

## RAZA ART & MEDIA COLLECTIVE: A LATINO ART GROUP IN THE MIDWESTERN UNITED STATES

Olga U. Herrera

*Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame, Indiana*

Undoubtedly, the late 1960s and early 1970s was a period of increased activity for Latin American and Latino artists in the United States. In the Midwest, in particular, the Contemporary Mural Movement initiated in Chicago in the spring of 1967 soon found adept followers in artists such as Mario Castillo,<sup>1</sup> Ray Patlán, José Bermúdez, Mario Galán, Héctor Rosario, José Narezo, David Torrez, Oscar Martínez, and José Mojica, to name just a few, who painted community-based murals in cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Lansing as part of a new public art movement. Cultural centers, artists' groups, and a few art journals appeared, providing the grounds for future art activity and development in the region.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, early art collectives emanated from different areas in the Midwest, such as Movimiento Artístico Chicano (MARCH) in Indiana, in 1972;<sup>3</sup> the Association of the Latino Brotherhood of Artists (ALBA) in Illinois, in 1973;<sup>4</sup> and Raza Art & Media Collective (RAM Collective) in Michigan, in 1974, among others.

This unprecedented artistic activity took place within a context of a historical period of upheaval and discontent characterized by protest, community organizing, and activism as a result of a series of social and political movements that sought to challenge and change the structure of U.S. society. The Civil Rights Movement, the Feminist Movement, the Chicano Movement, the Anti-War Movement, and the Student Movement, among others, brought national issues of poverty, urban crisis, repression, discrimination, racial and ethnic tension, democracy, peace, and economic inequity to the forefront. In murals and in art groups, these artists found the means through which they could connect art with pressing social issues by visually expressing and sharing collective experiences, by reclaiming their cultural heritage, and by fighting for their rights from the fringes of a national art scene.

But despite this great art activity, a strong art community, and cultural and art exchanges with other artists and institutions in both the United States and the Americas, Latino and Latin American art in the Midwest<sup>5</sup> has been severely understudied and under-documented.<sup>6</sup> A few studies and publications focusing on the artistic production of Midwest individual artists and the mural movement exist, as do a few that provide a brief

overview of activity in the decades between 1940 and 1980. Just to mention some, mural production of the 1970s has been researched and documented by Víctor A. Sorell.<sup>7</sup> Also, George Vargas, in his dissertation "Contemporary Latino Art in Michigan, the Midwest, and the Southwest,"<sup>8</sup> dedicated two chapters to Latino art in Michigan, one looking at the art of the period between 1940 and 1960; the other looking at the development of contemporary art in the 1970s. Likewise, the mural work of Diego Rivera in Detroit received renewed attention in 1986 with the retrospective and related public programs and publications organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts in commemoration of the centenary of his birth.<sup>9</sup> Karen Mary Davalos has studied exhibition practices, looking in particular at the model of Chicago's National Museum of Mexican Art, formerly the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, since the mid-1980s there has been an increase in artists' publications, museum catalogues, and a few monographs.

The examples cited above have provided a starting point for research conducted by the University of Notre Dame U.S. Midwest Team as part of the *Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art Project* of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas. However, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the role of archival repositories, interviews with artists, and private collections in the findings of our team, and in particular the role of the Tomás Ybarra-Frausto Research Material, 1965–2004, now housed at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C. It was among his papers where I first came across some of the documents and journals that will be illustrated and discussed here.

This paper attempts to highlight some of the team's findings by tracing and reconstructing the history, activities, and connections of the Raza Art & Media Collective between 1974 and 1979 in Michigan. By examining a series of documents and articles published in its journal authored by the RAM Collective, and supplemented by recent conversations with some of its founding members, this paper seeks to provide a glimpse into the collective's multiple activities. More importantly, it also sheds light on little-known connections and exchanges of ideas, concepts, and information in the mid-1970s with other U.S.



Fig. 1 First issue of the *Raza Art & Media Collective Journal*, published on January 1, 1976.

Latino art collectives, as well as with organizations active at the time, such as Asco in East Los Angeles, Con Safo in San Antonio, and MARCH in Chicago.

RAM Collective, to use the name the group adopted in June 1977, was officially established and incorporated at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in the winter of 1974–75. Among its founders was a group of individuals with backgrounds in art, history, art history, community education, film, photography, and journalism that included Ana Luisa Cardona, Michael J. García, Jesse González, George Vargas, S. Zaneta Kosiba-Vargas, and Zaragoza Vargas. Identified documents consist of a series of articles and essays that were published in the group's *Raza Art & Media Collective Journal*, between January 1, 1976, and June 1, 1977 (fig. 1), as well as announcements and invitations to their public events.

A significant article was published in the first issue of the journal under the title “To our Audience,” in which founding members set forth their mission and objectives. According to the former, the collective sought to “give expression and visibility to the art and media of nuestra raza...[by which they meant]...the gamut of print, pictorial and broadcast enterprises which entertain,

educate and inform society”<sup>11</sup> Arguing that the tools of information and expression had long been denied to La Raza, collective members established the following goals to undo years of neglect and to provide remedy:

1. To organize, create, and utilize various artistic/media resources, both public and private, for the enrichment, education, and enlightenment of the Spanish-speaking population of the State of Michigan.
2. To provide for the financial, intellectual, and physical support of the unique Spanish-speaking artistic/media needs.
3. To serve as a model for the Spanish-speaking peoples in their struggle to end stereotypes in the arts and media by the projection of a Raza aesthetic.
4. To document the continuing Spanish-speaking culture through public exhibits, publications, films, archives, and other media projects.
5. To serve as an instrument for the training of those Spanish-speaking individuals and groups in their specific artistic/media pursuits.
6. To serve as facilitator, both private and public, between the general population and the Spanish-speaking when there are educational concerns regarding the arts and media.

In setting these six goals, the collective, therefore, assumed a broad scope of activities in its mission of expression and visibility, which went far beyond a formulation of aesthetics that would challenge prevalent stereotypes and would delve into much-needed areas of audience development and reception, education, funding, documentation of heritage, and cultural brokerage. As ambitious as these objectives were, more important was the wording of the text that, at a closer look, reveals inscribed meanings of negotiation, definition, repositioning, reappropriation, and recovery.

By choosing Raza [Spanish for race, in general] rather than an ethnic group origin, the collective negotiated the multiple identities and ethnicities of its members and of the Michigan population at large. Ana Luisa Cardona was Nuyorican, Zaneta Kosiba-Vargas was of Polish descent, George Vargas had been born in Texas but was reared in the Midwest, Jesse González was born in Michigan, and Zaragoza Vargas and Michael J. García were also from Texas. At the same time, the collective strategically chose to define its audience not by an ethnic background but by language. In doing so, RAM Collective sought to bridge inherent differences in the demographics of the State of Michigan. Through several waves of migration since the late 1910s, it had at that particular moment a Hispanic/Latino

population composed of peoples of Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Cuban ancestries and origins and, to a minor degree, smaller segments of peoples from Central and South America. In targeting a Spanish-speaking population, collective members re-positioned what Benedict Anderson would call a “nationally-imagined community” in Michigan linked by a common language.<sup>13</sup> Imagined as this community was, it was in reality a bilingual and bicultural one. All RAM Collective communications, journal, exhibition, and other printed announcements were issued in English, with very few exceptions in which originals had been written in Spanish.<sup>14</sup> The symbolism of this strategy had to do with the cultural re-appropriation and recovery of a language that had for years been denied in school and instruction. It also implied a strategic alignment of RAM Collective with official state organizations for purposes of visibility and access to funding<sup>15</sup> since (on July 15, 1975) the Michigan Legislature and the Governor created the Michigan Commission on Spanish Speaking Affairs and the Office of Spanish Speaking Affairs, which exists to this very day.

Put simply, “Raza,” as well as “Spanish-speaking,” are part of a long terminology list that adds to the growing debate about the inadequacy of terms for U.S. cultural, racial, and ethnic groups with origins in Latin America. However, “Raza” seemed to have occupied a more favorable position in the artists’ imaginations by implying a positive connotation of *mestizaje* as intended by José Vasconcelos, Mexico’s Secretary of Public Education under Álvaro Obregón (1920–25), and the chief ideologue of the revolutionary mural movement, and therefore, more encompassing of difference in Latino ethnic groups.<sup>16</sup> In the Midwest, “Raza” became a widely utilized term to denote a pan-Latino identity (Chicano/Latino/Boricua) that was used not only as part of the name of the RAM Collective in the 1970s, but also later in the early 1980s in the Chicago-based collective Mi Raza Art Consortium (MIRA), which, as important as it was, falls outside the scope of this paper.<sup>17</sup> The term “Spanish-speaking,” instead, as was to be the case for “Hispanic” in the 1980s and 1990s, was no less than a homogenizing strategy by Michigan’s state government to categorize and contain a segment of its population. This preferred use of language rather than ethnicity conflates language with racial identity, negating difference in racial types and indigenous languages within the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States.

From 1974 to 1979, collective members organized exhibitions, lectures, festivals, and cultural events, and they produced short films and other media projects through which they ful-

filled their objectives of education, documentation, training, and intercultural dialogue. Although RAM Collective gives as its official founding date the winter of 1975, uncovered documents indicate that, by the summer of 1974, future members were already meeting and expressing their ideas in the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A) Newsletter of the University of Michigan Chapter. In its August 13, 1974, issue (no. 11), the newsletter explored the theme of “Art and La Raza.” The edition featured various essays by Chicanos and non-Chicano contributors, such as “Borinquen: A Culture under Siege,” by Ana Luisa Cardona; “Patronage: Chicano Art and its Consumption,” by Felipe Reyes; and “Photography and Art through Borinquen Eyes: Interview with Julio Perazza, Senior in Art,” by Jesse González. Their joint efforts and negotiation of ethnicity proved critical to the group’s composition, ideology, and vision for a Raza aesthetic.

It is precisely in thinking about a Raza aesthetic that RAM Collective members looked beyond the Midwest for sources of inspiration that eventually would influence them greatly and would help them forge connections with other U.S.-based artists’ groups. In the fall of 1972, Felipe Reyes, a founding member of the San Antonio art collective Con Safo, arrived at Ann Arbor to pursue an MFA in painting at the University of Michigan. Already in the spring of 1972, Reyes, along with other members of the collective, had organized the traveling exhibition *Con Safo: Pintores Chicanos de San Antonio, Tejas*, shown in several campuses throughout Michigan, April 5–14, 1972.<sup>18</sup> None other than Tomás Rivera—author of *Y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971) and recipient of the Quinto Sol Literary Award<sup>19</sup>—accompanied the exhibition as group representative, lecturing on its objectives and members.

Reyes’s presence in Ann Arbor—as well as that of Santos Martínez, who had joined Con Safo in early 1972, and then enrolled in the University of Michigan MFA program—had a great impact on the direction that RAM Collective took. Reyes, who had been exploring Chicano art since 1968, was a key figure in the formation of San Antonio artists’ groups such as El Grupo (1968), which evolved into Los Pintores de Aztlán, in 1970; Los Pintores de la Nueva Raza, in 1971; and Con Safo on December 19, 1971.<sup>20</sup> The Con Safo collective met for the first time when Reyes was studying under Mel Casas, then Chair of the Art Department at San Antonio College. Casas, who was invited to join the group by his student, not only proposed the collective’s name, but soon became its president and spokesperson. Casas authored the *Brown Paper Report*, a statement about the collective that included its goals and definitions of the terms “Chicano,” “Brown Vision,” and “Con Safo.”<sup>21</sup>



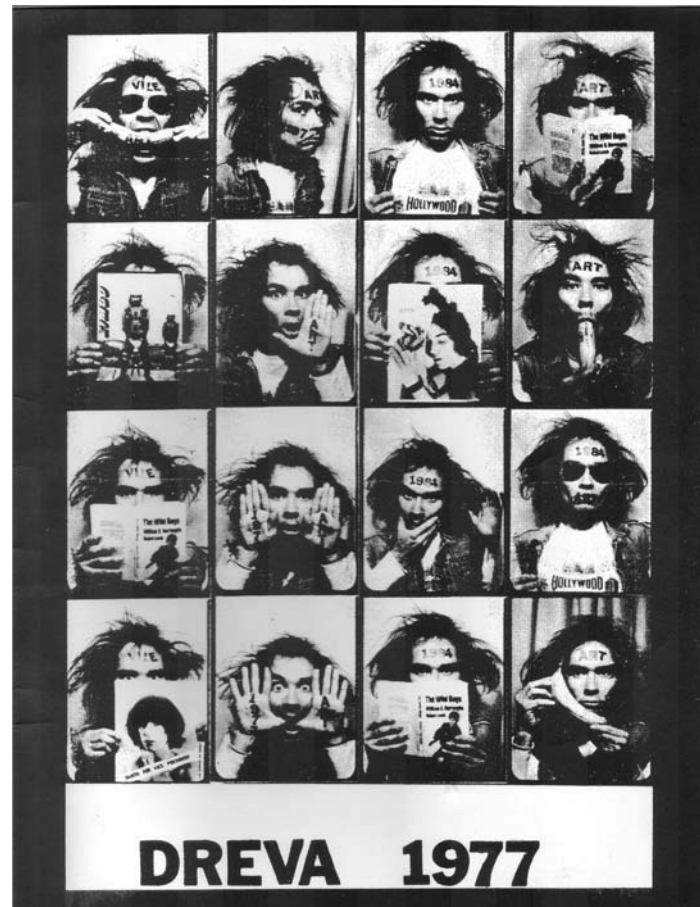


Fig. 2. Jerry Drevia, *Untitled [Drevia 1977]*, 1977. Mail art reproduced in *RAMC Journal*, vol. 2 no. 1 (June 1, 1977).

During the formative stages of the RAM Collective, Reyes and Martínez participated in informal discussions. According to RAM Collective member George Vargas, Reyes “shared his varied experiences as an arts lecturer, organizer, teacher, and artist to help develop a proper perspective in the growth of a valid people’s art in Michigan. Reyes suggested to RAMC members to study for inspiration their respective Latino or Raza histories, which have traditionally been denied to them in the educational system in the United States.”<sup>22</sup> Both Reyes and Martínez also exhibited with the RAM Collective in the *Raza Art Exhibition* in the fall of 1975 at the Union Gallery at the University of Michigan. After Reyes left Michigan for San Antonio, he continued to be guest artist in RAM Collective exhibitions, including *RAZARTES*, held March 19–25, 1978, at William Monroe Trotter House. Con Safo ideology contained in the *Brown Paper Report* influenced the objectives of RAM Collective in subverting stereotypes in the arts and also helped in the successful organization of the collective. Reyes’s abstract expressionist style and approach to Chicano and Mexican themes served as alternative visual examples that broke with art stereotypes, despite being based in the reality of the Chicano experience.

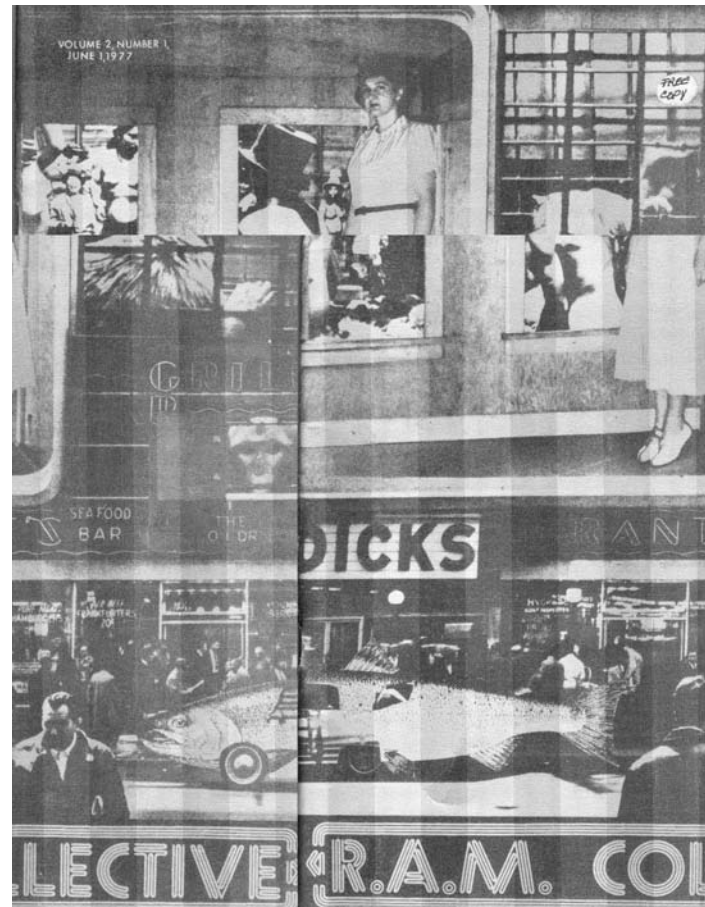


Fig. 3. RAM Collective used its journal as a forum for the exploration of a Raza aesthetic. On the cover of vol. 2, no. 1 (June 1, 1977) is a collage by George Vargas photographed by Julio Perazza.

Along with Con Safo, the East Los Angeles-based group Asco (1971–1987)<sup>23</sup> also exerted great influence on RAM Collective. As understood by RAM Collective, and according to member George Vargas, the goal of Asco was “to shatter the stereotypes in the concept of Chicano art and in [the] role of the Chicano artist and to create a cohesive art alternative to any strict interpretation of Chicano ideology and techniques in a Chicano art movement.”<sup>24</sup> To Vargas and other members of the collective, “Asco broadened the sensibility of Chicano artists in Michigan regarding experimentation in alternative art.”<sup>25</sup> Vargas stresses that “Asco was the most dynamic and interesting for they exploded pre-conceived notions in Chicano minds as to what Chicano art must be. Asco revealed to Chicano artists in Michigan what Chicano art can be.”<sup>26</sup> Asco’s incursions into conceptual art through street performance, installation, and video art as well as mail art and Xerox art [fig. 2] showed RAM Collective members an alternative view as to what a collective could and should aesthetically accomplish, thus opening up new avenues for exploration beyond the prescribed models of the time. Asco’s work was prominently included in the third issue of the *RAMC Journal* (September 1, 1976), as well as in the fourth and last issue (June 1, 1977) (fig. 3).<sup>27</sup>

## Raza Art

“It is impossible, I feel, in this time when communications are so open, to set out deliberately to make an art which is Mexican, or American or Chinese or Russian. I think in terms of universality. Art is a way of expression that has to be understood by everybody, everywhere. It grows out of the earth, the texture of our lives and our experiences.”<sup>1</sup>

Rufino Tamayo, would seem with these words, to have taken a stand against the feasibility of a national or ethnic art; yet, these very words provide the raison d'être for raza art. To say that the texture of life experienced on Manhattan's upper east side is understood in Adrian, Michigan, San Antonio, Texas, or as close as Fox Street in the Bronx is a simplification of reality. To say that the experiences of these places are readily understood in New York galleries would be a distortion of the truth. The fact of the matter is that although there does exist a universal core of human experience, this core has been covered over, built upon, torn apart, taken from some and given to others. Traditionally the Chicano and Puerto Rican, along with other people of color in the United States, have been denied the legitimacy of their experiences and have been told to identify with the mythical American, the assimilated product of the melting-pot fallacy. The raza artist, like the Black artist, revolted against this cultural disenfranchisement and has reacted in ways similar to that described by Ralph Ortiz when he said:

“By climbing out of the melting pot and recapturing my Puerto Rican past, I had the possibility of arriving at an authentic Puerto Rican present. I could envisage a future that would free me and other Puerto Ricans from the oppressive colonial notions which have left us with counterfeit identities.”<sup>2</sup>

Those who would promote the development of art along ethnic lines contend that from a common experience there does emerge a unique way of seeing and visual expression. On the other hand, it is argued that an unlabeled work of art defies identification according to ethnic grouping. Although the latter viewpoint would appear to hold true at the present time, it is necessary and helpful to examine several factors contributing to this. It should be remembered that the raza artists are products of the American educational system. As such, those who pursue art education shall be equipped with an inter-

national visual vocabulary and techniques, history, media, and instruments. This international visual vocabulary is one which claims not to concern itself with nationality or ethnicity. Expressions which deviate from this are excluded from art historical study or considered a lower form of aesthetic expression. Therefore, one hears the criticism that raza art is political propaganda; the implication is that this immediately sets it apart from fine art. Art for art's sake appears to be the motivating force behind much art education and criticism.

Felipe Reyes, a Chicano from San Antonio, worked with a group of artists in 1967 called Galerías Almazan. These Chicano artists gathered over a period of several months to hear lectures by Chicano on techniques of drawing and organization of the picture plane. Several series of pencil drawings resulted from this. In an interview with Reyes on March 20, 1975, he claimed that in working with this group he saw and felt that Chicanos had a certain way of drawing and that developments made as a result of the lectures were incorporated by the artists into their work. It is suggested, therefore, that the educational system is a contributing factor to the erosion of national and ethnic boundaries in art. Furthermore, were the educational system to encourage the development of diverse artistic formulations, it is highly possible that stylistic qualities peculiar to different minority groups would emerge. This diversity would be an enrichment of art in human terms.

Folk art is an area in which the erosion of national and ethnic boundaries is not as strongly felt. For example, it is generally acceptable to speak of American or Haitian folk traditions. Both schools have unique stylistic features which color the personal conventions of individual artists. This fact supports the contention that communication and involvement with the mainstreams of art results in an equalization of the artistic vocabulary. Chelo Gonzalez Amezcua of Del Rio, Texas<sup>3</sup> is one of the Chicano artists who has not received a formal art education, nor does she claim familiarity with cultural things. She has for many years produced fine-line ball-point pen drawings on paper and cardboard. Her drawings of god-like figures are set before dizzying linear patterns and bear no ties to current art movements. Her isolation, similar to that of the traditional folk artist, has maintained the intuitive purity of her forms.

This is not to say that raza artists should retreat from the larger world in

which they live. In most cases this approach would be not only artificial but professionally and economically disastrous. In actuality, since the late 1960s, raza artists have been drawn from their former isolation into activist roles. The involvement of raza artists in the socio-political movement came from a recognition of the similarity between problems identified by the movement and those faced by themselves as artists. The question as identified by Reyes became, “How can we as artists contribute to the movement?”<sup>4</sup> The answer was found through the organization of art work around issues of la causa. As a result of this there exists a corpus of Chicano art which while having superficial relations to the pop, conceptual, and poster movements in American art, has at the same time a base in the reality of the Chicano experience.

Chicano and Puerto Rican art will of necessity be disparate and will of necessity partake of its mezzote polarity. Whereas the art of the 1960's was socially oriented, recent years have seen the development of a respect for differences of ideology, process and approach within raza art groups. The talk is now of broadening and deepening dimensions for more valid communication.

“There is a resistance, from the Chicanos, against assimilation into a “pure” Mexican society and Anglo-American society. Chicanoism is the process of synthesis of these cultures in varying dosages as suits personal and group tastes, with the idea that it never loses its identity as a culture of synthesis of the Americas and Europe.”<sup>5</sup>

The concept of a culture under siege is one which all minority groups in America share. In order to share in the social and economic prosperity to which they are entitled, they have in the past been forced to reject their biculturalism. In order to combat this, raza artists have proposed the process of cultural secession with the hope that through the visual definition of the raza reality artistic communication can rediscover our universal core.

Anna L. Cardona

<sup>1</sup>Genauer, Emily, *Rufino Tamayo*. New York: Abrams, 1974, p. 57.  
<sup>2</sup>Ortiz, Ralph, “Culture and the People,” *Art in America*, 50:37, May, 1971.  
<sup>3</sup>Quarata, Jacinto, *Mexican American Artists*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971, pp. 47-49.  
<sup>4</sup>Tapod interview with Felipe Reyes and Santos Martinez, March 20, 1975, Ann Arbor, Michigan.  
<sup>5</sup>Con Safo, *Chicano Artists*, San Antonio, Texas, n.d., p. 9, p. 9.

Fig. 4. “Raza Art,” by Ana L. Cardona, one of the founding members of the Raza Arts & Media Collective.

The influence of both Con Safo and Asco translated into RAM Collective’s desire to challenge stereotypes in the arts and media. Perhaps the most important objective that the collective set for itself was to serve as a “model for the Spanish-speaking peoples in their struggle to end stereotypes in the arts and media by the projection of a Raza aesthetic.”<sup>28</sup> To that end, the collective used its more important tool, its journal, which had been designated as a forum for the examination of this aesthetic. From an art-historical perspective, RAM Collective artists succeeded in creating visualities in which self-expression and self-definition of culture and history were present. In their journal, artists favored the photographic medium, using collage methods to deconstruct images revealing hidden messages and relevant cultural meanings.

But what was Raza aesthetics to RAM Collective members? To George Vargas, “RAMC espoused the concept of a RAZA aesthetic based on the plurality of Hispanic/Latin American people in terms of a ‘pueblo’ or extended family.”<sup>29</sup> Ana Luisa Cardona, writing on Raza art in 1975, stated, “whereas the art of the 1960’s was socially oriented, recent years have seen the development of a respect for differences of ideology, process

## Task Force on Hispanic American Arts

### Comisión Consultiva sobre las Artes de Origen Hispano en los Estados Unidos

Presentation made before the National Council on the Arts in Washington on November 12, 1977 by the Panel on Hispanic Americans and the Arts and adopted as a resolution of the Task Force on Hispanic American Arts in Los Angeles on March 16, 1978.

Presentación ante el Consejo Nacional de las Artes en Washington el 12 de noviembre de 1977 por el panel de Hispano-Americanos y las Artes y adoptada como resolución por la Comisión Consultiva sobre las Artes de origen Hispano en los Estados Unidos en Los Angeles el 16 de marzo de 1978.

### HISPANIC AMERICANS AND THE ARTS

### HISPANOAMERICANOS Y LAS ARTES

Fig. 5. The NEA’s Task Force on Hispanic American Arts, chaired by Jacinto Quirarte, brought together leading Hispanic/Latino individuals in the visual, performing, and literary art fields.

and approach within Raza art groups. The talk is now of broadening and deepening dimensions for more valid communication”<sup>30</sup> (fig. 4).

In August 1978, RAM Collective members became involved with an initiative of the National Council of the Arts, the advisory body of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), through Chicago-based MARCH and its director, José Gamaliel González, who at the time was U.S. Great Lakes Region representative in the NEA’s Task Force on Hispanic American Arts (fig. 5). The NEA, a federally funded independent agency that provides government grants to artists and art organizations, was at the time exploring ways to improve and increase access to funding for the arts to “strengthen Hispanic American Arts.”<sup>31</sup> As a result of the contact with MARCH, RAM Collective entered into a new area of activities and into arts advocacy and community arts organizing. As a strategic move toward having better access to funds distributed by the NEA’s Expansion Arts Program and to having a more prominent role at the state level, some members founded a state-wide consortium and umbrella organization, *Nuestras Artes de Michigan*, which eventually absorbed RAM Collective. The last RAM Collective



official event was a lecture by Francisco Mora and Elizabeth Catlett on the “African Influences in Mexican Art,” held at the William Monroe Trotter House at the University of Michigan on October 5, 1979.

Although active for five years, RAM Collective legacies have lived on through a succession of art groups and consortia. Some of its members were and are still active to this very day in art organizations, including Nuestras Artes de Michigan and a more recent consortium of Latino art groups, Artes Unidas de Michigan. Three founding members of RAM Collective went on to receive their Ph.D.’s from the University of Michigan, and two of them, George Vargas and Zaneta Kosiba-Vargas, wrote dissertations in art history that looked back at the 1970s: “Contemporary Latino Art in Michigan, the Midwest, and the Southwest” and “Harry Gamboa and ASCO: The Emergence and Development of a Chicano Art Group, 1971–1987,” respectively. Two other members became art educators still active in Michigan today.

These documents on the Raza Art & Media Collective elucidate the existence of connections and circuits of exchange of information among 1970s art collectives in the United States. These findings highlight how influences in organization, and the formulation of new concepts and art directions, played out at a critical moment in which changes in structural foundations in access and public funding were being examined and revised.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> In 1968, Mario Castillo painted the mural *Metaphysics* at the Urban Progress Center in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood. It is arguably the first Latino mural of the Contemporary Mural Movement.
- <sup>2</sup> Casa Aztlán and the Segundo Ruíz Belvis Cultural Center were established in Chicago in 1970 and 1971, respectively. In 1973, the University of Indiana-Bloomington’s Research Center for Language and Semiotic Studies began the publication of *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, which included art-related news and articles in some of its issues. The *Raza Art & Media Collective Journal*, a quarterly publication of the collective, first appeared on January 1, 1976; it was followed by *Imágenes*, a bilingual monthly publication of the Latin American Arts, Ltd., in July 1976; and *ABRAZO*, a quarterly publication of MARCH, in the fall of 1976.
- <sup>3</sup> Members of MARCH included José Gamaliel González, Víctor A. Sorell, Mario Castillo, Ray Patlán, Ricardo Alonzo, Efraín Martínez, Francisco Blasco, Salvador Vega, Carlos Cortez, Laurance Hurlburt, Susan Stechnij, and Santiago Bolton, among others. For more information, see “Movimiento Artístico Chicano (Mexican-American Art Movement) MARCH,” *Quarterly: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago* (Spring 1976): 13.
- <sup>4</sup> ALBA was “the rebirth of a consciousness dedicated to the growth and promotion of Latin art throughout the United States.” Among its members were Iko Alegria, Anna Castillo, Paula Cofresi, Yolanda Galván, Gamaliel Ramírez, José Roman, Héctor Rosario, Douglas Kitto, María Allen, Richard Alonzo, Francisco Blasco, Manuel Castillo, Mario Castillo, Rev. Ruben Cruz, Gini Sorentini, Alex Garza, José González, Raymond Patlán, Delia Pena,

and the Teatro Desengaño del Pueblo, among others. For more information, see “ALBA Latino Artists Organization,” ALBA Festival brochure, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, 2–5 April 1974.

- <sup>5</sup> The Midwest, for purposes of this paper, comprises the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- <sup>6</sup> Two projects currently under way in the region, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston’s *Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art* and the University of Notre Dame’s *Midwest Latino Arts Documentary Heritage*, are the first of their kind to conduct in-depth regional research and documentation. They are thus addressing the critical lack of access to primary source material and attempting to remedy the virtually nonexistent record of artistic production of Latin American and Latino visual artists in regional libraries and archives in ten Midwestern states.
- <sup>7</sup> Víctor A. Sorell, “Barrio Murals in Chicago: Painting the Hispanic American Experience on ‘Our Community’ Walls,” *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* 4 (Fall 1976): 50–72. See also Sorell, *Guide to Chicago Murals: Yesterday and Today* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Fine Arts, 1979).
- <sup>8</sup> George Vargas, “Contemporary Latino Art in Michigan, the Midwest, and the Southwest” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1988).
- <sup>9</sup> Rivera was born in Guanajuato, Mexico, on December 8, 1886. For the catalogue of the retrospective, see *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts and New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1986).
- <sup>10</sup> Karen Mary Davalos, *Exhibiting Mestizaje: Mexican (American) Museums in the Diaspora* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 107–89.
- <sup>11</sup> Ana L. Cardona, et al., “To our Audience,” *Raza Art & Media Collective Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1976): 1.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 101.
- <sup>14</sup> This includes three poems and a transcript of an oral history conducted in Puerto Rico with elders: “Un Nuevo Corrido,” vol. 1, no. 2 (March 1976): 2; “Iza” and “Entre Cuatro Paredes,” vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1976): np; and “Puerto Rican Elders,” vol. 1, no. 4 (June 1977): np.
- <sup>15</sup> RAM Collective participated in Michigan’s First Statewide Congress on the Arts that was held June 15–17, 1978, and introduced Resolution No. V-5A, calling for the creation of a Minority Arts Task Force to increase communications with special audiences.
- <sup>16</sup> **Ed. Note:** In his landmark essay, *La Raza Cósmica*, José Vasconcelos proposes a new mechanism for legitimizing *mestizaje* in Mexico. Eminently popular in the 1950s, his debate centered on an ideology of a future “fifth race” that would result from the miscegenation of the country’s existing races (that is, white Europeans, black Africans, yellow Asians, and the red indigenous groups). This multicolored, plurality would lead to a new civilization—*Universópolis*—that could only be realized in the Americas. See Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cósmica* (México D.F.: Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1948).
- <sup>17</sup> Mi Raza Arts Consortium was founded by José Gamaliel González on October 3, 1980, in Chicago. “MIRA Announcement,” George Vargas Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- <sup>18</sup> The exhibition traveled to Central Michigan University, University of Michigan-Flint, Delta College, and Michigan State University. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto Research Papers, 1965–2004, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Con Safo File, Box 8, Folder 33, 2006.
- <sup>19</sup> **Ed. Note:** In 1970, Tomás Rivera won the first Premio Quinto Sol for this collection of sketches about migrant workers. The award, which included a cash prize as well as the publication of the manuscript, was established by Quinto Sol Publications at the University of California, Berkeley. Making accessible works that captured the modern-day Chicano experience, Quinto Sol quickly became the leading Chicano press of the time. Other early award winners published by Quinto Sol, as it consolidated the core of a Chicano literary canon, include Rudolfo Anaya (*Bless Me, Ultima*, 1972) and Rolando Hinojosa (*Estampas del valle y otras obras*, 1973). See Cyrus R.K.

Patell, “Emergent Ethnic Literatures: Native American, Hispanic, Asian American,” *A Concise Companion to Postwar American Literature and Culture*, ed. Josephine G. Hendin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 366–68.

- <sup>20</sup> For a detailed account of the collective’s history, see Rubén C. Cordova, “Con Safo: San Antonio’s Chicano Artists Group and Its Legacy,” *ARTLIES* (Winter 1999–2000): 18–21, 24.
- <sup>21</sup> “Brown Paper Report,” Tomás Ybarra-Frausto Research Papers, 1965–2004, Con Safo File.
- <sup>22</sup> Vargas, “Contemporary Latino Art in Michigan,” 266.
- <sup>23</sup> ASCO founding members included Harry Gamboa, Jr., Patssi Valdez, Gronk, Willie Herrón, and Humberto Sandoval. For more information about *Asco*, its activities and members, see Harry Gamboa, Jr., *Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa Jr.*, ed. Chon A. Noriega (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Max Benavidez, *Gronk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); and Zaneta Kosiba-Vargas, “Harry Gamboa and ASCO: The Emergence and Development of a Chicano Art Group, 1971–1987” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 1988).
- <sup>24</sup> Vargas, “Contemporary Latino Art in Michigan,” 243.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 244–45.
- <sup>27</sup> The September 1976 issue featured “Autologüe 25, 75 & 100,” of 1976; “Walking Mural,” of 1972; and “ASCO Celebrates the 9th Victim of the L.A. Slasher,” of 1974. The June 1977 issue featured Harry Gamboa, Jr.’s “Cruel Profit,” of 1974; “Pistol Whippersnapper,” of 1976, albeit now in a new format. It also featured Jerry Devra’s work, as well as the collective’s reinterpretation and reappropriation of ASCO’s original work
- <sup>28</sup> Goal number three, in Ana L. Cardona, et al., “To Our Audience.”
- <sup>29</sup> Vargas, “Contemporary Latino Art in Michigan,” 264.
- <sup>30</sup> Cardona, “Raza Art,” *Raza Art & Media Collective Journal*, vol. 1 no. 1 (January 1, 1976): 2.
- <sup>31</sup> “Report of the Task Force on Hispanic American Arts to the National Council on the Arts, August 11, 1979.” Tomás Ybarra-Frausto Research Papers, 1965–2004, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.