



Smithsonian Institution

Archives of American Art

Mel Casas papers: Clippings, 1967-1971

Extracted on Mar-28-2024 08:50:12

The Smithsonian Institution thanks all digital volunteers that transcribed and reviewed this material. Your work enriches Smithsonian collections, making them available to anyone with an interest in using them.

The Smithsonian Institution (the "Smithsonian") provides the content on this website (transcription.si.edu), other Smithsonian websites, and third-party sites on which it maintains a presence ("SI Websites") in support of its mission for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." The Smithsonian invites visitors to use its online content for personal, educational and other non-commercial purposes. By using this website, you accept and agree to abide by the [following terms](#).

- If sharing the material in personal and educational contexts, please cite the Archives of American Art as source of the content and the project title as provided at the top of the document. Include the accession number or collection name; when possible, link to the Archives of American Art website.
- If you wish to use this material in a for-profit publication, exhibition, or online project, please contact Archives of American Art or transcribe@si.edu

For more information on this project and related material, contact the Archives of American Art. [See this project](#) and other collections in the Smithsonian Transcription Center.

[[image 1]]

Michael Lopez - Ceramic

Collection the artist

[[image 2]]

Jose Clemente Orozco - Departure of Quetzalcoatl Dartmouth College

[[image 3]]

Pedro Huizar

Rose Window of the Mission San Jose

San Antonio, Texas

[[page 4 text below the images]]

of pine were especially prepared with a gesso ground and painted with tempera colors. Most of the artisans are anonymous although a few are identifiable by name during the early decades of the 19th century. Some of the painters known are Jose Aragon of Chamisal (heart of the Sangre de Cristo Range) working in the 1820's and '30's and, Jose Rafael Aragon (no relation) of Cordova, active between 1829 and 1855. Of the late 19th century sculptors, Juan Ramon Velazquez (1865-99) is prominent.

With time, the artisans simplified the forms in their works until these became the prototypes for a well-defined folk tradition in New Mexico. This was further systematized into an even more limited number of formal possibilities by the 20th century santeros who no longer make polychromed pieces, although the sculptured parts are still made and assembled in the old way. Some of the artists who have worked in this tradition are Patrocino Barela (1908-64), George Lopez (b. 1900), and Joe Mondragon (b. 1931).

The first phase of the Mexican-American tradition spans the period of the time during which New Spain and then Republican Mexico controlled the area. American conquest definitely put an end to it although the breakdown process had already started some decades earlier under Mexican rule. It had its strongest expression in New Mexico where it was initiated and where it remained strong long after it ceased to be a viable force anywhere else.

Although Mexicans continued to come to this country throughout the second half of the 19th century, their numbers were not sufficiently large to create cultural changes in the areas where they settled. The change came with the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Thousands began to emigrate to the States after this date and continued to do so throughout the 1920's and '30's. The situation changed somewhat after this period as conditions in Mexico became more stabilized.

The second phase of the Mexican-American art is dominated by artists actually born in Mexico. This includes all of the major Mexican muralists, Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949), Diego Rivera (1886-1957), David Alfaro Siqueiros (b. 1898), and Rufino Tamayo (b. 1899). Although these men never became American citizens they lived and worked in this country for many years. Orozco first came to the United States in 1917 and stayed for several years. He returned to Mexico in the early '20's but was back in this country by 1926. This time he stayed for eight years. Some of his major US works are the murals in Pomona College, California, in 1930 and Dartmouth College, New Hampshire in 1932-34. Tamayo arrived in this country in 1926 and lived off and on in New York for the next 20 years. He developed the style of richly colored abstract



painting which was to bring him international acclaim and eventual recognition in his own country. His Smith College mural (1943) is an important
[[end of page 4]]

[[top of page 5]]

[[image 4]]

Porfirio Salinas - Bluebonnets Humble Oil & Refining Company

[[image 5]]

Edward Chavez - New Mexico Landscape Kronenberg Collection

[[page 5 text below images]]

work of this period. He has since painted others in Houston, Texas, at the Bank of the Southwest Building (1955-56) and one other (1953) now in the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts. The other two muralists came to this country only to fulfill specific mural commissions. Siqueiros painted outdoor frescoes at the Chouinard School of Art and The Plaza Art Center, both in Los Angeles (1930-31); and in San Francisco, Rivera painted at The Stock Exchange Luncheon Club, the California School of Fine Arts, and The San Francisco Junior College (1930-31 and 1940), at the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts (1932-33), and at Radio City in New York (1934).

The '20's and '30's then were dominated by the muralists whose influence on American artists of this period (beyond their obvious impact on the short-lived PWAP-sponsored muralists) has not been properly assessed, particularly in regard to the work of Jackson Pollock and other Abstract Expressionists of the '40's.

The next generation of Mexican-American artists bridges both cultures. Some are self-taught, like Octavio Medellin (b. 1907), Chelo Gonzalez Amezcua (b. 1903), and Porfirio Salinas (b. 1912). Others, like Antonio Garcia (b. 1901) and Margaret Herrera-Chavez (b. 1912) have received most of their formal art training in the United States. Still, close ties with Mexico have been retained (all, except Salinas and Herrera-Chavez, were born in Mexico). Medellin has returned to his native country on several occasions to work and study, and Garcia, to travel. Every year since 1945 Garcia has conducted a painting "workshop" for American and Mexican students in that country. Miss Gonzalez and Mrs. Herrera-Chavez acknowledge Mexican themes in their works as inspirational points of departure. Salinas, better known for his landscapes, likes to paint bullfight scenes and counts among his friends the best painters of this genre in Mexico and Spain.

Octavio Medellin's works in wood or stone, usually based on representations of a figure or animal, are strong and monumental regardless of their size. His subjects are depicted in broad, firm strokes. Surface textures and other details are subordinated to the total sculptural statement. He has a high regard for the native and primitive crafts of Mexico, particularly those of Veracruz and Yucatan. The functional art of the Indians and the integral part it plays in their daily lives have influenced his work. Medellin has taught in several Texas colleges and universities and, since 1966, has run his own school of sculpture in Dallas.

Porfirio Salinas has chosen a far more particularized path in his devotion to recording the landscapes of the Southwest with special reference to

the environs of San Antonio. It is this immediate recognition and emotional attachment to the land that Texans feel that have brought him such acclaim in his home state. One of his earliest admirers was Lyndon Johnson, who began to buy his works in the '40's and

Mel Casas papers: Clippings, 1967-1971
Transcribed and Reviewed by Digital Volunteers
Extracted Mar-28-2024 08:50:12



Smithsonian Institution

Archives of American Art

The mission of the Smithsonian is the increase and diffusion of knowledge - shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex, consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park, and nine research facilities. Become an active part of our mission through the Transcription Center. Together, we are discovering secrets hidden deep inside our collections that illuminate our history and our world.

Join us!

The Transcription Center: <https://transcription.si.edu>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianTranscriptionCenter>

On Twitter: [@TranscribeSI](https://twitter.com/TranscribeSI)

Connect with the Smithsonian

Smithsonian Institution: www.si.edu

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Smithsonian>

On Twitter: [@smithsonian](https://twitter.com/smithsonian)