spent considerable time in these communities.

**DIRECT:** Take time to explore the seven texts placed throughout these gallery spaces and think about how these texts add to your understanding of other works you have previously explored.

**ASK: How do you see the concept of belonging present in these texts?** (Pair share your interpretations with another person)

**INFORM:** Using an assortment of artforms, mediums, and narratives, Delilah Montoya presents a critique of traditional Spanish Colonial Casta Paintings. Casta paintings often depict caricatured figures of racial mixing reflective of a complex social hierarchy (see below for more information). Delilah Montoya explores persistent ideas about race and class through her use of photography, maps, and data about DNA of the people in her photographs.

**DIRECT:** Explore Montoya's work and look for comparisons in how she offers a new approach for intersectionality in the modern-day United States, especially in the Southwest.

**ASK: How does Montoya present the concept of belonging in her works?** (Pair share your interpretations with another person)

**INFORM:** Gandert reflects on the deep and lasting presence of Hispanic culture and considers the link between Mexican and Indigenous people to create something unique. In these galleries, we are able to investigate the complex histories of belonging and the power of place for Chicánx artists and individuals. As you leave today, I implore you to spend more time considering how "place" becomes established and how individuals navigate their own belonging within those spaces.

## QUOTED

“I make art just like I need to breath or just like I need to eat. I make art because I need to. It’s how I survive.” - Tony Ortega

“People, family, friends, colleagues, students, community, my surroundings, identity, culture, traditions and life give me my creative muse. Creating is like breathing and eating. It sustains me.” - Tony Ortega

“Ever since the beginning, I’ve wanted my pictures to look back at people...These are peoples’ lives, and I ask my students – do you want to be a spy or a participant? If I’m close, then I can’t be invisible” - Miguel Gandert

“Over time I’ve come to see myself as the guardian of the pictures, not necessarily the creator...It’s my responsibility to get the images out into the world because I believe people have given me a gift that I want to share” - Miguel Gandert

“One of the things I learned early on within the Chicano Movement is the idea of mestizo, the coming together of multiple cultures” - Delilah Montoya

“Not only am I inventing myself, but I’m trying to invent it in such a way that the community understands it and can embrace it” - Delilah Montoya

“To continue educating children on how important art is in our lives” - Sylvia Montero (when asked what was still on her bucket list)

“I think I am bicultural in many ways. I can relate and be in my two worlds. I am more from [America] now, but I want to reconnect to my heritage. When we emigrate, we lose some connections to our homeland and culture, but we can find it again through the arts and community” - Maria de Los Angeles

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Example of traditional Casta paintings w/ explanation (inspired Delilah Montoya’s work):

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a new and unique genre of painting developed in Mexico. Designed to depict and classify the miscegenation occurring between the three main racial groups (Spaniards, Africans, and Indians), these sets of paintings (usually fourteen to sixteen) contain a wealth of information on the daily life, diet, occupations, clothing, habits, utilitarian objects, and recreations of the era. Often commissioned for export to Spain, casta sets advertised the monetary wealth and natural abundance, in both products and people, of the American territories. The emphasis on ostentation and public display of wealth and abundance in castas became a conscious construct of Mexican self-image and can be associated with the growing nationalism of the late colonial period in Mexico.

At the same time, the new genre of casta painting also reflects the desire to reinforce the stratification of social classes, a European system that was fast breaking down in the New World as a result of various factors, including racial mixing, access to wealth (especially among miners and merchants), and social mobility. The paintings increasingly attempted to reinforce upper-class conceptions of social stratification by privileging family groups that



included a Spanish male—showing them early in the series (usually in numbers one to six) and furnishing them with details that suggested a more affluent lifestyle than that of other racial mixtures.

Like most castas, this casta portrays a family engaged in private activities, thus providing a rare glimpse into the daily life of eighteenth-century Mexico. The clothes and utensils reveal the hybridity of Mexican culture of the eighteenth century in their mix of European, Asian, and Mexican material culture. This example shows the casta family in a Rococo trompe l'oeil painted frame atop a low pedestal base. The label identifying the racial mixtures of the family is written on the base.

--Donna Pierce, 2015

<https://denverartmuseum.org/object/2013.333>

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## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

As the title suggests *PERTENECER* — Spanish for “to belong” — this exhibition presents artworks by nine artists that explore the possibilities and meanings of belonging. The diverse experiences of belonging are interpreted by these artists in vastly different ways through drawing, painting, printmaking, video, sculpture, and photography. Central to this exhibition are important works from the museum’s permanent collection, a portfolio of prints about long-standing Hispanic communities in New Mexico and a mural sized painting by Denver artist Tony Ortega depicting a street scene from the city’s North end. These artworks depict the artists’ experiences of belonging to places that are shaped by Hispanic communities that have lived in the areas for centuries and decades. Other artists explore what it means to immigrate to a place; expressing both the hope that a new home presents and the courage that it takes to make the journey across borders.

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## RELATED EVENTS

**Interested visitors should also look out for other exhibitions related to *Pertenecer*:**

### **Meet the Artist**

Tuesday 11/26 from 10am - 5pm

Friday 11/29 from 10am - 5pm

Saturday 11/30 from 10am - 2pm

Visit the Fine Arts Center Museum - FREE with CC ID

Over the Fall Break, New York based artists Maria de Los Angeles and Ryan Bonilla will be creating a mural sized installation for the new exhibition *Pertenecer: Chicanx Artists on Belonging*. The public is invited to watch this creation on Tuesday 11/26 and Friday 11/29, 10am -5pm. Meet the artist on Saturday, 12/30, 10am - 2pm.

## **Visibility and Belonging: Chicanx Art in Context**

In the UnBlocked Gallery Space

On view until March 15, 2020

From the late 1960s to the present, Chicanx muralists have transformed the landscapes of Colorado celebrating diversity and history while also offering new visions of a shared future. Emanuel Martinez, the artist of the 1986 mural *Arte Mestiza* in the FAC parking lot, uses his artistic expression to strengthen community and offer his own visions of a shared future. Mellon Museum scholar and Southwest studies faculty Nancy Ríos developed this research project and overall presentation following the goals of Emanuel Martinez in furthering and strengthening community within Colorado Springs.