

This essay accompanies the exhibition *Absence/Presence: Latinx and Latin American Artists in Dialogue*, organized and presented by ANOTHER SPACE, June 10–October 9, 2021, guest curated by Cecilia Fajardo-Hill.

Absence/Presence: Latinx and Latin American Artists in Dialogue

Cecilia Fajardo-Hill

I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definition of light and dark and gives them new meanings.¹

– Gloria Anzaldúa

Absence/Presence fosters a dialogue among thirty-seven Latinx and Latin American artists on the defining, but often inconspicuous, imposed domains of absence and presence that coexist both in society and the art world. On the one hand, absence is seldom wanted, and instead is perpetuated by institutionalized racism, patriarchalism, state violence, and classism. On the other, presence is often mediated and conditioned so that visibility and agency are both diluted and distorted. The artists included in *Absence/Presence* challenge the prescribed rules of visibility and invisibility, agency and disenfranchisement imposed by the status quo to create dynamics of tension, interrogation, and affirmation. Latinx and Latin American artists have generally been separated and treated in isolation from each other and thus are invisible from one another or only visible in distorted ways. Nevertheless, we share not only a colonial legacy and a history of violence, but also a sophisticated and ongoing legacy of political imagination and artistic experimentality.

This exhibition is held in New York, and this essay is written in the United States; these conditions, then, naturally shape a perspective of the Latinx and Latin America through the lens of the contingent present in this country. It is therefore necessary to specify the general critical framework for bringing together this group of artists. We, Latinx and Latin Americans, share the umbrella term/root “Latin.” In Latin America, the term signals citizenship associated with Latin American countries; whereas in the United States, Latina/o and Latinx suggest an ethnicity based on Latin American ancestry. In both cases, the terms Latina/o and Latin American are colonized markers and have been used to homogenize an enormously diverse region/people in single, manageable categories that are overdetermined, fixed, and classificatory. “Latin” is a blanket term that has never been able to encompass the plurality and specificities of the region; and further, this construct has been used to make uniform and segregate by pigeonholing us into fixed and colonial categories. The term “Latin” points to an epistemological

and existential conundrum that is a reflection of our shared colonial legacy and histories of violence, but it also entails profound connection, affinities, and the potentiality for collaboration and empathy. Among the most substantial colonial legacies we have inherited are marginalization—from society, the world’s (art) scene, financial systems and realities, etc.—and separation. The way the Latinx and Latin American have been kept separate from each other, and even set against each other,² is counterproductive and a continued legacy of colonialism by which we circumscribe a territory or shape an identity in relation or opposition to another. Further, the separation of the non-Spanish-speaking³ countries in the Caribbean from the hemispheric notion of Latinx and Latin America is unjustified and has been called into question by authors such as Arlene Dávila. There are, however, opportunities in this situation, as we can continue to resignify and activate the “Latin” as a laboratory for decolonization, futurity, dialogue, and the embodiment of imagination, freedom, and the self.

While the term Latin American has thus far withstood transformation, the recent (though still-disputed) adoption of the term Latinx, instead of the binary Latina/Latino, allows for inclusivity, not only of gender, but also of race, ethnicity, and class, as well as a much-needed intersectionality. Adriana Zavala states: “To me, the X in LatinX is about addressing structured absence. But it also marks presence. It says I am here and I will be counted. The X also insists on queering structures of knowledge in order to make this presence visible.”⁴ Ed Morales proposes performing a mixed-race, de-centered Latinx identity as a space of solidarity and collectivity that asserts racial difference,⁵ thus bonding with other racial minorities such as African Americans.⁶

It may seem that Latin America, which is conceived as a homogeneous identity, could not be included in this dialogical space of solidarity. Contrary to this view, Latin America consists of twenty separate countries, which are each unique and diverse, and many within their home countries experience their own share of violence, colonialism, racism, patriarchalism, and hardship. We can no more homogenize the ideas of Latinx and Latinx art than we can Latin America⁷ and Latin American art. Latinx artists, with their diverse backgrounds, have dual, triple, or likely more ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds stemming from Latin America, while still facing marginalization, stereotyping, and economic inequality in the United States. In Latin America, with its pervasive and widespread instability, as well as its related political, social, and economic crises, there is a continued experience of uncertainty, violence, social displacement, and exile; this in turn feeds into migration and leads to the creation of more Latinx experiences and identities in the United States. The Latinx as well as the

Latin American are ongoing projects with a shared intent of resistance to the status quo, within and without the boundaries and constraints of the “Latin” label.

This exhibition, far from homogenizing thirty-seven artists as disparate as Laura Aguilar and Josely Carvalho, or Guadalupe Maravilla and Manuel Antonio Pichillá, takes a dialogical approach and includes multiple voices, where each artist stands individually and as part of a collectivity. This show acknowledges as a general framework the continued coloniality of the present, though not as the inescapable status quo, but as an ongoing laboratory for artists to resist, shape, and imagine the self, the present, and the future. Three themes intersect in the exhibition: affectivity, justice, and self/being within the dialectical umbrella of absence and presence.

Absence is embodied as acts of denunciation of problems, including: incarceration, racism, migration, family separation, lynching, state violence, stereotyping, classism, and gender and sexual oppression. Paradoxically, society’s mechanisms of invisibilization constitute the formation of presence through absence as the very negation of the humanity, freedom, and the potentiality of individuals and their cultural expressions. In contrast, the presence embodied by the artists is materialized through the poetics and politics of pleasure, healing, questioning, affirmation, affectivity, survival, and beauty, thus countering imposed absence. Further, indigeneity is the symbolic and cultural thread that embodies this presence across the overarching framework of the exhibition. Artists that embed their work in the past or present of the Indigenous create a sort of reflective mirror of both past loss and an emerging futurity, which may be both decolonial and healing. For example, Sandy Rodriguez’s *Double portrait with nonochton for Mariee and Yazmín*, 2019, depicts an ancestral maternal figure singing to a baby in a cot and is painted in the style of a Pre-Hispanic codex on handmade amate paper. On her chest is a small, detailed drawing of real-life mother Yazmín leaning against her baby, Mariee, on the child’s deathbed. On the right side of the drawing is a nonochton, a medicinal plant. Although this work is about the tragic death of Mariee in the hands of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after her separation from her mother at the border, it is also about healing and the survival and continuity of the Indigenous symbolized by the codex-inspired mother figure and the plant. As Maylei Blackwell writes: “portraying Indigenous people as being only of the past is part of a genocidal logic that fixes Indigenous people in a temporal frame of extinction and disappearance.”⁸

Against the logic of this violence, Rodriguez’s work, as well as works by Martine Gutierrez, Claudia Peña Salinas, Patricia Valencia, and Manuel Antonio Pichillá, assert the Indigenous as living and powerful. Focusing on embodiment, Gutierrez, a

transwoman of Indigenous descent, created *Neo-Indeo, Legendary Catchiquel*, 2018, as part of the series *Indigenous Woman*. This work defies the racism of both the art world and the fashion industry by celebrating her Maya heritage and asserts a contemporary, decolonial self. The artist, posing larger than life as a legendary Catchiquel woman, counters marginalization, not only through her powerful and beautiful presence, but with her defiant gaze which looks back and down on us. *B`EEY camino* (path), 2019, by Pichillá, a contemporary Maya Tz'utujil artist from San Pedro de la Laguna in Guatemala, is a textile made by the artist that refers to the day of the Maya calendar that denotes the search for light in the paths of life. It has the form of a band used by women to sustain their corte—or traditional skirt—though Pichillá has devised a design of his own, conceiving the textile as a complex Möbius strip, which may be manipulated and transformed. The *Huari Hat*, 700–1000, by an unidentified Pre-Columbian artist from Huari, Peru, is included in the exhibition to represent an embodied textile tradition—one that hinges on functionality and is not solely an art object per the Western definition of art—and is made with a pattern of extraordinarily intricate, abstract forms; it stands in dialogue with Pichillá's textile as well as with the Maya textiles that Marine Gutierrez wears in her portraits.

Turning to architecture, in *Tepantitla Glyph VIX* Peña Salinas depicts motifs from an ancient Pre-Columbian mural in Teotihuacan called *Tepantitla* that portrays the mythical paradise of the Aztec goddess of terrestrial waters, Chalchiuhtlicue, and Tlaloc, the god of rain. Peña Salinas thus highlights the presence of the feminine and symbolically by embodying the ancient myth in the present. Working with Emmett Walsh and shooting with Super 8, Patricia Valencia made *Riviera Maya*, documenting the Pre-Columbian archaeological site of Tulum along with the film's titular Riviera Maya, a five-star resort near Cancun, to reveal the tensions of the forced coexistence of the Pre-Columbian past and the present, as well as the legacy of colonialism. What these works have in common is that they establish dialogues with and embody forms of the Indigenous in the present, thus reclaiming and asserting our Indigenous heritage in the contemporary and enacting decolonialization in art.

The theme of affectivity encompasses embodiment, the erotic, and the notion of care in the tracing and honoring histories of injustice and disappearance. In order to contextualize the notion of affectivity in *Absence/Presence*, I will refer to José Esteban Muñoz's idea of "feeling Brown," a term that is not an identity, per se, but which functions as a coalition term "that unites cultural and political activists across different national, racial, class, and gender divides." For Esteban Muñoz, what "unites and consolidates oppositional groups"—in feeling Brown—"is not simply the fact of identity but the way in which they perform affect, especially in relation to an official

'national affect' that is aligned with a hegemonic class."⁹ Even though Esteban Muñoz is referring specifically to Latinx and queer people, the notion of affectivity may be engaged in thinking of disobedient forms of desire and affection in the works of both Latinx and Latin American artists. The significance of Muñoz's conception of feeling Brown is that it describes a form of political doing and becoming—whether queer or not—when an individual performs a non-hegemonic, non-normative, and unregulated form of affect. This Brown affectivity is experienced by identifying with other Brown and Black bodies, with the bodies of women, queer, trans, and other individuals that diverge from, or have been victims of, the status quo. For example, Dominique Duroseau's *Working Orchestra Rhythmed* (Black on Black on Black with Black series), 2020, is a large work made by both sewing and gluing together pieces of black clothing made with, among other things, faux cashmere, faux leather, cotton jersey, and a vintage dress to create a rich surface suggesting the coexistence and togetherness of Black bodies, both fragmented because of systemic violence and surviving as sensual embodiments of Blackness. It is the performative act of piecing together fragments of black/Black clothes/bodies to create a disobedient, unclassifiable, and beautiful surface that suggests the healing power of affectivity. Delilah Montoya's *[A] part*, 2019, overlays in large letters and red ink the word "a part," over the black-and-white photographic image taken from the newspaper of a mother holding and kissing her small son during their reunion after their forced separation while migrating. The appropriation of the newspaper image and the use of text function as both a denunciation and a celebration of the Brown affect.

Expressions of affectivity relating to intimacy and the erotic are found in Magali Lara's *Windows* series from 1977 that explores intimacy, desire, and femininity in the liminal space between the private and the public; in Lygia Pape's eschatological, feminine *Objeto de sedução* (Object of Seduction), 1976; in Francisco Toledo's manipulated polaroid of his penis as *Self-Portrait*, 1995; as well as in William Cordova's *Thunder, Lightning (4- J. Trudell)*, 2007, an organic abstract composition made with semen that pays intimate homage to the Native American author, poet, actor, musician, and political activist J. Trudell. Hudinilson Jr.'s and Claudio Perna's 1970s Xeroxes of their own bodies and Miguel Angel Rojas's homoerotic voyeurism in *Fisgón*, c. 1979/78, made in the context of 1970s homophobia, are also affirmative forms of affectivity.

María José Arjona's blurred photographs of embraces, *Une* (or "one" as a gender-fluid term), 2010, stem from her performance *Filmation*, which aimed to affirm the body when facing critical situations. For this performance, the artist filled the space with inflatable "cushions," which prevent things from moving within packages. The public had to penetrate the space through the filled cushions, and the rationale behind the

work's symbolism is that the only thing that separates our bodies is air. When Arjona found a member of the public in the space, she would place a cushion between herself and the person and pierce it, so once the air was released, she was able to embrace them. These images embody a broad notion of affectivity that blur the space that separates and divides individuals in an affirmative act of unity and dissolution of differences. Carvalho's two blown-glass vessels contain contrasting smells: affection and anoxia. While affection embodies, in the artist's words, "an affirmation of being," anoxia, "a bacterial odor used as a weapon of war and cause of dyspnea," embodies a lack of oxygen and therefore, loss of life, reminding us of the excessive use of force by state police against civilians during recent social unrest, both in the U.S. and the rest of the world.

Guadalupe Maravilla's *Disease Thrower #10*, 2021, one of a series of free-standing sculptures functioning as headdresses, therapeutic instruments, and shrines, bridges the themes of affectivity and justice. This piece is made by assembling materials and objects—an obsidian disk, a basket, spinning tops, a molecular model, dried gourds, loofahs—collected across the areas in Central America and Mexico that the artist traveled through while migrating as a child from El Salvador to the United States. These altar-like sculptures are crowned by specially made gongs, to be activated by the artist and by healers and collaborators in participatory performances. The materials relate to both his personal as well as collective migration struggles, as well as to disease and healing. Moreover, according to Maravilla, a survivor of colon cancer, present and past genetic trauma leading to disease may be inherited over generations. He started making the Disease Throwers after recovering from cancer. While receiving radiation, the artist discovered sound therapy, which became central to his transdisciplinary practice. The activation of these sculptures in collective sonic events using gongs generates healing, vibrational sounds, bridging times and cultures from the Pre-Columbian era to the present. *Spirit Trap*, 1974, by Marcos Dimas, is an assemblage functioning as a sort of dream catcher based on Afro-Taíno aesthetic and spiritual practices. By paying homage to root cultures in Puerto Rico, this piece also functions as a healing sculpture countering the history of colonization as it relates to the island's past and present.

Works in the justice section tackle similar issues of trauma, loss, and violence stemming from the displacement and migration that Maravilla addresses in his work. Some works directly engage U.S. and state interventionism. Regina Galindo, in *Carguen con sus Muertos* (Carry Your Dead), 2018, confronts viewers with the broader violence perpetuated by the migratory crisis, one of the direct consequences of U.S. interventionism, as well as the mistreatment of migrants by U.S. border enforcement

and policies. Similarly, Antonio Manuel, *Noticias*, 1977, relates to the brutal violence during the 1964–85 dictatorship in Brazil, which was established with the support of the U.S. State Department. Alicia Grullón's *Breaking News*, 2019, is a video performance where the artist adopts the name of Jaklin Caal Maquin, the four-year-old Guatemalan girl who died in a U.S. migrant detention center in 2018, in order to propose a U.N. mission under the leadership of Indigenous people to address the border crisis and offer a political alternative to bring about the end of the current rights abuses. Comparable to Grullón's work is *Que Bonita Bandera es Lolita Lebrón*, c. 1973, by Marcos Dimas, which pays homage to Lolita Lebrón, who advocated for Puerto Rican independence after she experienced the poor labor conditions in the garment industry in New York in the 1940s.

Some artists in *Absence/Presence* explore state and societal violence. Carolina Caycedo in her collective performance *Beyond Control/Más allá del control*, ongoing since 2013, embodies an analogy between the control of the social body in society and the control over water. Ken Gonzales-Day's series *Searching for California's Hang Trees*, begun in 2002, grew out of his research into the hidden and overlooked history of lynching in California. All the trees in the series were photographed in the cities and counties where lynchings took place and stand as "silent witnesses" to the horrific violence. As the artist writes, beyond being artworks, "the resulting series of photographs was created to help me cope with the history of racial hatred that had taken place in the California landscape. It was an invisible history." Maria Adela Díaz, in *STATUS QUO*, 2017, addresses endemic violence against women in Latin America, while Coco Fusco, in *A Censured Prescription*, 2020, calls attention to the lack of access to information and treatment for the general public during COVID-19.

Structural inequalities are endemic for Latinx migrants. As Patricia Zavella explains, "day laborers, gardeners, or landscape workers . . . often face wage theft, few benefits, and violence in their worksites," and "the poor are often marginalized economically, socially excluded, and subject to blaming discourses."¹⁰ The works of William Camargo, Christina Fernandez, Jay Linn Gomez, Narsiso Martinez, and Patrick Martinez reference the invisibility, marginalization, and inequality experienced by farmers, laborers, and domestic workers. Employing the overarching theme of justice, Patrick Martinez calls attention to inequality with his neon piece *equality*, 2016, where the phrase "all men are created equal" is lit and the word "equal" deliberately left off.

Farming and domestic work have been at the center of exploitation and poor working conditions for migrants, as well as marginalization based on classism. *Untitled Farmworker*, 1989, by Christina Fernandez, the daughter of Chicana activist parents,

brings together more than fifty-two manually typed index cards listing the names, injuries, and deaths related to farm workers' exposure to pesticides, poor working conditions, and police abuse. Each of these cards has been "planted" in soil and is held in place by the hand of the artist's brother over a light blue background, forming a monumental landscape of human rights abuse, while her labor of care and remembrance functions simultaneously as an act of healing. Narsiso Martinez makes portraits of farm workers on discarded produce boxes collected from grocery stores. While paying homage to the farm workers, Martinez calls attention to the difficult conditions, exacerbated by the COVID pandemic that these workers, often undocumented, have to face. William Camargo, in *Y'all Forget Who Worked Here?*, 2020, addresses the systematic erasure of the contributions and presence of Brown people, mostly Mexican, Mexican American, and Native American women who worked in the Anaheim Sunkist Packinghouse before this area was gentrified to cater to the Disneyland industry. Finally, Jay Linn Gomez's Magazines series is informed by their experience as a live-in nanny in a Beverly Hills home. The series references the invisible and disposable condition of domestic workers, gardeners, and pool cleaners despite their indispensable role in maintaining the owners' homes in working order. In *Self-Portrait*, 2013, the artist herself is represented carrying two babies, marking simultaneously presence and absence, as it is impossible to distinguish their features and because their faded silhouette vanishes into the background.

As with the two earlier themes, affectivity and justice, self/being is inevitably intertwined with the overarching ideas and experiences discussed earlier in sharing the legacy of colonialism and invisibility, as well as the potentiality of healing, creation, and futurity. Among the most harmful colonial legacies is the promotion of assimilation—sometimes by force—and the "whitening" of other cultures, such as Latinx—and particularly Indigenous—and more broadly of people perceived as "low class." Because of the belief that cultures other than the mainstream are of lesser value, it is supposed that people of color would want to assimilate. Nevertheless, there is a long history of the opposite, of not only cherishing, but continuing to build cultural identities that embody and embrace difference.¹¹ As Anzaldúa writes, "each of us must know our Indian lineage, our afro-mestizaje, our history of resistance."¹² José Esteban Muñoz uses the term identities-in-difference to describe emergent identities constructed by disidentifying "with the mass public and instead, through this disidentification, contribut[ing] to the function of a counterpublic sphere."¹³ For Esteban Muñoz, disidentification—as opposed to identification and counteridentification—is the third mode for dealing with dominant ideology and transforming a cultural logic from within.¹⁴ Laura Aguilar, Dominique Duroseau, Delilah Montoya, Sophie Rivera, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz, and Patssi Valdez, to mention a few

of the artists in *Absence/Presence*, are among those who, instead of identifying with the white ideal, negotiate “strategies of resistance within the flux of discourse and power.”¹⁵ These artists pursue notions of resilience, resistance, the creation of self, and the construction of their own identities and cultures.

A work that may be thought of as a paradigm for the theme of self/being is *Colored China Rags I*, 2012, by the Afro-Cuban American artist Juana Valdes. The work is comprised of delicate sculptures made of porcelain bone china, a material characterized by its whiteness and translucency. Instead of maintaining the whiteness, Valdez inserts pigment into the clay to allude to skin colors that range from pale to dark brown. Importantly, the eight sculptures in *Colored China Rags I* are arranged in a horizontal line, deconstructing any hierarchical positioning usually privileging whiteness. These rags stand both for skin and for the body and are symbolic representations of the complex history of race culture in the context of migration and displacement.

The *Siluetas* (Silhouette) series, begun in 1973, by Ana Mendieta, who lived in exile from her native Cuba from the age of thirteen, explores the archetype of the feminine and the artist’s need for rootedness, while also representing her interest in Afro-Caribbean spirituality. The *Siluetas* were ephemeral, site-specific works—including the silhouette made with gunpowder documented in *Absence/Presence*—which not only embodied her provisional, though profound connection with land, but also the continuation of Pre-Columbian and Afro-Cuban spiritual traditions in the present. Similarly to Mendieta, Laura Aguilar engaged the California desert landscape with her nude body as a way of letting her queer femininity commune with a sense of place, while celebrating her large, Brown body as a working-class Chicana woman. With this series she also defied canonical notions of beauty, on the basis of which she and other Brown women have been excluded from art history. In contrast to Aguilar, Joiri Minaya, in her performance *Containers*, 2017, counters stereotypes of exoticism and constructions of the feminine associated with tropical nature. Wearing bodysuits with prints that mimic tropical nature, she interacts with the landscape and performs sculptural poses from art history while her voice challenges the viewers’ prejudiced gaze.

An overriding issue for Latinx people and culture has been the racist and classist stereotypes of unsophistication that make Latinx invisible in society. Countering such notions, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz’s video *Marché Salomon*, 2015, is a celebration of youth and Haitian Afro-Caribbean syncretic culture, featuring two young workers at a Port-au-Prince open-air market who are having a conversation about animism in objects. Dominique Duroseau, in a black-and-white photograph from her series

Mammy Was Here, latest, 2016, denounces racism and misogyny. Sitting sideways, Duroseau covers her face with a black-and-white gingham fabric while holding in her hand a black, African mask, which stands as a surrogate for her head. In Haiti, the gingham apron or uniform characterizes the “Black Mammy.” As the artist explains, the gingham is only black-and-white when mourning the death of a parent or the lynching of Black people. By wearing the black-and-white checked pattern while refusing to show her face, the artist is decrying the long history of racism and violence against the Black body, while also resisting objectification and affirming the survival of African people and culture in the present.

Patssi Valdez directly counters tropes of the unrefined Chicana by creating portraits of her Chicana friends, after they have applied make-up and dressed up, presenting them as larger than life, defiant, and beautiful. *Chicana Clones*, from the mid-1980s, aims at capturing, in the words of the artist, “the youth culture and these very fashion-conscious Chicanas that I was around; it was really important to me that this group of stylish trendsetters and their energy be documented.” Similarly, Delilah Montoya’s series *The New Warriors*, including *Jackie*, 2006, presents powerful portraits of women boxers that defy stereotypes of Latinx women as being domestic and subjugated. Sophie Rivera, who is best known for her Newyorican portraits from the 1970s that challenge stereotypes and celebrate the humanity and singularity of the sitters, also photographed Latina/o children in New York City playgrounds and printed the images in large formats. *Double Exposure*, 1995, captures frontal portraits of girls in playgrounds using multiple exposures. The end result of these photographs is that the image multiplies, making the children impossible to pigeonhole while evoking a sense of the infinite possibilities of self and future.

In *Absence/Presence* Latinx and Latin American artists interrogate and expand the term “Latin,” while revealing their common ground relating to history, culture, and symbolic values. Above all, they challenge the power of the hegemony to impose subalternity and regimes of invisibility and mediated visibility. Within the framework of the exhibition’s intersecting themes—affectivity, justice, and self/being—the represented artists denounce the racism, classism, violence, and gender constraints of the colonialist status quo while at the same time giving agency through their art to the decolonized imagination and multiple subjective positions, as well as performing affectivity and open-ended, emerging identities-in-difference. The Indigenous in the show symbolizes the non-linear continuity from the past to the present, and with this the possibility of connecting and reclaiming a sense of decolonial belonging that is cultural, personal, and symbolic—a belonging that is decolonially utopian, not in the sense of the imagined impossible, but as the seemingly impossible possible: the

resilience, survival, and flourishing of futures and political imagination in difference, both in life and in art. The same may be said of Africa and Blackness, as seen in the work of Duroseau.

Ultimately, the artists in *Absence/Presence* point to the need and fruitful potentiality for a hemispheric, intercultural dialogue that promotes both solidarity and creative exchange. The negative politics of absence and presence may thus be reversed, through an agency that is no longer mediated, and instead is embodied in justice, affectivity, and disidentification. To return to Gloria Anzaldúa, with whose words I opened this essay: “I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.”¹⁶

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NOTES

¹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza=La Frontera*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 103.

² See Arlene Dávila, “Making Latinx Art,” *Latinx Art: Artists, Markets, and Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020), 1–21, where the author pits Latin American artists against Latinx artists, highlighting Latin Americans as having “national privileges” and their own established “regimes of value” and thus being at the root of the marginalization of Latinx artists in the United States. This argument misses the point that it is the U.S., with its institutionalized systemic racism, that marginalizes Latinx people and artists. Dávila also underplays the constant crisis and precariousness of Latin America and the Latin American art system, as well as the contingency of the term Latin American. Ultimately, the status quo has nothing to do with the artists themselves, but with structures of power.

³ The artificial separation of much of the Caribbean from the rest of the hemisphere as a result of the hierarchical positioning of Spain and Portugal in the history of the colonialism in the Americas is objectionable, and, therefore, the term “Hispanic” is no longer a viable denomination for the Latinx.

⁴ Adriana Zavala, quoted in Dávila, “Making Latinx Art,” 6.

⁵ Morales's understanding of racial difference is counter to the marketable, stereotypical, and institutionalized notion of melting pot that official multiculturalism promoted in the 1980s and 1990s.

⁶ Ed Morales, *Latinx: The New Force in American Politics and Culture* (London and New York: Verso, 2018).

⁷ Morales argues that the Latin American project was based on the advancement in Mexico of the mestizaje ideal of the cosmic race put forward by José Vasconcelos in 1925. Morales sees this project of "race erasure" as counter to the needed assertion of cultural difference. To define the cosmic race as the Latin American project is reductive, as Latin America is not Mexico, and several other individual models in the continent have been brought forward in the twentieth century. Further, as the Latinx is becoming a wider ranging concept given the constant flux of a diverse migration, Latin America as an idea needs to continue to be questioned, because defining Latin America as homogeneous and the Latinx as diverse is a problematic contradiction. Gloria Anzaldúa elaborates, instead, on an operational notion of mestizaje, by moving away from institutional or state-sponsored mestizaje and promoting a notion of decolonial mestizaje that is empowering for resisting racial hierarchies (particularly in the U.S.) and recovering and embodying forms of ancestral Indigenous knowledge.

⁸ Maylei Blackwell, "Indigeneity" in *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2017).

⁹ José Esteban Muñoz, "Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho's 'The Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs)'" (abstract), *Theatre Journal* 52, no. 1 (2000): 67–79.

¹⁰ Zavella, "Poverty," in *Keywords for Latina/o Studies*.

¹¹ Maylei Blackwell writes in this regard: "there is a growing recognition of how even when Indigenous communities are deterritorialized, they retain their cosmovisions, civic and political structures, and relationships to their ancestral homelands." Blackwell, "Indigeneity," in *Keywords for Latina/o Studies*.

¹² Anzaldúa, *Bordelands*, 108.

¹³ José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics: Cultural Studies of the Americas*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 103.