Hybrid agency: postmodern contemporary art from Oaxaca, Mexico

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Hybrid Agency: Postmodern Contemporary Art from Oaxaca, Mexico

By

Neil Pyatt

Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of
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Abstract

The last three decades have seen the Southern Mexican city of Oaxaca evolve to become an autonomous centre for the creation and promotion of contemporary art on state, national and international levels. The present research's original contribution to knowledge is the analytical investigation of an art movement's response to the political and technological effects characteristic of postmodernity and effected through globalisation.

The research uses a hybrid theoretical framework that includes the work of: Fredric Jameson to discuss postmodernism; Nelly Richard to characterise a postmodern Latin America; Homi K. Bhabha to analyse the postcolonial context and the creation of agency; and, inherent to this structure and the context, the work of Néstor García Canclini.

The theoretical investigation is supported by ethnography that ascertains how hybrid political thought and community altruism characterise the Oaxacan art community and the aesthetic expression practised by a new generation of its members.

Oaxacan contemporary art is based on the success of the post-Rupture primitivist magical realism practised originally by important Oaxacan artists living and travelling in other locations. The most recent generation of contemporary artists in Oaxaca integrates with, upholds and promotes the model of cultural production that is now inextricably intertwined with the local and wider communities.

Participant observation and the analysis of the behaviour of the artists studied, focused the investigation on the efficient interaction between artists and collective action as an integrated sector of civil society. The research determines how the artists studied and the wider Oaxacan art community applies their knowledge of global communications and information technology to create and market a cultural product and promote a postmodern social and political perspective.

Regarded as a solid sector of the local and regional community due to its national and international standing, the Oaxacan art community constructs political power from significant, direct involvement with micro-projects to engaging in partnerships with state and federal stakeholders in large-scale cultural endeavours. The research discusses projects instigated and undertaken by the artists studied, including the call for a pacifistic solution to the Oaxaca Conflict of 2006, a six-month socio-political uprising caused by actual and historic conditions in the national and regional Left-Right political duel.

The strength of the art community is founded on necessary and reinforcing collective action in both artistic and altruistic projects; often combined through the direct use of art in the creation of funds and media-empowered support towards achieving a perceived common good that centres on the protection of identity and the political defence of diversity.
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More than anyone, I thank my parents and my sister. I love Duval I thank his mother, Olga, for bringing such a caring being into this world and for the manner in which she and her family love and care for him.

I am indebted to Prof. Colin Rhodes for giving me the opportunity to undertake this research and I must thank Prof. Clive Edwards and the art school formerly known as LUSAD. After many years of investigative, theoretical and financial torment, it was the input of Prof. Oriana Baddeley and Dr. Gillian Whiteley that became the most important. Soid Pastrana, Guillermo Olguín, Luis Valencia, Demián Flores, Francisco Toledo and the other artists mentioned here are a small sample of the Oaxacan art community that I hope is adequately represented and aided by this work. I thank all the members of all the worlds and circles in which I move or have moved in Oaxaca, Mexico City, Huitzilac and Cuernavaca. None of this would have been possible without the unfaltering support of Gonzalo Cervantes Rojas, Juan Carlos Meixuiero, Domenico Pasaforte, Ernesto García, Jonathan López, Gerardo Martínez Rentería, Rafael Salgado, don Andrés, don Fernando and Claudia Rosales.

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Preface

The seeds of interest that have grown into the present research were planted in October 1996, during what I believe was my first conversation with an Oaxacan academic. Dr. Marcos Figueroa, then a lecturer in human rights law at the Universidad Autónoma 'Benito Juárez' de Oaxaca, told me that the then recently-formed *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) 'Zapatista National Liberation Army' insurgence of 1994 constituted a postmodern war and not one of real military action. Dr. Figueroa said that evidence for this was the visit by American film director Oliver Stone to Subcommandante Marcos's jungle hideout amid rumours that he was buying the film rights to the Chiapas-based rebellion.

I was shocked, not at a Mexican university professor's coherent analysis after Jean Baudrillard nor the depth of his political fervour or knowledge, but that the very thing I had sought to escape had found me in a tiny cantina in a small city in Mexico. Within two weeks of submitting the final requirements of an M.Phil. in Social Anthropology at Cambridge, a postmodern reading of a contemporary cultural phenomenon, the essence of my M.Phil. thesis and what I hoped to be the foundation of a journalistic and academic career, had presented itself despite my best efforts to reduce the possibility and thereby afford myself some time for recuperation.

During the time that passed before I made any positive move to further investigate the culture of my new surroundings, I repeatedly noticed a single work of graffiti that read '500 years of repression' scrawled in black paint on a white garage door located along what I much later learnt is the typical route for southerly protest marches entering the city of Oaxaca. For a naïve, fluent Spanish speaker who learnt the language by living in and visiting the Old Spain from a very young age, this graffiti provided the harsh realisation that many sectors of postcolonial societies continue to hold rancour towards their conquerors and the previous and prevailing conditions they have caused.

The combination of these episodes left me with an initial desire to study pre-Hispanic cultures in Oaxaca. Dominated in number by the Zapotec and Mixtec populations, these cultures remain as strong influences on everyday Oaxacan life, from the conspicuous tourism industry based on the equally visible ancient ruins of Monte Albán, Mitla and Yagúl, to the indigenous people and languages seen and heard on almost every street and definitely in every marketplace.

However, to an urban anthropologist intent on unravelling the mystery of how popular culture, advertising and the mass media could be cemented into a globalising force by postmodernism, the primitivist artworks that seemed to saturate and represent Oaxaca and its powerful connection to its own history were difficult to comprehend. Reporting on local culture as
the founding editor of an English-language newspaper supplement for the state's largest newspaper meant meeting younger generations of Oaxacan artists. Developing a sense of how the most recent stages of the development of the region could be read in their work created a concrete reason to concentrate on investigating Oaxacan contemporary art.
Chapter 1. Introduction

The state of Oaxaca is in the South of Mexico, an important region due to its highly varied racial, political and economic past and present. The primary feature of the relationship between this location and its peoples is its physical geography. A very mountainous region of extreme climatic conditions is responsible for a lack of farmable land and the creation of a very large number of very small settlements, in turn forming numerous tribal and distinct language groups. The state of Oaxaca consists of 570 municipalities, almost one quarter of the total number of municipalities that comprise the nation's 32 federative entities. The reduced level of poverty and development caused by such a low amount of agricultural production and the lack of a conglomerate society were further exasperated by the Spanish colonization of the Americas.

The contemporary human geography of the state of Oaxaca is due, in the most reductionist of terms, to this harsh physical geography combined with Mexico's predicament as the only developing nation to share a border with the United states of America (U.S.). Mexico is the U.S.'s second-largest export market and third-largest trading partner, almost 80 percent of Mexico’s exports were to the U.S. in 2011. The cultural mixing due to the colonial rule of Mexico by Spain had been the subject and major preoccupation of Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican culture until the major Latino population shifts characteristic of the last third of the twentieth century.

The material wealth of Mexico's northern neighbour has created a landscape blotted by migration, has done little to combat economic instability and induced the creation of a globe-topping illegal drug industry and criminal culture that is organised and institutionalised at levels that have traditionally relied on intricate ties with corrupt governmental bodies and law enforcement agencies. These authorities have only recently been subject to a committed policy of investigation and the serving of justice enforced during the presidential term of Felipe Calderón Hinojosa from 1 December 2006.

Limited local development of infrastructure and the related sporadic foreign investment leaves going to work en el otro lado 'on the other side [of the border]' as the only option for economic well-being for a large section of the population. In 2007, Oaxacan migrants residing in the U.S. sent back 1.272 billion dollars to their families still residing in the state. That year, Mexico as a nation received 24 billion dollars from the working sector of the 24 million Mexicans and

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1 Figures 1 and 2 in Volume II show maps of the location of the state and its relevant cities.
Mexican-Americans living in the USA, the second largest source of the nation's income after the revenue created by its troubled, state-owned petroleum sector, Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX).

Migration is one means of influx of American popular culture and the American-English language that give a boost of primary energy to the late, consumer capitalism piped in to Mexico through mass media channels, the execution of so-called neoliberal economic strategies and globalisation. Rapid evolution in information and communications technology far outweighs growth in any other sector and is a causal factor in an accelerating, self-alimenting process of development in a nation that has never had control of its own resources in order to industrialise or modernise in the sense signified by traditional historical models.

The present research tests the theory that postmodernity provides new tools and modes of expression to discuss human thought and behaviour, as a response to similar conditions Colin Rhodes refers to as the 'growing disjunction between a rapidly increasing technological and scientific complexity and the ability of the individual to comprehend these changes' that combined with the 'decline of humanitarian values in European culture' and caused 'the rise of Primitivism at the turn of the twentieth century.'

An introductory use of Fredric Jameson's focus on architecture to analyse postmodernism from which he figuratively generalises on the postmodern condition, connects the hypothesis proposed here with the conditions Rhodes describes:

My implication is that we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with that evolution [a mutation to a postmodernist space]; there has been a mutation in the object unaccompanied as yet by any equivalent mutation in the subject. We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace, as I will call it, in part because our perceptual habits were formed in that older kind of space I have called the space of high modernism.

The present research identifies, in the Oaxacan contemporary art studied, the presence of the 'tools' as the author labels them, or the 'perceptual equipment', under a Jameson label, that human subjects require in order to understand the space into which we have happened. The hypothesis tests how postmodernism, as the cultural model Jameson proposes, 'foregrounds the cognitive and

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5 'Nearly 80 percent of Mexico’s exports in 2011 went to the United states. In 2011, Mexico was the second-largest supplier of oil to the United states.' U.S. state Department, Relations With Mexico.
pedagogical dimensions of political art and culture\textsuperscript{8} and how those dimensions are fundamental to the contemporary art studied.

The postmodernist space the present research investigates, Oaxaca, Mexico, requires considerable introduction and a recounting of its history that the latter part of this chapter undertakes; to develop the research hypothesis formulated above into the research question, a more succinct course is momentarily taken.

Mexico's advanced Amerindian civilisations that created cultures dependent on aesthetics and respectful of artistic merit present a highly complex relationship between aesthetics and meaning. As cultural heritage, this relationship has been recognised as being present in the contemporary art created in Oaxaca in the last decades of the twentieth century. The recognition of a level of similitude in Oaxacan cultural output, in particular painting, caused the creation of a critically-identified Oaxaca School.

Oaxaca is the birthplace of leading Mexican artists Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991), Rodolfo Morales (1925-2000), Rodolfo Nieto (1936-1985) and Francisco Toledo (b. 1940). The work of these artists can be generally and briefly described as possessing a primitivist style, abundant fauna in its iconography and infantile drawing towards paradisiacal representations.\textsuperscript{9} The Oaxaca School was defined as producing and attracting artists that purposefully copied and perpetuated the styles and use of techniques of these Oaxacan Masters, in particular, Tamayo, Morales and Toledo, without accomplishing or innovating any new development in formal or conceptual terms.

Important to the establishment of the present study, was how Toledo's considerable investment in community altruism was brought into the limelight on a national scale in 1998. The term 'community altruism' has been chosen over the favoured one of 'activism' for two significant reasons:

1) for its greater power in referring to a range of action through interaction:
   
   A) by an individual participating in group action or actions,
   B) group action to benefit \textit{that} group as a community,
   C) the action of a group or community for the benefit of a larger group or complex grouping of groups or communities such as that denoted as 'civil society';

2) the definition of the term 'activism' as direct political protest or reaction to political events or policies does not cover the range of altruistic projects Oaxacan artists engage with as

\textsuperscript{8} Jameson, \textit{Postmodernism}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{9} Plates 1 to 3 in the accompanying Volume II show work by Tamayo, Morales and Toledo respectively. Plates 78, 79, 80 and 81 present Toledo's work in direct relation to the discussion in Chapter 2.
individuals and as a community, although it is accepted that many of these altruistic projects are designed to make up for a perceived lack of local development or implementation of political policy.

In the 1998 case used here, Toledo had been attracting and coordinating private and public investment towards the renovation of the seventeenth century former convent in the heart of Oaxaca that would create a monumental cultural centre. Upon completion of the renovation, Toledo threatened to boycott the opening ceremony in protest of how the 'spirit' of the project had been hijacked and reworked to create a propaganda vehicle for the state and Federal governments, including President Ernesto Zedillo who was to officiate at the opening ceremony. Toledo did appear at the ceremony but immediately criticised the procedure by contesting the slight he perceived on the part of governor Diodoro Carrasco's state Government in removing the name of his organisation, the Patronato Pro-Defensa y Conservación del Patrimonio Cultural de Oaxaca (ProOax) 'Board for the Defence and Conservation of the Patrimony of Oaxaca',10 from the list of founding entities on the official invitation. To prove his point and make his protest, the artist revealed the inauguration plaque for the renovated building building over 30 minutes before the Mexican president was due to officially do so, thereby engraving ProOax's involvement into the history of the event and highlighting its crucial influence in the project's realization. Interviews given by Toledo to the national and local press were most thoroughly and fairly reported by powerful left-wing weekly magazine Proceso11 and left-wing daily newspaper La Jornada:

We hope that in the future the relationship between the government and civil society be on an equal footing. Even though it is true that the hurried inclusion of ProOax was undertaken by the government to extricate itself from the embarrassment it had created, I think there was some rectification and they did consent to invite us to a small part of the party. It was no bad thing making them lower their heads and recognise civic participation.12

The powerful, political intervention of the artist, who had invested considerably in the $11.9-million, four-and-a-half year project, had an impact on the author. As a journalist experiencing a growing level of engagement with the local artistic community, encounters with

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10 Patronato Pro-Defensa y Conservación del Patrimonio Cultural de Oaxaca (ProOax) 'Board for the Defence and Conservation of the Patrimony of Oaxaca'.
young artists, including Guillermo Olguín Mitchell (b. 1969, Mexico City, Distrito Federal, Mexico) and Soid Pastrana Vera (b. 1970, Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico) were significant. Their work was based on recent study and travel abroad and its composition and elements were easier for me to read. These younger artists were also practitioners of community altruism.

The breakthrough came early in 2003 upon meeting Demián Flores Cortés (b. 1971, Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico), a painter who had lived his childhood in a rural, coastal region of the state of Oaxaca but as a teenager and adult had resided in Mexico City. Flores had used the impact of his formative years in the then largest city in the world, his undergraduate degree at the National School of Plastic Arts and the early years of his career to forge a unique and acclaimed Pop Art style.

With a developing nation's desire to create capital, and a unique geographical situation as poor neighbour to the United states of America, the global force of consumer capitalism, Mexico and especially Mexico City allow themselves to be awash with unbridled forms and magnitudes of advertising materials. Flores had used his Zapotec descendancy and personal immersion in an image-and-text-filled urban jungle to found a visual soapbox from which to discuss Americanisation, globalisation and their effects on his native country and its native peoples. Therein creating a new visual argument for Mexican art, one that focuses intelligently on both national and international politics whilst in true Pop Art style uses over-familiar logotypes, slogans and street-level popular culture to make its point. Postmodernism was prevalent in Flores's work: creating discussion of 'identity, territory and memory' by confusing time, space, cultural references, techniques and media within a series and even within a single work. Alongside his business-like attitude to cultural production, painting on a rigorous nine-to-five office schedule and networking at every possible opportunity, Flores also practised community altruism primarily, but not exclusively, through cultural promotion.

As predicted by postmodernism, there existed a community that held a similar worldview to the author's, one that simultaneously embraced and analysed a globalising media culture, but was of wholly distinct ethnic and geographical descent and as representative of the colonised, far removed from the attitude and upbringing of coloniser that was embedded within the continent in which I had lived and studied. This community actively engaged in expressing and promoting this worldview in local terms while reflecting and often mocking the global picture.

The research question of the present study asks how the young members of this community use their cultural heritage, a real-time knowledge of the changing world around them and positive attempts at community altruism that reinforce their ideas, to create visual representations of contemporary Mexico that are simultaneously worthy and conscious of global consumption. The
resulting knowledge facilitates analysis of the trends and directions taken by cultural producers in a postcolonial location affected at an accelerating rate by forces the present study recognises as characteristic of the postmodern condition and in particular globalisation.

The methodology to be used was to be one founded on the integration I had constructed with the community in question. This chapter firstly introduces this methodology before reviewing and implementing the theoretical essence of the research, beginning with the development of the concepts of postmodernity and postmodernism followed by discussed in direct relation to Latin America, Mexico and Oaxaca.

1.1 A postmodern ethnography
The research was undertaken in the field of the history of art and visual communication, with significant attention given to the application and development of methodologies and knowledge derived from social anthropology. This conjunction was important in forming a proper understanding of the values and conditions created by the contemporary set of cultural, philosophical, political and ethical ideas that create postmodern society as generally understood and in relation to the specific cultural conditions and practices in the area under investigation.

The international character of the modern art 'industry' and the related necessity for artists, including those focused upon by the research, to operate as international characters, created the need for an understanding of the mass media as the global communication system responsible for modern-day learning. The specific local, regional and global political content of all types of media source playing a direct part in both the resulting visual expression and community altruism of the artists studied.

The research focuses on the work of contemporary young Mexican artists Demián Florés and Soid Pastrana, who are recognised as important representatives of a new generation of painters from the Southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. Other artists were studied in varying degrees. The creation and operation of the Oaxacan art community in its present form is attributed to Francisco Toledo (b. 1940, Mexico City, Distrito Federal, Mexico) and therefore his life and work is analysed in relation to the hypothesis in Chapter 2, with particular emphasis on early political associations and continued endeavours in community altruism that take many forms on many scales. The impact of Toledo's life and work on the lives and works of the artists studied, particular places and events important in the interpretation of these artists' work and their own recognizably-similar investments in community altruism are also documented in the resulting analysis.

Based on existing professional and personal relationships with the artists studied and a number of the members of the Oaxacan art community, the research is primarily based on
information obtained through participant observation and the continued cross-referencing of that primary material with the content of relevant mass media sources within a framework of theoretical analysis defined as postmodern through its simultaneous use and identification of the tools of postmodernism.

An example can be given to clarify this facet of the research: Demián Flores arrived in England on the very first day the present research began, this posed an immediate precedent and highlighted the challenges and rewards that the real-time study of a developing, contemporary phenomenon itself poses. Launched immediately into ethnography mode, the form of participant observation being undertaken was therefore questioned by the study itself. Such questions have been addressed by postmodern ethnographers. From the work of John Brewer, the ethnography undertaken by the research can be classified as being based on the humanistic model of social research: based on naturalism, the study of social life in real, naturally-occurring settings. Brewer presents his concept of the 'ethnographic imagination' to respond to the postmodern critique of ethnography. The three dimensions Brewer gives to his ethnographic imagination concept provide some responses to questions with which the present research engages:

1) the belief that fragments [of primary data] can reliably represent a social world which cannot be completely described in the restricted spatial confines of an ethnographic text;
2) the belief that small-scale, micro-events in everyday life have at least common features with the broader social world; and,
3) the belief that people make sense of their everyday lives […] involving a complex reasoning process, which must be analysed if that social world is to be understood in the round, although members' accounts should not be taken at face value.

Following the classification criteria of Colin Robson, the present research can be categorised as exploratory and descriptive in terms of the purposes of its enquiry, and as a case study in terms of a research strategy that has been designed to be as flexible as possible. Practically all of the research being conducted on qualitative data.

Having assimilated these ways of defining the research into the design of the ethnography to be undertaken, the artistic output, community altruism, the lives of the cultural producers and the author changed drastically due to the eruption of the Oaxaca Conflict on 14 June 2006. Before this
event, it had been planned to examine the Oaxacan and Mexican cultural sectors' involvement in the federal election of 2006 that had generated enormous amounts of publicity and controversy for a number of years, as the neo-conservative Right were facing the potential loss of power over Mexico for the first time in the nation's history. After a highly controversial campaign battle and defeat for the Left by only 0.56% of the vote, the author spent one month living in Mexico City, only a few blocks from where the defeated candidate and his supporters had staged a sit-in that lasted five months from July to November 2006.

An evolving media industry, increasing creation of citizen and independent digital news media and a developing transparency in Mexico promoted by President Vicente Fox's 'Transparency Law' implemented in June 2003, were all factors in creating a real-time, multi-faceted investigative and media-combative arena that continues to unearth, present and discuss political parties' ideologies, spending and actions.

In Oaxaca, public reaction to increased levels of corruption and violent repression exhibited by the state Government converted the annual teachers' strike into a localised revolution that saw the creation of the Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca (APPO) 'Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca', controlling the centre of the state capital and introducing a state of 'non-governability' across the city and state towards the destitution of the state governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. Documentation and analysis of how the art community was forced to engage with and articulate the Conflict to the point of mediating dialogues for the resolution of the historical insurgency is presented in Chapter 4. The predicted violent end to this situation, an occurrence the Oaxacan art community worked hard to prevent to then itself become persecuted in the process, came on 25 November 2006.

Towards the collection of more comparable qualitative and quantitative data, a survey of how artists in the Oaxaca art community interpreted and considered postmodernism in their work or that of members of their community and direct investigation into their experience of the effects of the Oaxaca Conflict on their artistic output and livelihoods, was attempted.17 Only a very limited response to the survey was obtained. Reasons for the relative failure of this attempt included:

1) An observed 'I'm too busy' attitude of many Oaxacan artists in response to any general request for information or assistance that is not about only their own work or directly relevant to their career, its betterment or a project they are already committed to.

2) Reluctance to participate in a survey in a form that would require some

17 The questionnaire used in the survey is presented in Appendix I.
investment of time in the use of information technology (typing answers to questions). It was hoped that this factor could have been reduced by the author's offer to receive artists' responses in any form, including during interview.

3) Highly subjective questions in the survey, labelled as 'leading' by Oaxaca-resident American painter Jonathan Barbieri (b. 1955, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.). It was hoped that this factor could also have been reduced by including an open invitation to interpret the questions in any relevant manner and provide any information thought beneficial.

The survey was based on an original investigation of Oaxacan art to be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 undertaken by English poet and writer Robert Valerio, whose study, undertaken in the late 1990s is the only existing analysis and criticism of Oaxacan art. The survey distributed by the present research included an additional, optional section that repeated Valerio's original questions.

The most detailed response to the survey was provided by Demián Flores, whose answers supported the data collected over the fieldwork period and through a number of years of professional and personal association with him. The subjective nature of the subject matter of the present research was reflected by the almost sole reliance on informal interviewing and the cross-referencing of actual and media events in both the present and the past to obtain a comprehensive way to interpret and analyse the sample group. The nature of the deep integration with the local culture and of the participant observation created their own difficulties, not least of all the vulnerable nature of the collection and storage of information on the part of the author and of many of the sources used. For example, the Oaxacan Left-leaning newspaper Noticias Voz e Imagen de Oaxaca was victim of a prolonged siege from June 2005 that included an invasion in July 2005 that caused the loss of its entire on-line resources, digital archives and part of its print archive. The author's own resources were subjected to many changes of address within the city of Oaxaca, the state of Oaxaca, the country of Mexico, and globally.

1.2 Postmodernism as an analytical framework
The primary aim of the present research is to investigate the expression of postmodern thought in the contemporary culture of a particular group embedded in a poor, rapidly-evolving, population, geographically located within a postcolonial society. The group under examination consists of a generation of young artists; the culture they exhibit is the cultural output in terms of the works of art they produce and also the nature of their altruistic actions in aid of the wider community to which their group belongs.
The assumption is made that postmodernism is the cultural and intellectual phenomenon deemed responsible for discussing the social and historical conditions known collectively as postmodernity and prevalent in the late twentieth century. The present research demarcates and introduces the two concepts using the work of Andreas Huyssen, who argues that 'the adversary and critical element in the notion of postmodernism can only be fully grasped if one takes the late 1950s as the starting point of a mapping of the postmodern.'18 This statement concludes Huyssen's detailed discussion of postmodernism as originally an American phenomenon that he posits as an avant-garde movement that included 'an iconoclastic attack'19 on what Peter Bürger has termed 'institution art'20 to refer to 'the ways in which art's role in society is perceived and defined, and [...] to ways in which art is produced, marketed, distributed and consumed.'21

Bürger's argument that the avant-garde of the nineteenth century22 was a separation with aesthetic tradition that attempted to reintegrate art and life, is seen by Huyssen as suggesting 'useful distinctions between modernism and the avant-garde, distinctions which in turn can help us place the American avant-garde of the 1960s.'23 This perspective, according to Huyssen, makes it possible to discern that political contradiction with the avant-garde's major goal: 'to undermine, attack and transform the bourgeois institution art and its ideology of autonomy rather than only changing artistic and literary modes of representation.'24

Oppositional to modernism's traditional notion of form and meaning that upheld 'cultural institutions and traditional modes of representation [...] in a society in which high art played an essential role in legitimizing hegemony' was the 'specific radicalism' of the avant-garde that Huyssen sees as 'directed against the institutionalisation of high art as a discourse of hegemony [and] recommended itself as a source of energy and inspiration to the American postmodernists of the 1960s.'25

Regarding postmodernism as being primarily an American movement of the 1960s that had 'some of the makings of a genuine avant-garde movement',26 was also confirmed from a European perspective, by Jean-Francoise Lyotard: 'The word is in current use on the American continent among sociologists and critics; it designates the state of our culture following the transformations

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22 Bürger's Theory principally connects the historical European avantgarde to three movements: Dada, early surrealism and the postrevolutionary Russian avantgarde.
26 Huyssen, 'Mapping', p. 20.
which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature and the arts.  

Vital to the hypothesis being tested by the present research is Huyssen’s identification of a variation of postmodernism, over time, allowing categorisation of a series of postmodernisms. The present research relates the early career and, temporally related, aspects of the life and work of Francisco Toledo to Huyssen's 1960s postmodernism characterised by:

1) new cultural energies;
2) a sense of a fundamentally new situation;
3) a temporal imagination which displayed a powerful sense of the future and of new frontiers, of rupture and discontinuity, of crisis and generational conflict;
4) the attack on the institution art was always also an attack on hegemonic social institutions;
5) a technological optimism … What photography and film had been in the 1920s, television, video and the computer were for the prophets of a technological aesthetic in the 1960s;
6) an uncritical attempt to validate popular culture as a challenge to the canon of high art, modernist or traditional. This 'populist' trend of the 1960s with its celebration of rock 'n roll and folk music, of the imagery of everyday life and of the multiple forms of popular literature gained much of its energy in the context of the counter-culture and by a next to total abandonment of an earlier American tradition of a critique of modern mass culture.

Huyssen discusses the critical view of Daniel Bell and others that he summarises thus: 'demonstrators of the 1960s were practising modernism in the streets', but criticises this very positively in terms of the current hypothesis: 'my point here is precisely that high modernism had never seen fit to be in the streets in the first place, that its earlier undeniably adversary role was superseded in the 1960s revolt against that version of modernism which had been domesticated in the 1950s, become part of the liberal-conservative consensus of the times, and which had even been turned into a propaganda weapon in the cultural-political arsenal of Cold War anti-communism. The present author posits that postmodernism suffered a similar fate as that of high modernism described here, during the approximate period 1970-1990, whereby postmodernism was

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30 Huyssen, 'Mapping', p. 18.
commandeered and 'turned into a propaganda weapon in the cultural-political arsenal' of neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism. It is this 1970s and 1980s version of postmodernism that was initially received, analysed and unsuccessfully rejected by Latin America, in both academic and non-academic spheres. Confounding this importation of political, aesthetic and social perspectives, was this continent joining the rest of the world to experience, in the 1990s, a 'reduction in the attractiveness of postmodern thought and [that] placed globalization at the centre of the social sciences. Just as today we perceive with greater clarity that the postmodern did not close the curtains on modernity, the global problematic does not allow us to leave modernity behind either.'

The 'cut-throat' capitalist strategies of the 1970s and 1980s, still being applied and confounded during the 1990s and beyond, in Latin America as elsewhere, correspond to the generation of artists in Oaxaca who created weak reflections of Toledo and other painters' successful projects. The new generation of painters studied by the present research, born around 1970, comprise a younger strata eager to emulate iconic styles of art and behaviour but from a different standpoint, based on the importance of a global education and a globalised manner to package and market themselves, their work and their ideals in a hyper-real but under-achieving economy.

Research the author undertook before the present research, revealed that were far less than 1000 total Internet users in the city of Oaxaca in 1997, with the largest Internet service provider having contracted only 490 clients, of which only 350 were current users in August of that year. This service provider was the only small enterprise, an innovative start-up called Antequera Red, amongst four service providers available. The other three enterprises were: the IT department of the local technological college, the Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca (ITO); a local branch of American Internet service pioneer Compuserve; and the Mexican nationalised telephone company, Telmex. These four companies provided a basic 56KB dial-up modem connection to all the major businesses, academic and government institutions in Oaxaca. The lack of market necessity, the availability of affordable technology to effectively cover the distance from Mexico City and McAllen, Texas, the location of the closest hub of the internet backbone, meant that Telmex did not physically connect Oaxaca to any form of high-speed Internet, that required placing large-scale transmission and receiving equipment on the Fortín Hill that physically delimits the city to the

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33 In real terms, Latin America remains physically unconnected from the internet, relying on advances in, and now vital use of, satellite technology.
north, until 2000.

Exemplifying the highly commercial nature of the increasing investment made and emphasising the incredible power of this monopolistic entity bound to grow exponentially in an unregulated environment or market, in 2001, Telmex announced a national campaign in conjunction with American software corporation Microsoft, the T1msn Spanish-language portal was automatically delivered to new and very much undiscerning users of Telmex's Internet service, who in turn had its content automatically delivered onto their browsers and computers. The Internet service, called Infinitum, continued to be promoted using the absolutist slogan Infinitum es Internet 'Infinitum is the Internet'.

Chapter 3's discussion of the new generation of Oaxacan art discusses the rapid and accelerating use of communications technologies in Oaxaca in order to demonstrate the globalising influences of these technologies on Oaxacan art; Chapter 4 emphasises a wider discussion of this development on the population of Oaxaca.

In his milestone work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984); Lyotard underlines the transavantgardism of the foundations of postmodernism: 'Artists and writers must be brought back into the bosom of the community, or at least, if the latter is considered to be ill, must be assigned the task of healing it.'

The promotion of this 'task' and the illness suffered by 'the community' were most clearly analysed and presented by Lyotard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) by Jean Baudrillard; and Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1984).

Derrida's deconstruction is key and therefore explained, but it is important to examine the accelerating nature of change induced by the social and historical conditions referred to above and not postpone that examination by dwelling on the formation of a theoretical position already having been accepted in the present hypothesis.

In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard posits that advances in technology, specifically the use of computers in the communication of information, what we now refer to as information technology, create new developments in knowledge and its distribution. Lyotard exemplifies this advancement with the changing role of the university but assures that it is visible in all of society's arenas where society is defined as a 'unified totality', or 'giant machine'. This definition makes it unnecessary to choose 'between the homogeneity and the intrinsic duality of the social', as long as knowledge is being communicated and the aim is to study that knowledge but also address that the...

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34 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. 73.
communication component of society 'is becoming more prominent day by day, both as a reality and as an issue.'

The outcome of this increased use of communication, diffusion of information and development of knowledge is an increment in the individual's capacity to make his or her own decisions that have the potential to be better informed and of greater impact on, or greater relation to, decisions of other individuals. Lyotard concedes that knowledge has become the principal form of production and could become the major stake in the worldwide competition for power and that this is already the defining factor between developed and developing world nations. Globalisation, which he calls 'the new forms of circulation of capital that go by the generic name of multi-national corporations,' are overpowering the nation-states, pioneers in a rewriting of rules and terms that has no choice but to accept the redrawing of borders and the nature of groupings.

The 'breaking up of grand narratives' is how Lyotard articulates the mode and meaning of the change he sees as 'societies enter [...] the post-industrial age and cultures the postmodern one.' Transformations in knowledge and communication, supplemented by powerful and very visible examples of the stepping-over of once considered all-mighty institutions cause disbelief in those institutions and those like it. The metaphysical nature of metanarratives leads to incredulity in those narratives, exemplified by Christianity and Marxism. Failing to fulfil their promise and being exposed to promote the interests of traditional power-mongers most often seen as white or Western, heterosexual and middle-class males, causes them to lose their legitimating functions.

Lyotard interprets this decline of master narratives as a positive thing, notably he forwards the surfacing or resurfacing of successful micronarratives; the related promotion of alterity and difference that gives marginal voices new outlets could occur by default or result from the wars, scandals and crises viewed as generated by what are now viewed as modernist metanarratives.

Lyotard developed his theory further using sociolinguistic analyses in the tradition of post-structuralism postulated by Jacques Derrida, who used the structuralist focus on linguistics to develop Heidegger's idea of 'Destruktion.' Destruktion was further defined by Heidegger as an Abbau 'dismantling, lit. unbuilding', thus:

There necessarily belongs to the conceptual interpretation of being and its structures, that is,

38 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, p. 16.
40 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, p. 15.
42 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, p. xxiv.
to the reductive construction of being, a destruction - a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are de-constructed down to the sources from which they were drawn. Only by means of this destruction can ontology fully assure itself in a phenomenological way of the genuine character of its concepts.\footnote{Martin Heidegger, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology. Translation, introduction, and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, c1982), p. 23. Originally published as Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1975).}

This can be simply defined as the intellectual exercise of a negative analysis: that to live authentically one must escape from the average everyday ordinariness of life and contemplate his/her own death (non-being, or nothingness); in turn this exercise creates a positive analysis of history through an attempt to discern authenticity through a rigorous questioning of accepted authority. Structuralism theorised that meaning was created by systems of signs working together; a sign being an object, image or word constructed by a signifier and a signified.

Derrida's resultant 'Destruction' saw every sign based on 'non-presence' or 'absence'; commonly explained as the word 'dog' not explicitly meaning a four-legged furry animal but more so something that is 'not cat' or 'not book', and so deconstruction, the basis of post-structuralism, sees meaning as only understandable through its relation to the meaning of other objects. The signifier of any object, image or text must contain 'traces' of the signs left by the absence of the other related signs.

After Roland Barthes,\footnote{Roland Barthes, Critical Essays, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972). Originally published as Essais critiques, (Paris: Seuil, 1964).} Derrida used the word 'text' to refer to any object, image, word, sign or phenomenon, cultural or otherwise, including history and the perceived reality this was seen to create. Derrida's most famous saying must be understood in this context. It was translated into English as, 'there is nothing outside the text.' Many writers engage with this sentiment, the positive critics suggest that Derrida was not an ultra-idealist trying to reduce everything to language. Offering different readings of the same, more accurate translation of this quote where the French original is: \textit{Il n'y a pas de hors-texte} 'There is no outside-text', Alex Callinicos reads this as Derrida believing that 'once you see language as a constant movement of differences in which there is no stable resting point, you can no longer appeal to reality as a refuge independent of language.'\footnote{Alex Callinicos, 'Obituary: The Infinite Search', Socialist Review, (November, 2004) <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9101> [18 May 2008].}

From Derrida claiming that everything acquires the instability and ambiguity inherent in language, here for 'everything' we can read history and the meta-narratives it has created, Lyotard developed upon what was seen as a strong starting-point for a deliberation on the self \textit{as} other. As a
fundamental breakthrough in examining self-other relationships now that the binary oppositions which govern a 'text', where here we can read self or other or self-other relationships, had been dismantled. Postmodernism had begun a theory of cultural identity and therefore identity politics.

In *The Différend: Phrases in Dispute*, Lyotard develops his analysis of how injustices take place in the context of language. He uses the term 'différend' to refer to a case of conflict between parties, or what he terms 'phrase regimes', that cannot be objectively settled due to the lack of a rule of judgement equally correct to both as the parties concerned do not share agreed rules, norms or paradigms due to difference in language. Lyotard distinguishes the victim from the plaintiff, as having been wronged and as not having the power to present that wrong for the same reason of unshared modes of communication or models of behaviour; 'I would like to call a différend the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim.'

The ascendancy of the plaintiff over the victim is analogous to the ascendancy of certain groups and suppression of others. An application of this theory is that of indigenous peoples' claims to land rights in colonised countries. This example shows the relevance of Lyotard's work for practical problems in the contemporary world and is one that is very relevant to the present study, relating directly to the causes and outcomes of the Oaxacan Conflict and the general nature of society and culture, therefore the representation and expression studied. The context of indigenous illegal immigrants in the United States that do not speak Spanish and are very likely to lose all rights to an opportunity to express before even appealing for respect for their situation, also highlights the relevance of Lyotard's work. For Lyotard, a 'différend-free' existence would mean the establishment of a new form of localised, non-centric justice. Opposing master narratives that homogenize and impose hierarchies according to difference, Lyotard's view promotes the idea that reality consists of singular events that cannot be represented accurately by rational theory.

Opposing universality with pluralism and multiplicity, Lyotard's concern for difference, led to his definition of postmodernity as an age of fragmentation and pluralism. The desire to analyse and present history or events and how politics is best viewed as a series of opposing representations of those events is his perspective on the impact of science and technology in postmodernity.

The presenting of an irreconcilable différend was developed by Lyotard into his base theory of the postmodern: the antonymous task of presenting the unpresentable. The most direct defining passages in *The Postmodern Condition*: 'The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation', point to Lyotard's penchant for discussing and deconstructing representation in order to dismiss modernist claims is Lyotard's method of

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delineating the difference between postmodern and modern aesthetics.

A postmodern writer or artist is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories [...] Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done.49

This description of postmodern artistic endeavour is central to the present research, in terms of the cultural output investigated but also, very importantly, to the long-term claims made on the pedagogical and performative roles of that output, and, in turn, with respect to the present work and the discourse it itself presents.50 From what Jameson calls 'Lyotard's embattled endorsement of the supreme value of aesthetic innovation',51 comes what the present research considers the crux of his contribution. Lyotard continues:

Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an event; hence also, they always come too late for their author, or [...] their realization always comes too soon. Post modern would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo).52

The meaning of these bountiful passages, from the appendix to The Postmodern Condition, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?53 comes clear in the context that Lyotard has set: 'Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.'54 Jameson reads this as a reluctance on Lyotard's part:

[Lyotard is] in reality quite unwilling to posit a postmodernist stage radically different from the period of high modernism and involving a fundamental historical and cultural break with this last [...] not as that which follows modernism and its particular legitimation crisis, but rather as a cyclical moment that returns before the emergence of ever new modernisms in the

49 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, p. 81. Emphasis in the original.
51 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 61.
52 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, p. 81. Emphasis in the original.
53 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, pp. 71-83.
54 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, p. 79.
stricter sense.\textsuperscript{55}

Delineated thus by Lyotard: 'A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern.'\textsuperscript{56} The present research draws particular attention to this approach, with reference to the theoretical conclusions it will be possible to make upon investigation of the postcolonial theories that follows in the later sections of the present chapter and the raw data provided by the ethnographical study of Oaxacan art.

**Jean Baudrillard**

Jean Baudrillard was originally a structuralist interested in the way the semiotic regimes of advertising shape and categorise the understanding of reality. His initial work also used a Marxist model, he worked towards a sociology of 'consumer society' and how it associates new values, meaning, and behaviours with material goods, thus a political economy of consumerism. Most writers agree that his work changed from the late 1960s and into the 1980s, leaving behind a direct focus on consumer behaviour but preferring to investigate how society was being changed by the mass media, information and technology. The development of Baudrillard's earlier work investigated consumerism directly and deconstructed advertising using Derrida's interpretative tools and allowed him to arrive at hypotheses and then conclusions on the power of cultural representations to become lived reality and in turn stimulate explicit behaviours.

Developing the structuralist notion of the sign, Baudrillard sought to prove that through the consumption of an advertised material good the individual adopted the cultural sign and adapted one's behaviour to the code it implied and imposed. The code then shapes and ultimately determines reality through the continued operation and interaction of both cultural and behavioural signs. For Baudrillard, this meant that the object cannot itself be identified or determined as the real object, or the 'real' reality of that object as separated by Rex Butler in his book *Jean Baudrillard: The Defence of the Real* where Baudrillard's 'the real' is exposed to have a dual meaning. The 'real' reality exists beyond the limits of our simulations but is simulated as soon as it comes into contact with the hyper-real world and is different from the circular reality produced by the self-referential systems that create the simulations. Butler posits that Baudrillard provided an account of these circularities by exploring, critiquing, and showing them up to be fictional understandings, or simulations, of the real.\textsuperscript{57}

Baudrillard labelled his own vision as nihilistic and that his theory was obsessed by the mode

\textsuperscript{55} Jameson, foreword to Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. xvi. Emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{56} Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. 79.
of disappearance. Baudrillard used this model to state that the media had created a system of non-communication, offering only a one-way process of communication the media had become an example of 'power belongs to him who gives and to whom no return can be made,' given that the media make 'all processes of exchange impossible.' For Baudrillard this is the root of the media's 'system of social control and power'.

The effect of this on society, expressed in *Simulacra and Simulation*, is that the mass media has become so powerful that simulated realities replace actual reality. This hyper-reality is a perfect imitation of reality created through the manipulation of signs. Through large, mass audiences, massification is intensified and so greater reinforcement of ideas and experience results. If the masses absorb all media, Baudrillard named specifically the broadcast media, especially television, then the meaning of the signs and simulacra in every realm of everyday life is neutralised or resisted as it is recognised as only simulacra. The masses demand and are given greater quantities and an eventual majority of spectacle and entertainment and the re-packaging of other content in spectacular or entertaining forms. This last being especially prevalent in the Mexican mass media that appears to know no limits in saturating all available space and time with advertising content.

Douglas Kellner believes Baudrillard's abstraction of the media from social systems and media technology means Baudrillard anthropomorphizes the media and by bestowing upon it a form of technological mysticism, he globalises media effects and elevates the media to demigods of a new type of society and new type of experience. This behaviour is prevalent across all media sectors in Mexico, outstanding examples being the investigative and documentary efforts of TV Azteca. This national broadcaster purposefully involves itself with the viewing public through its *Fuerza Informativa Azteca* 'Azteca Information Force' (FIA) the human and resource capital of its news teams invested in gleaning every detail or tragic consequence from any news-worthy story, where 'news-worthy' must be taken as a very wide category. Extending itself into helping victims, families, animals or populations in distress, the uniformed FIA are recorded by multi-logotyped cameras as they create their own news stories behind the stories, wringing every last drop from the situation and minimal investment the company has made to get them there, in order to create as much usable journalistic material as possible.

Baudrillard believed that all subversive communication has to pass through media.

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communication channels and therefore have all content and message translated into standard codes in keeping with the editorial line or other machinations of the media institutions themselves. The evolution of the Internet's original forum and idea-sharing uses now have a commercial and mass media application and the boundaries of these categories also blur with the commercial media application known as 'citizen journalism' pioneered by the BBC and CNN that long before had been used extensively by non-commercial media sources, this leads to a negation of Baudrillard's rejection of the existence of successful subversive media.

The electoral system and the general strike are also media, playing on extensive formal socialisation, according to Baudrillard they are the 'subtlest and stealthiest institutions of filtration, dismantling and censorship.' He explains the student and general strike in France now known as Mai '68 as a media event that had its meaning neutralised, but that:

The real revolutionary media during May [Paris, France, 1968] were the walls and their speech, the silk-screen posters and the hand-painted notices, the street where speech began and was exchanged - everything that was an immediate inscription, given and returned, spoken and answered, mobile in the same space and time, reciprocal and antagonistic. The street is, in this sense, the alternative and subversive form of the mass media, since it isn't, like the latter, an objectified support for answer-less messages, a transmission system at a distance. It is the frayed space of the symbolic exchange of speech - ephemeral, mortal: a speech that is not reflected on the Platonic screen of the media. Institutionalized by reproduction, reduced to a spectacle, this speech is expiring.

The best-known of Baudrillard's examples of the hyper-real and a demonstration of how the real can be shaped by economic, political, and cultural powers was first published as a series of newspaper articles in 1991. He argued that the first Gulf War 'did not take place,' its 'reality' was so mediated and constructed by images that in effect it occurred in hyper-reality. As he was writing in real time during and just after the war, Baudrillard's claim that the media's audience had 'neither need of nor the taste of real drama or real war. What we require is the aphrodisiac spice of the multiplication of fakes and the hallucinations of violence' was by now what he saw as 'pleasure in our indifference and our irresponsibility [...] the supreme form of democracy.'

The present study examines the contradiction of these ideas in the context of the official,

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63 Baudrillard, *For a critique,* pp. 176-177.
Fredric Jameson

Fredric Jameson states that it is worth observing that his own 'version of all this [postmodernism] [...] owes a great debt to Baudrillard, as well as to the theorists to whom he is himself indebted.'

Having studied and developed neo-Marxist literary and critical theories during the 1960s and 1970s, Jameson's impactful response to Lyotard's work interprets postmodernism in terms of the Marxian theory of capitalism. Jameson uses a neo-Marxian model of the stages of capitalist development to define postmodernism as a new stage of capitalism that breaks away from modernism, but is a new 'cultural dominant' much more than an aesthetic style. Jameson was able to identify and analyse formal features of postmodern representation and theorise on their foundation as part of what he saw as a shift to a global capitalism. Concentrating on culture was also a way to criticise Lyotard, who Jameson saw as reluctant to define his idea of postmodernism as too radically different from that of modernity, claiming that Lyotard did not describe a historical or cultural situation too different from that of high modernism and attributes this as being due to an unwillingness to move away from the avant-garde art Lyotard had investigated so closely.

Jameson believes we should take 'a further step that Lyotard seems unwilling to do in the present text, namely to posit, not the disappearance of the great master-narratives, but their passage underground as it were, their continuing but now unconscious effectiveness as a way of “thinking about” and acting in our current situation.' This is the development of Jameson's previous work *The Political Unconscious* (1981) from which Kellner quotes the phrase 'the construction of the bourgeois subject in emergent capitalism and its schizophrenic disintegration in our own time'. It is here that we can see Jameson's present and future preoccupations for culture and society.

As Edward Said comments in his essay in the *Anti-Aesthetic*, Jameson is a 'Marxist literary theorist who writes for Marxist literary theorists' and doggedly contrasts with the 'new French post-Marxism' ideological position Lyotard had taken. It remains that Jameson's work as a whole should be read as a series of attempts to provide a Marxist method of interpretation and aesthetic theory. It can be acknowledged that from Jameson's standpoint that the capitalist processes of

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66 Fredric Jameson, 'Foreword', in *The Postmodern Condition*, by Lyotard, p. xii.
commodification and reification are the driving forces of present society. This builds on the work of both Lyotard and Baudrillard as it has been introduced above. The following summary of factors that Jameson sees as characteristic of postmodern society can be constructed:

1) a 'schizophrenic' fragmented image culture and 'aestheticisation' derived from the rupture of narratives and subjects;
2) a reduction of history to historicity, to a stereotyped and clichéd set of images that pander to nostalgia rather than genuine historical understanding;
3) the implosion of high culture and mass culture;
4) a 'new depthlessness' that resists interpretation, involves pastiche and not parody;
5) a loss of critical distance and embellishment to existing society.  

Technology and science, a theme common to the approaches of Lyotard, Baudrillard and Jameson as central to postmodernity, are treated in different ways by these writers. The present research has delved into the work of Spanish philosopher Eduardo Subirats whose critical stance covers what he calls the 'metamorphosis of culture' from modernity to postmodernity using a wide range of cultural movements, works, artists and writers as references. His early work underlines the importance of the avant-garde and observes the effects of globalisation on a number of levels, in particular that of Latin America culture.

While Lyotard believes that through postmodernism 'it is possible to ascribe the dialectics of the avant-gardes to the challenge posed by the realisms of industry and mass communication to painting and the narrative arts,' Subirats criticises early treatments of 'modern tecno-science', such as that by the Frankfurt School, 'of establishing strategies of dominance and dehumanization.' He argues for a reconfiguration of the cultural significance of technology that does not focus on the 'infinite recounting of its alienating aspects'. His proposed metamorphosis of modernity does not dwell on the conflict between historic culture and industrial civilisation, but on how new forms of instruments and machines define the living space of human communication and, at the same time, are given a symbolic dimension. This integration and dependence on communications technology is emphasised by the current research as an explanation of Jameson's 'depthlessness' and an

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69 Jameson, Postmodernism.
71 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. 75.
important factor in the 'implosion' feared by Baudrillard; it also also introduces the importance of technology and communications to the global nature of postmodernity and, importantly for a Marxian interpretation, the new structures and distribution of labour under capitalism.

Neil Lazarus, whose work is pertinent to the postcolonial theories discussed below, begins *Nationalism And Cultural Practice In The Postcolonial World* (1999) with Jameson's idea that 'with its propensities towards “infinite expansion,” capitalism “may be said to reinvent history in a new way, and also to constitute an incomparable and hitherto novel form of social imperialism.”'

Lazarus defends his use of this 'Marxist understanding that capitalism [...] is unprecedented as an historical formation both in its global extension as a mode of production and in its intensive saturation of social relations' with a critique of Anthony Giddens's model of modernity and globality as a universalisation of the West. If, in a Marxian view, capitalism is understood as a world-system from the outset, then it follows to continue with Immanuel Wallerstein's statement that '[we] do not live in a modernising world but in a capitalist world. What makes this world tick is not the need for achievement but the need for profit. The problem for oppressed strata is not how to communicate with this world but how to overthrow it.' The present research uses this perspective of the reach of capital as its standpoint on globalisation and the globalising power of new information technologies.

Wallerstein can also be used to emphasise the role of postmodernity in the task that Oaxacan artists are hypothesised to be undertaking towards such an overthrowing. 'The years since 1968 [are] so often cited as the year zero of “endism” and “post-” thought alike,' continues Lazarus, to then criticise these types of thought for 'not having born witness to any or transcendence or leaving behind of capitalist modernity, but on the contrary, to a *consolidation* of the historical patterns of bourgeois class domination.' The present research posits that what Wallerstein has called a 'revolution in and of the world-system' and 'one of the great formative events in the history of our modern world-system' is the 'watershed event' of a process in its infancy but not without maturity.

If the present moment is characterised by Jameson's 'paradoxical slogan: "difference relates"' then it is the expression of that sentiment, in a pedagogical and performative way, using the farthest-reaching communication and other forms of technology that is the necessary and ongoing element of this stage of this process. If this 'slogan' is a characterisation of the 'postmodernist experience of

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76 Lazarus, *Nationalism*, p. 16.


form, then it is this form, however playful, indiscreet and hybrid, that this stage in the process is taking, and at an accelerating rate. The work of Eric Hobsbawm explains the pertinence to the hypothesis:

The events of recent years have indeed been spectacular and world changing - and also unexpected and unpredicted. Yet the revolutionary nature of the period we have been - we are still - living through goes far beyond those changes in global politics which are now making it impossible for cartographers to prepare atlases that will not be out of date in a matter of months. Never before in history has ordinary human life, and the societies in which it takes place, been so radically transformed in so short a time: not merely within a single lifetime, but within part of a lifetime.

The present research mirrors Hobsbawm's desire to describe global changes. He considers three such changes: 'For much of recorded history most human beings have lived off the land and its animals. [...] Yet between 1950 and 1975 this ceased to be the case over the greater part of the earth’s surface. [...] And this process occurred with dramatic speed.' Hobsbawm's second change 'is the unprecedented creation of intellectuals as a mass demographic phenomenon' and to illustrate his third change, the position of women in society, he 'considers the per cent of married women in the USA who lived with their husbands and went out to work for pay. In 1980 more than half of all US married women did so. Once again, the percentage just about doubled between 1950 and 1970.'

The present research aligns the time-scale of Hobsbawm's analysis of history to the avant-garde tendencies described by Huyssen, Lyotard and Subirats. The theme of Hobsbwam's speech is to 'demonstrate that human societies, and the relations of people within them, have undergone a sort of economic, technological and sociological earthquake within the lifetime of people who have barely got beyond middle age.' This 'earthquake' is represented by the present research in how global changes affect the area and community studied, the speed of these changes and also the accelerating nature of changes of this type brought about by those same changes. Returning to Hobsbawm once more extrapolates to highlight this:

There has never before been anything like it in world history, for, as I have pointed out,
these are not localized or regional changes but global ones - even though their specific impact differs from one country to another. And it would be quite astonishing if such drastic changes in material life did not also produce crises in what Marx called the “superstructure” of ideas - in culture and civilization.86

This view differs from that of Lazarus, who comments on the 'IMF- [and] World Bank-managed austerity or “structural adjustment” programs, and the so-called “race to the bottom” - the ongoing capitalist-sponsored downward levelling of living conditions on a world-wide scale'.87 The present study responds that it is Hobsbawm's 'relations of human life' discussed as 'ordinary' that have begun to change during the period Lazarus labels “post-” thought'. Lazarus believes that this period, the one corresponding to the processes that, in his view, only consolidate bourgeois class domination 'has brought in its wake heightened instability and political conflict (often crystallising around ethnic-nationalist, neo-traditionalist, and fascist movements) and the restructuring of the international division of labour'.88 Jameson believes that postmodernism provides the way to articulate concrete social struggles; the present research understands how these tools were and are used to the ends of which Lazarus writes and this is considered as the 'metaphorical exchange of energies with those other two characteristic postmodern systems (or representations!) which are the media and the market.’89 Postmodernism as political marketing, tried and tested in the neo-conservative areas and by their governments in other areas constitutes the 'abused' 1970s-1990s postmodernism of the present research. Jameson reveals why this abuse was so easy and how this form of politics, or this representation of politics was and continues to be so successful:

For the very concept of difference itself is booby-trapped; it is at least pseudodialectical, and its imperceptible alternation with its sometimes indistinguishable opposite number, Identity, is among the oldest language and thought games recorded in (several) philosophical traditions. (Is the difference between the Same and the Other the same as the difference between the Other and the Same, or is it different?)90

The present research reads these problems with postmodernism as having been co-opted by political representation that learnt from and developed upon the aesthetic success of the use of postmodern aesthetics in advertising and mass culture. Popular culture's global power and status

86 Hobsbawm, 'The Crisis of Today's Ideologies'. p. 57.
87 Lazarus, Nationalism, p. 19.
88 Lazarus, Nationalism, p. 19.
89 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 341.
90 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 341. Punctuation in original.
owe much to the fine-weaving that postmodern aesthetics can simultaneously perform and represent to consumers. Others, voters and the full array of difference-related subjects are at once consumer and commodity. If, from Jameson, 'what passes for a spirited defense of difference is, of course, simply liberal tolerance [...] the result of social homogenization and standardization and the obliteration of genuine social difference in the first place' then the present research proposes that 'the dialectic of neoethnicity' is easily co-opted towards promoting consumption. Relevant here to both the creation of the communities and groups studied and the consumption of culture regarded as responsible for the insurgence of neo-liberal strategies. This theme is clearly related to the resurgence of interest in and by the Zapotec culture, where the recently created magazine Revista Guidxizá has its title translated into Spanish and always printed alongside it, specially in promotion, as Nación Zapoteca 'Zapotec Nation'.

'There is a "difference," one would think, between one's being condemned to be identified as a member of a group and a more optional choice of the badge of group membership because its culture has become publicly valorized.' An investigation of the relationship between the members of the communities and groups studied here is then directed towards this, Jameson's, realist assessment of difference: 'Ethnicity in the postmodern, in other words - neo-ethnicity - is something of a yuppie phenomenon, and thereby without too many mediations a matter of fashion and the market.'

**Postmodernism as representation**

Georg Simmel's treatment of culture posits that complex structures of modernity led to an alienation and mental isolation from the flow of subjective life, increased by urbanisation, and this cultural pessimism developed into an enthusiasm for radical collective action, especially during the First World War. 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' presents Simmel's view of the city as a place of stimulating freedom but that forces its inhabitants become 'blasé' and calculating in order to survive. The related search and exchange of cash, being, once greatly extrapolated, indicative of modern life and the enforced conditions on the populations of basically impoverished postcolonial locations whose pressures and dependencies come from abroad, and as hypothesised here, of no greater extent than in the case of contemporary Mexico and the state of Oaxaca.

It became apparent that Simmel's work was a candidate to be added to Kellner and Best's list

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of 'important sources of postmodern theory in 19th century thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche', where 'these theorists anticipate contemporary forms of the postmodern turn'. The details of Simmel's stunted and undermined contribution to academia in his lifetime, and even the oft-cited notion of varied categorisations for a thinker primarily described as a sociologist but who indeed showed and thereby promoted a multi-faceted approach to the extent even of creating subject and discipline names to fit his theories, are of a postmodern nature.

A theoretical parallel can be drawn with Jameson, for whom space is a 'fundamental organising concern' of the model of political culture that postmodernism represents in order to discuss the present situation. He presents the aesthetic of postmodernism as the new cultural form as an aesthetic of 'cognitive mapping' that he extrapolates from Lynch's notion of a cognitive city map that individuals use to guide their physical movement and relationship to their surroundings, to national and global spaces; 'that mental map of the social and global totality we all carry around in our heads.'

For Jameson, 'disalienation in the traditional city, then, involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories.' As Jameson proposes this map as a cultural model, extending the notion of the redrawing of national, continental and as described above, interpersonal and intercultural boundaries, he leads to the creation of a politics of postmodernism as a cultural phenomenon, as the aesthetic representation of a historical, but self-questioning, reality.

The cultural model Jameson proposes, as has been presented above 'foregrounds the cognitive and pedagogical dimensions of political art and culture' in a return to these dimensions. The proposed politics of aesthetic representation has the intent to trigger our self-conscious and awaken 'our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life, both as we live it now, and as we feel it in our bones it ought to be lived.'

For Jameson, politics is updated within the new social movements, where culture, as a political tool, will 'make an inventory of the variable structures of “constraint” lived by the various marginal, oppressed, or dominated groups - the so-called "new social movements"'.

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99 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 51.
100 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 50.
101 Douglas Kellner and Steven Best, Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations (New York: The Guildford Press,
Hal Foster creates a distinction between a postmodernism of resistance and a postmodernism of reaction. The former is founded on a 'desire to change the object and its social context' and critically deconstruct traditions with a critique of their origins, while the latter, using the seemingly playful aesthetic and rubric of postmodernism is strategically promoted by the political Right or neoconservatives as exemplary of an unwanted, adversary culture so it can then be denounced and replaced by an affirmative culture, a tool of social control.\(^{102}\) The present study reads the Oaxacan art community as exhibiting a postmodernism of resistance that responds to the postmodernism of reaction that the Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI) 'Institutional Revolutionary Party' had so successfully used against culture's impact in its long reign since the first post-Revolution election in 1929.

As proposed above, central to this investigation is Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping where he postulates that the individual strives to imagine himself within a comprehensible totality in order to understand his own world and his place in it. To this cognitive map we must add Jameson's argument from 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital' that specifies that 'third world texts [...] necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third world culture and society.'\(^{103}\) This work by Jameson has received much criticism from the postcolonial theorists, as Lazarus summarises in *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, for residing on an untenable categorisation of the third world, and not 'that the universalism of his hypothesis concerning “third-world” literature is unwarranted or even that his method is latently orientalistic' but that Jameson's 'postulation of the “national allegory” hypothesis [is] colonialist in character and tendency.'\(^{104}\)

National allegory, as explained by Jameson in 'National Allegory in Wyndham Lewis', 'is a formal attempt to bridge the increasing gap between the existential data of everyday life within a given nation-state and the structural tendency of monopoly capital to develop on a worldwide, essentially transnational scale.'\(^{105}\)

An individual subject in the third world, for which we can read an inhabitant of Mexico or even a contemporary artist in Oaxaca, is constantly repositioning and redefining him- or herself in


terms of his or her local, regional, continental and global cognitive map from an inherent political standpoint. This can be further explained by the work of Dawn Ades, who writes 'history is not, in Mexico, just a background cultural reference – it is a dynamic, insidious, active and contested element in the expression and construction of political and cultural identity. The Mexican individual, and for reasons of cultural richness and financial poverty, more so in the case of a Oaxacan subject, is continually comparing and therefore changing his or her view of the past and the present and the relationship between them.

Theoretical support of this idea will now be reviewed in terms specific to the development and impact of postmodernism in Latin America. Without pre-empting the theory to follow, the following excerpt from a leading contemporary writer in Mexico, from a novel published during the time of the fieldwork, links postmodernism and postcolonialism. The context of the work of fiction depicts a futurist anti-utopianism that portrays Mexico City, a Mexican or Latin American diaspora as an unnamed group living under the conditions of an almost water-less society.

After all what are we? […] An idiotic stubbornness. A population loyal to its tyrants, disembowelled, hurt, disheartened, hungry, sick, sad, tricked, deformed and dumb. A people faithful to its tyrants, squashed, injured, disheartened, hungry, sick, sad, tricked, deformed and mad. At least this helps those that live off pity: dwarves, the micro-leaderless, the hypertrophied, the hyper-tense, hypersomniacs, the hypothermic, the jaundiced, the scaly-skinned, the used, the endomorphic, the oval-faced, the undernourished, the menstrual and the hyper-menstrual, the hyperemic, hypochondriacs. Fat people, those with cirrhosis, the lame, the one-armed. The blind. The hyperreal. They amount to twenty million ex-patriots. Hundreds of thousands more dragging their misery all over the place. Poor them.

1.3 Postmodernism in Latin America

The concept of a Latin American postmodernism evokes thought of the condition of postcoloniality and also appears 'inappropriate for nation-states and social formation that is usual to think of as not yet having gone through the stage of modernity'. So Beverley, Aronna and Oviedo introduce the

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107 Juan Manuel Servín, Al final del vacío (Mexico City: Random House Mondadori, 2007), p. 13. This work was published in close temporal proximity to Guillermo Fadanelli, En busca de un lugar habitable (Oaxaca: Almadía, 2008), that discusses the impact of technological innovation, amongst other postmodern problematics, through recounting the devastation of the publishing industry by its digital competition.
two central themes to their collection of leading essays, *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*.

Beverly, Aronna and Oviedo are 'less interested with presenting a 'regional' variant of postmodernism' but present the purpose of the collection to 'resituate' the concept of postmodernism in a 'more genuinely international framework' as it 'risks being colonised by Anglo-European provincialism'.

This statement reflects a general direction present in the relevant Latin American literature, that rigorously vindicated Latin American cultural studies, 'not as a branch of a universal cultural studies or as a supplement of British or European cultural studies, but as a full-fledged field of inquiry that has its own historical problematics and trajectories'. Work by writers such as Hugo Achúgar and Santiago Colas argued that the point of departure for an understanding of Latin America should be found within the political, social and cultural contexts of Latin America itself.

A resulting 'fracturing and implosion of the field' is best analysed by Abril Trigo in the *Latin American Cultural Studies Reader*:

The global thrust of […] transnational cultural studies, subaltern studies, postcolonialism and postoccidentalism, and deconstructionist discourse analysis […] activated a chain reaction in Latin America, where many intellectuals immersed in their national and regional problematics perceived them as a new form of neo-colonial intrusion and deployed, as a defense mechanism, a fallacious dichotomy between literary criticism and cultural studies, thus inadvertently concealing and displacing the ultimate issues behind the geopolitical divide.

The cause of this attitude is commonly related to the state of U.S.-Latin American relations following the violent and repressive neo-liberal programme with which Latin America cannot identify. The result of this attitude led to a concentration on the postmodernism of reaction, as defined above by Foster, whereby the neo-conservative faction seeks to sever the social and controls of culture by denouncing adversary propositions. This concentration lead to deep scepticism in the intention of postmodernism that George Yúdice treats as celebrating parasitism and

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To celebrate 'parasitism' (whose Latin American correlate is the problem of informal economies) or the hyper-real (which in Latin America is wrought by the hyperinflationary effects of the external debt and narcotraffic) is like cheerleading on the sidelines as neoconservatives sell out the country.\textsuperscript{113}

Norbert Lechner writes of a 'disenchantment called postmodernism'\textsuperscript{114} as a new state of mind that deserves our attention in the new international cultural climate but asks whether it is just an intellectual fashion. Claiming that postmodernity is above all disenchantment with modernity and if disenchantment is a reinterpretation of desires, he questions whether new landscapes and a new dynamic able to fulfil new desires. Lechner responds: 'Why take for granted that homogeneity favours peaceful understanding while heterogeneity is a source of conflict.'\textsuperscript{115} Disenchantment as a 'new value,' is also dangerous in Lechner's view, as it 'can seriously effect the process of democratization by weakening its political roots.'\textsuperscript{116}

The use of an analysis of postcolonialism from further afield if we are to truly generate and support an international framework and avoid the pitfalls of an academic hyper-bureaucracy that does little other than reflect the power-hungry reactionary politics of the region, comes from the work of Okwui Enwezor. He differentiates postcolonialism from postmodernism thus: 'postmodernism was preoccupied with relativizing historical transformations and contesting the lapses and prejudices of epistemological grand narratives, postcoloniality does the obverse, postcoloniality seeks to subjugate and replace all grand narratives through new ethical demands on modes of historical interpretation.'\textsuperscript{117}

Is the postmodern experience possible in Latin America, where it is still not clear that there is or was a clear modernity? The colony did not develop towards modernity, 'not only because it imported Christian gods [...] who adapted themselves to the polytheism of our indigenous cultures, but [...] because the colony defined its fundamental ethos around the cultivation of land [...] and it was as difficult for the great landowners, ecclesiastics, politicians and colonial agents, as much as


\textsuperscript{114} Norbert Lechner, 'A Disenchantment Called Postmodernism', in \textit{The Postmodernism Debate}, ed. by John Beverly and others, pp. 147-164 (p. 147).

\textsuperscript{115} Lechner, 'A Disenchantment', p. 154.

\textsuperscript{116} Lechner, 'A Disenchantment', p. 148.

for Indian peasants, to fully undertake the difficult and audacious task of modernity.118

The development of a Latin American postmodernism and its relationship to an uneven path through modernity, or the experience of an alternative modernity, is consistent with the work of Charles Taylor, whose concept of 'creative adaptation' posits that cultures adapt to their individual conditions and it is as likely that they will become more distinct than as to become more similar or unite.119 From the Latin American camp, Enrique Dussel argues that 'modernity is, in fact, a European phenomenon, but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity that is its ultimate content.'120 Is this 'ultimate content' readable as postmodernism in Latin America?

When declaring 'I don't believe in postmodernity' in an interview given to Mexican newspaper Reforma, in 2004, Hal Foster continued: 'I am in almost total agreement with Habermas - primarily that modernity is an incomplete project and that postmodernism could have arrived at its end.'121 Following Jameson's lead, that treats modernism and postmodernism as terms to express two ways to periodise culture and its relationship with other historical processes, Foster labels postmodernism as an 'attempt to reconnect art with everyday life, after modernity had made it abstract, difficult and unpopular.'122 Important here is the description of what Foster calls in his literature the 'neo-avant-garde', that equates to the Huyssen's description of the factors creating postmodernism from the late 1950s, Lyotard's reporting on instances of 'transavantgardism' and 'los avant-gardes' denoted by Subirats.

How can art reintegrate into society? The reverse of Bürger's sentiments that originally read: 'the demand that art be reintegrated in the praxis of life within the existing society can no longer be seriously made after the failure of avant-gardiste intentions.'123

The present work sides with Foster and Benjamin Buchloh in promoting a neo-avant-garde. If the historical avant-garde 'criticised the notion of autonomy, the central term of modernist thinking' and sought to 'abolish the separation of the aesthetic from the real and attempted instead to integrate art within social praxis' it did attempt to criticise the institutionalisation of modernism.124

Bürger sees the activities of the generations of post-War artists that he calls the neo-avant-

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118 Fernando Calderón, 'Latin American Identity and Mixed Temporalities', in The Postmodernism Debate, ed. by John Beverly and others, pp. 55-64 (p. 56).
120 Enrique Dussel, 'Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)', in The Postmodernism Debate, ed. by John Beverly and others, pp. 65-76 (p. 65).
122 Salazar, 'Entrevista con Hal Foster'.
garde as being flawed from the beginning. Bürger conceives the neo-avant-garde as having a fragment or open structure but, according to Buchloh, this means Burger misses the point that 'within such an open structure, all formal and material, not to mention iconographic elements are no longer able to generate the traditional semantic functions'.

Buchloh posits that the 'semantic atrophy' of postmodernism is the opposite of what Burger would expect of a successful neo-avant-garde – where a centralised and integrated meaning that maintains a 'referential relation to the the real world' resides within the aesthetic object itself. Buchloh argues strongly with the use of the repetition model that the neo-avant-garde work prohibits the perception of an immanent meaning and dislodges this traditional structure. With this displacing of meaning to the peripheries, we return once again to postmodernism.

Differing from Buchloh's approach, the present study posits that Oaxacan art does treat meaning as an aesthetic and ideological investment but that meaning is not only assigned to the artists' works from 'the process of their reception – the audience's dispositions and demands, the cultural legitimation the works are asked to perform' but, also, that meaning is assigned from outside. The establishment of a new generation of contemporary artists in Oaxaca, consciously copying or continuing the system invented by Francisco Toledo for both how to organise an artistic community as well as how to positively interact and aid the wider community of which that community is a sector, creates a new line of inquiry that asks whether it was not the societal interaction and altruism that was the basis of the system. The answer to this would appear to be 'yes' counting Toledo as one of a very small number of socially active artists in the early stages of the formation of Oaxacan art combined with the fact that the generation that immediately followed his did copy his and others' aesthetic styles but did not invest so heavily in the altruistic activities or even in the further development of the cultural sector itself.

Recounting the history of Mexican art leads to the undeniably inevitable need to consider the relationship between history and politics themselves. The enthusiastic grabbing of socialist realism by the Mexican Muralists was not unique to them. The Mexican experience due to and after the Muralist movement followed a pattern documented by Groys to be prevalent throughout world history:

Social realism was proclaimed the heir to all progressive art of all periods of world history. As to the reactionary art of each period, it was to be forgotten and stricken from the annals of history; the only possible reason for preserving anything at all was to illustrate the forces

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125 Buchloh, 'The Primary Colours', p. 47.
126 Buchloh, 'The Primary Colours', p. 47.
hostile to genuine, progressive art. Thus, since socialist realism shared the 'historical optimism', 'love of the people', 'love of life', 'genuine humanism', … it acquired the right to use any progressive art of the past as a model.\textsuperscript{128}

The resulting Rupture in Mexican art and the creation of Contemporary Art is reflective of the development of the nation during the C20th and highlights the individual nature of Mexico's history. Mexican art diverged away from its social realist roots, during modernist times that it has been argued did not affect Mexico or Latin America in the same way as other continents. The contemporary art indicates that the proposition that 'societal modernization, once activated, moves inexorably toward establishing a certain type of mental outlook (scientific rationalism, pragmatic instrumentalism, secularism) and a certain type of institutional order (popular government, bureaucratic administration, market-driven industrial economy) irrespective of the culture and politics of a given place is simply not true.'\textsuperscript{129}

Charles Taylor promotes a cultural theory of societal development, that proposes a divergence of cultures based on a process of creative adaptation where a theory of modernity that does not take into account the process of creative adaptation predicts only a convergence of cultures. Thomas McCarthy argues that Taylor overestimates the extent to which cultural differences are likely to survive societal change.\textsuperscript{130} Where Taylor sees the creation of a patchwork culture if cultures resist creative adaptation, McCarthy believes there is a case for divergence within convergence.\textsuperscript{131}

Oaxaca has a current need for development and investment on its own terms. Oaxacan art, as a viable system created by Francisco Toledo and continued by more recent generations including that of Pastrana and Flores, provides a framework on how to adapt to globalisation and accelerating change. The way in which Oaxaca reacts to, rather than resists, the complex journey through modernity or the external pressure to modernise, represents a very real, Latin American postmodernism.

Foster states in the 2004 article: ‘Since Jameson, once again it's [postmodernism is] used to think about changes in culture in relation to political, economical and social changes. For me it's not a philosophical, political or cultural trend but an analytical posture. On this point I agree with


\textsuperscript{129} Dilip Gaonkar, 'On alternative modernities', in \textit{On alternative modernities}, ed. by Gaonkar, pp. 1-23 (p. 16)


\textsuperscript{131} Charles Taylor, 'Two Theories of Modernity', p. 185.
Lyotard that postmodernism must prepare to adjust to a new modernism. There must be more than one postmodernism.\textsuperscript{132}

This is a position held by many of the Latin American authors: Martin Hopenhayn sees Latin American subjects as 'postmoderns by osmosis in the midst of a still-pending modernization.'\textsuperscript{133} An important notion from Hopenhayn's work, in terms of the present study, is his defence of the postmodern narrative against abuse, in particular, he writes, '[it] cannot be reduced to the market offensive and to the ideological uses that some neoliberal strategies make of it.'\textsuperscript{134} For the present work, this supports the position that a 1970s-1990s postmodernism was 'exhausted'\textsuperscript{135} from abuse by 'flows of finance capital in the Reagan-Thatcher era',\textsuperscript{136} and globalisation, the postmodern version of which, Garcia Canclini says, was hurried to an early grave once 'we discovered that the great thriller of neo-liberal globalisation is based on too many dangerous relationships and impossible loves.'\textsuperscript{137}

Speculation of the type undertaken by José Joaquín Brunner, that postmodernism is the form modernity takes in Latin America.\textsuperscript{138} Beverly, Aronna and Oviedo posit that 'the production of a postmodernist sublime in relation to Latin America may involve the aesthetic fetishisation of its social, cultural and economic status quo.'\textsuperscript{139} The result of this potential aesthetic fetishisation is a characteristic of the Latin America experienced by the present study, that also mirrors McLean's treatment of postmodernism as an 'analytical posture.'\textsuperscript{140}

Calderón surmises that the constitution of the first Latin American Communist parties caused such 'rich polemics' between the 'intellectuals who jumped on its [Marxism's] bandwagon' due to Marxism arriving 'already transformed into Leninism' can be appreciated with greater clarity in an analysis of the ideology and the relationships between the Mexican Muralists.\textsuperscript{141} Typical to these times, was Diego Rivera's introduction of Leninist concepts and goals to be attained through the instrument of a central, controlling party and its leadership: anti-imperialism, national self-determination, class alliances and communist struggle.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[132] Salazar, 'Entrevista con Hal Foster'.
\item[134] Hopenhayn, 'Postmodernism and Neoliberalism', p. 100.
\item[135] Huyssen, 'Mapping', p. 16.
\item[138] Beverly and others, eds., \textit{The Postmodernism Debate}, p. 4.
\item[141] Calderón, 'Latin American Identity'. p. 57.
\end{footnotes}
populist, movements' came with Latin America being beset by populism, what Fernando Calderón sees as 'the most genuine social and cultural creation of Latin America in the twentieth century.'

Only under populism [...] was modernity finally imposed in Latin America, with a Latin American style. Thus, from the Mexican and Bolivian Revolutions to the timid, but tragic and parodic, experience of Vargasism in Brazil, populism was the instrument our fuller integration into the universal and paradoxical experience of modernity.

To put it in Weberian terms, we were incorporated by populism into the modern game of living between bureaucratic rationalism and existential freedom. As the Mexican joke says: 'If Kafka were Latin American, he would be a realist.'

To return to this discussion's initial inquiry and a central concern of the present work, citing Ines Santa Cruz, it can be concluded: 'Ironically, perhaps, we are postmodern since modernity did not touch us.' Relating to the present work's investigation, Santa Cruz also comments that the region has an apparent 'vocation or a nostalgia for foundations and for meaning, a sort of hypertelos specific and proper to our unconcluded adventure'.

'How does the discourse of the postmodern, which theorizes the failure of this centred modernity, intervene in (disorganize, reformulate) the way that Latin America has had of imagining itself under modernist dependency?' This is the central question of highly significant work by Nelly Richard, that proposes that Latin America has been 'modern' in a postmodern way since before postmodernism had been innovated as an aesthetic and intellectual device with which to measure this characteristic and therefore an incongruous anomaly to traditional theories of progress and modernisation. Understanding her concise argument creates a mechanism by which to cement the present hypothesis, abbreviated as: how postmodernity provides new tools and modes of expression that members of the Oaxacan art community use to create visual representations of contemporary Mexico that are simultaneously worthy and conscious of global consumption.

If postmodernity is understood as a problematic of the crisis of Centred modernity, then postmodernity becomes the theoretical and discursive code that today speculates on totalities

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142 Calderón, 'Latin American Identity'. p. 58.
143 Calderón, 'Latin American Identity', p. 58.
and fragmentations; on the fragmentation of the Centre as a totality; and on the
decentralization of its axes under the semantic and territorial pressures of the margins that
proliferate within it.\textsuperscript{145}

As an American and European construct, postmodernity 'allows the Center to be the first to
meditate about its crisis of centrality' then the periphery, 'one of the margins now reintegrated into
the rhetorical complex of the disintegrated' becomes a 'perverse inflection of the Center ... which
aims at appropriating the periphery's alterity and its anti-hegemonic protagonism.'\textsuperscript{146}

It is necessary to deconstruct Richard's point even further. Latin America, what was once
the periphery, denoted to be so by modernity, now becomes, in postmodernity, the centre. The
'marginalization, dependency, subalternity and de-centering\textsuperscript{147} of Latin America are reassigned a
new 'insurgent or resigned\textsuperscript{148} value which therefore questions the relations of 'authority and cultural
power between: Latin American marginality and the postmodern defense of the margins, the crisis
of authority [...] the theory of de-centering and the center-function of this theory as a symbol of
cultural prestige, and the rhetoric of difference and the politics of difference.'\textsuperscript{149}

Richard's theory explains how, then, Latin America was postmodern 'all along'. The
Enlightenment ideals on which modernity was founded created categories and systems 'through
which historical development and social evolution are conceptualized\textsuperscript{150} in a form that is 'alien to
the stratifications of Latin American experience because it cannot accommodate the discontinuities
of a history marked by a multiplicity of pasts laid down like sediments in hybrid and fragmented
memories.'\textsuperscript{151}

The centre, the exporter of the original model of modernity, through which modernisation is
supposed to be attained, through 'cultural mimesis', now celebrating difference as postmodernity,
aims to appropriate the 'Latin American-ness' in order to restore the relationship of power. The
newly acquired respect for difference, in this instance the heterogeneity of 'Latin American identity
is mythologized and turned into folklore in any number of ways: indigenism, nationalism,
thirdworldism.'\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{145} Nelly Richard, 'Postmodern Disalignments and Realignments of the Center/Periphery', \textit{Art Journal}, 51/4, Latin American Art (Winter, 1992), p. 57.
\textsuperscript{147} Richard, 'Cultural Peripheries', p. 157.
\textsuperscript{148} Richard, 'Cultural Peripheries', p. 158.
\textsuperscript{149} Richard, 'Cultural Peripheries', p. 158.
\textsuperscript{151} Richard, 'Postmodernism and Periphery', p. 463.
\textsuperscript{152} Richard, 'Postmodernism and Periphery', p. 463.
Through a process that Richard calls the 'postmodernist decline of postmodernism', a 'Latin American neo-baroque, retro-reading of the copy' is stimulated, the reappraised copy or periphery is then 'played back' to the original or centre in a postmodern way. The creation of a postmodern Latin America becomes a postmodern commodity fetishised by the Centre, specifically 'using cultural pastiche as a form of satire that reverses the First World hierarchy of the model of imitation'. As 'the precursor of the postmodernist simulacrum [...] already contained in the colonial signature that feigned obedience to the European code, while diverting its icons toward alternative messages', the culture of Latin America can then begin to find itself, seen to have lost the 'dependent and imitative relation to European modernism as transmitted through local elites [that] has created a particular instance of the centre-periphery relationship: that of “reproduction”'.

The pastiche 'played back' to the Centre is one that 'consists of several kinds of primitivism in which Latin American identity is equated with a predetermined and fixed identity. The rediscovery of this identity therefore involves a mythical, backward-looking return to the sources and produces a static view of origin (the indigenous substratum) and memory (the mixed-race past), turned into ritual and applied over the whole continent.'

The present research posits that the Oaxacan painters investigated are using the knowledge learnt in creating this pastiche to express the pleasure of the moment of the 'perverse inflection' of their fate. The positive investigation of those same features, 'indigenous substratum … mixed-race past', is facilitated using the same 'perceptual equipment' that reinaugurated Latin America 'caricaturistically as the pre of the post'. Postcolonial resistance is augmented by the capitalist invasion of American economics, politics and culture being exported literally across the length of its northern border as well as through globalising mass media channels and technological advance. If the caricaturistic reinauguration may mean the model has become the 'desecration of the model itself', this would be reinforcement and fuel for the psychic and social processes creating the explicitly postmodern art and causing the explicitly postmodern altruistic behaviour studied in the present work.

The present author connects Teresa Del Conde's criticism of André Breton's famous declaration of Mexico as a "surrealist place par excellence" is not a very notable

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153 Richard, 'Cultural Peripheries', p. 158.
155 Richard, 'Cultural Peripheries', p. 159.
156 Richard, 'Postmodernism and Periphery', p. 463.
159 Richard, 'Postmodernism and Periphery', p. 466.
160 Richard, 'Cultural Peripheries', p. 159.
discovery' as the 'paranormal and imaginative aptitudes of Mexican artists and artisans form part of a tradition held for thousands of years', with the unceasing reactionary nature of the Mexican individual and collective personality. As surreal as this trait, in both its forms, continued to appear to the present author for many years, the understanding of it played an important role in the creation of the present work.

To illustrate, the author can use a preferred example: in everyday Mexican parlance, at all levels of society if informal situations are included, nicknames that would be deemed very, very offensive in other cultures are commonplace. An obese member of society, whether within a group or a subject unknown personally to the speaker is known as el gordo or la gorda 'fatty'; an individual with the light skin is known as el güer or la güera 'literally, whitey or blondie', and so the visual picture is painted verbally, irrespective of the actual dimensions of the characteristic, racial connotation or other conceptual element that other cultures would use to restrict what would be seen as extreme name-calling. For foreigners, other than the alarm caused by the name-calling interpretation mentioned, such behaviour can be confusing when the feature that Mexican society has chosen to use to nickname an individual is difficult to qualify, quantify as distinguishing or, in particular, when it could pertain to his or herself to a much more explicit degree. The author understands this instinctive labelling as a postmodern impartiality towards difference that in many, if not almost all, occurrences is, however minor or even subconscious, a celebration and respect for that subject's difference from the next's.

The history of Mexico, and of Mexican art in particular, provides evidence for this playful but direct engagement as both resistance and expression from documented colonial times, and markedly since Independence in the form of the lithographic and developed printing industry used as cutting political commentary from early in the nineteenth century and continued through to the Revolution in the work of José Guadalupe Posadas (1852-1913).

To further illustrate this reading of 'the unceasing reactionary nature of the Mexican individual and collective personality', the commonplace congratulatory expletive 'Viva México, cabrones' is deconstructed. Most commonly shouted, or voiced accompanied by celebratory gesture or tone in a more formal situation, this phrase means, 'long live Mexico, motherfuckers'. It is used to proclaim victory in nearly any situation, depicting and confounding a range of meanings from nationalism to anti-'the system' rhetoric that signifies a strong-felt relationship to all levels of government heightened by the imported and corrupt bureaucratic machine. The attitude this

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162 Discussed in Chapter 3.
163 The power of bureaucracy and the related facilitation given to corruption in Mexico is analysed by Claudio Lomnitz: 'Mexico has never had a state that was strong enough to provide services universally. In this context, corruption and
behaviour reveals is intensely present in what an admittedly difficult generalisation would measure as 'all things Mexican'. The author sees a strong connection with the relationship between subject and society, where that can mean private-public and colonised-coloniser, it can be read as a historical disposition to a necessary prioritising of immediate living over longer, more complex, less pressing processes.

What can be learnt from representing the search for a pre-postmodern Latin American identity that, in Mexico, celebrates difference and has a predisposition to appreciate and construct from the smallest of victories, is the stuff of the present research.

Postmodernism in Latin America will therefore be either blamed or credited for reducing the urgency for radical social change, or, lead to an interrogation of 'the artistic production of our own time for signs of some new, so far only dimly conceivable, collective forms which may be expected to replace the older individualistic ones'. These collective forms, or the 'hybrid', is the central theme of the seminal work in Latin American anthropology by Nestor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures* which will be discussed here and applied as part of the present framework.

The present work wishes to proceed with the idea that 'postmodernity is far from being solely disillusion or nostalgia, or a reactionary, globalizing phenomenon. It is the possibility of new organization of thought and knowledge in an open form through the relativizing of totalitarian paradigms and the decentralization of discourse, history and truth'.

Using the multi-disciplinary, hermeneutic approach credited to Geertz, the present study claims to utilise postmodernism's tools of resistance proposed by Jameson, to analyse the system of cultural production existing and evolving in the city and state of Oaxaca.

The analysis of both this working mode of production and the fate of its newest developments seeks to test Jameson's notion that 'all (class-based) collectivities are figures for the ultimate concrete collective life of an achieved Utopian or classless society' and thereby contest capitalism's contemporary constructions.

1.4 Hybrid Palimpsests: Postmodernity and Postcoloniality in Oaxaca

For primarily the same geographic and economic reasons briefly introduced above, the effect of other market mechanisms easily emerge as selection'. Claudio Lomnitz, 'Modes of Citizenship in Mexico', Public Culture 11/1, 269–293.


Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*.


globalisation and Americanisation on individual Mexican states is wide-ranging. The state of Oaxaca experiences a unique development: it is the Mexican state with the highest indigenous population spread across sixteen ethnolinguistic groups. Recently demoted from second poorest to the poorest of the Mexican states, the inhabitants of its eight regions, thirty districts and five hundred and seventy municipalities negotiate many interstitial boundaries and also engage either directly or in familial terms with the U.S.-Mexico border. The present research investigates how a tiny fraction of the physical and conceptual borders in Oaxaca are represented by the contemporary art studied and to what extent this representation can be seen to educate, or aid in their successful negotiation. The conceptual borders, such as that between local cultural preservation and capitalism create agency and resistance that the present research explains by applying Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity.

Hybridity has had a significant role in many fields over time, from its origins in the use of hybridization in agriculture and horticulture to 'everyday hybridity in identities, consumer behaviour, lifestyle.'

Therefore, as Jan Nederveen Pieterse describes: 'If practices of mixing are as old as the hills, the thematization of mixing as a discourse and perspective is fairly new.'

Here, Nederveen Pieterse's work introduces the work of Bhabha and Néstor García Canclini by continuing: 'In one sense it dates from the 1980s.'

The lineages of hybridity in this sense of its use include psychoanalysis which synthesized sensibilities. It is this synthesis that directed Bhabha's development of the notion that later also incorporated considerable support from poststructural analysis combined with literary criticism in what he terms the 'language metaphor' to deconstruct colonialism and postcolonialism in a confirmed postmodern fashion.

We cannot understand what is being proposed as 'new times' in postmodernism - politics at the site of cultural enunciation, cultural signs spoken at the margins of social identity and antagonism - if we do not briefly explore the paradoxes of the language metaphor.

Bhabha's postmodernist theorising on the colonial and the postcolonial is an extension of the work of Frantz Fanon. Bhabha reads Freud into Fanon's confrontation with the colonised world that he presents in Black Skin, White Mask. 'What does a black man want?' asks Fanon. Bhabha uses

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Fanon's articulation of 'the problem of colonial cultural alienation in the psychoanalytic language of demand and desire' to develop his own way of interrogating identity. Where Fanon's articulation of this kind 'radically questions the formation of both individual and social authority', Bhabha interprets how the 'social virtues of historical rationality, cultural cohesion, the autonomy of individual consciousness assume an immediate, Utopian identity with the subjects on whom they confer a civil status'.

Returning to the postmodern critique of modernity, it can be seen that Bhabha is promoting a denial of grand narratives, he believes the struggle against colonial repression has the power to 'change the direction of Western history [and] challenges its historicist idea of time as a progressive, ordered whole'.

Before reporting how Fanon asks what the black man may want, Bhabha states that what Fanon wants is the 'total transformation of Man and Society' as the social and psychic realities lived by the colonised subject constitutes a myth, a myth that is 'fundamentally undermined in the colonial situation'. This is Bhabha's reading of Fanon, derived from how Fanon speaks 'most effectively from the uncertain interstices of historical change, from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality; out of an unresolved contradiction between culture and class'.

Bhabha develops his theory of hybridity of identity from the psychoanalytic and poststructural analysis of these 'interstices'. He specifies three conditions necessary for an understanding of the process of identification in the analytic of desire:

1) to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness;
2) the very place of identification is a space of splitting; and,
3) the question of identification is never the affirmation of a given identity […] it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image.

So, Bhabha sees identification as the reusing of an image of an identity that was formed and remains bearing the mark of the splitting that necessarily happened 'in the Other place from which it comes'. Important here is the place of the splitting and its denigration as valued as Other in a traditional, colonial sense, that is reworked by Bhabha's discussion of how discourses of
poststructuralism do not fully question the 'third dimension that gives profundity to the representation of Self and Other.' His analysis of the ambivalent tension between desire and derision that is created in this 'third dimension', later more commonly labelled as a 'third space' or 'time-lag'. Bhabha 'interrogates identity' to show how encounters with identity force the subject to interrogate Self, the chapter 'Interrogating Identity' literally and literately performing this interrogation and describing identity as interrogating.

This interrogation is accomplished by demonstrating how the sign of identity has been erased from poststructuralist discourse thus removing the perspective of depth required to give identity the authenticity that is reflected in the mimetic or realist narratives. His method of identifying the process of identification goes beyond Barthes's poststructuralism, from where the "profound [...] geological dimension" of signification' is developed to provide the language of identity with a sense of reality. This dimension 'massively privileges resemblance' and creates the analogical relation between the signifier and signified. The resulting vertical dimension within the sign means the signifier is always predetermined by the signified. This dimension of depth gives language of identity its sense of reality, or, in other words, the manner in which to describe ourselves, but Bhabha writes this is not adequate to represent the 'experience of disseminating self-image'. Bhabha proposes that the 'representative postmodernist experience' of dealing with the psychic negotiations involved in identity requires a strategy of 'doubling'. Encounters with identity that exceed the frame of the image held of the Self by the subject 'evacuate the self as site of identity and autonomy and [...] leave a resistant trace, a stain of the subject, a sign of resistance.' In such encounters, the strategy of doubling has created the necessity for the subject to negotiate with itself spatially; the interrogation creates an internal discourse, a demand for identification, the subject is required to identify its Self to itself.

This is the basis of Bhabha's theory of hybrid identity. Traces or signs of resistance created in this 'third dimension' become part of the Self. The sign or the sign of the Self is therefore forced to act and react regarding the continued questioning. This action and reaction denote agency, creating what Bhabha describes as 'a contingent structure for social agency', going beyond the visual depths of Barthes's sign, human identity is defined not, as Western culture prescribes, by autonomy or individuality, but by 'dealing with or living with and through contradiction and then

181 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 48.
182 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 48.
185 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 49.
186 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 49.
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using that process for social agency.\(^{187}\)

Mexico is in Latin America, a continent whose 'countries now are the product of the sedimentation, juxtaposition, and intercrossing of Indian traditions, of colonial Catholic hispanism and of modern political, educational, and communicative practices.'\(^{188}\) More specifically, Oaxaca is in a Mesoamerican area of that continent, which requires special attention in terms of this 'intercrossing of Indian traditions'. Bhabha's own investigations into boundaries, mimicry and migration are mirrored in Chapter 3, with attention paid to the work of Guillermo Gómez Peña, a theme of critique of Bhabha's work that also connects it to that of Néstor García Canclini.

The present research now mirrors Bhabha's interpretation and development of Fanon's work on the colonial subject, described above as an extension of an investigation from an interstice 'deep within the struggle of psychic representation and social reality',\(^{189}\) by introducing the idea of hybridity as examined in relation to Latin America, a region categorised as syncretist by Vytautas Kavolis in his division of the world into seven incommensurable civilisational systems.\(^{190}\) If, as Bhabha has written, it is the 'hybrid hyphenations that emphasize the incommensurable elements - the stubborn chunks - as the basis of cultural identifications\(^ {191}\) then Latin America is prime territory for investigation of the hybrid, and, to immediately conjoin García Canclini and Bhabha, to investigate in a hybrid manner. As John Kraniauskas writes: 'the demands made by García Canclini on the idea of hybridity are substantial [...] Hybridity as a form of transdisciplinarity, for example, does not simply mean the use of concepts derived from a variety of disciplines but, in some instances, their mutual transformation.'\(^{192}\)

This call for hybrid or nomadic forms of critique is the first of García Canclini’s three hypotheses that analyse a new, layered conception of the world of culture. The hypotheses examine the hybridisation of that new conception using a transdisciplinary approach, using the tools of: 'art history and literature, which are concerned with the "cultured"; folklore and anthropology, which consecrate the popular; works on communication, which specialise in mass culture.'\(^ {193}\) The second of his hypotheses, that an alternative way 'of conceiving of Latin American modernization' can be


\(^{188}\) García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, p. 46.

\(^{189}\) Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 40.


\(^{191}\) Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 219.


\(^{193}\) García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, p. 2.
generated from the work of these mobile, interacting disciplines. As presented above, this idea is focused on seeing Latin America 'rather than like a foreign and dominant force that would operate by substituting the traditional and what is one's own [...] diverse sectors [would] take responsibility for the multitemporal heterogeneity of each nation.'

García Canclini uses the 'changes in the symbolic market' that have been introduced here using, primarily, the work of Huyssten and Bürger, to introduce how 'in part' the modern project was radicalised and how what was understood as a rupture with what came before led to a postmodern situation. Proposing a rethinking of Latin American debates, García Canclini goes beyond the implication that the continent is a defective result of canonised cultural modernism and social modernisation; measuring the discrepancy of how Latin American modernism fits:

Neither the “paradigm” of imitation, nor that of originality, nor the “theory” that attributes everything to dependency, nor the one that lazily wants to explain us by the “marvellously real” or a Latin American surrealism,' he announces the ‘inverse: that for being the land of pastiche and bricolage, where many periods and aesthetics are cited, we have had the pride of being postmodern for centuries, and in a unique way.'

García Canclini's third hypothesis proposes that such a transdisciplinary perspective on the study of cultural heterogeneity carried out during this period of postmodern dissemination and democratizing decentralization can improve knowledge of how political forces operate to generate 'the most concentrated forms of the accumulation of power and transnational centralization of culture that humanity has ever known.' García Canclini endeavours to account for Latin America's hybrid cultures, the peculiar Latin American modernity related to tradition by the 'intersection of different historical temporalities' in cultural, political and economic terms.

Here, it is possible to summarise the present thesis thus far in order to formulate a reason, methodology and place for the present research, anticipating or revealing an 'unexpected outcome' from viewing modernity 'through the prism of the local' and using an 'ethnographic lens' as Peiterse has used creatively the titles of Daniel Miller's 1995 and 1997 texts, respectively, to refer to the process of unpacking that is being applied to the concepts of modernity and capitalism. In this

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194 García Canclini, Hybrid Cultures, p. 3. Emphasis in the original.
195 García Canclini, Hybrid Cultures, p. 6.
196 García Canclini, Hybrid Cultures, p. 6.
197 García Canclini, Hybrid Cultures, p. 11.
The present research takes this form of transdisciplinary approach, emphasised by the work of Clifford Geertz and Hal Foster whose similar presentation of this idea even overlap in terms of the specific examples used when discussing this notion. Geertz asks 'what is Foucault – historian, philosopher, political theorist?' Foster quotes from Jameson's text: 'Is the work of Michel Foucault [...] to be called philosophy, history, social theory or political science?'

The present work is a hybrid of anthropology, history of art, social psychology and ethnography. It takes an approach presented in Angela McRobbie's call for ethnography to back up the social and ideological industries and discern relationships between cultural production and consumption. The fragmentation of society and the increased number of ever more fragmented identities and subjectivities as a positive outcome for McRobbie means forms of identity are not now constructed around work, class and community but around body, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, style, image and even subculture in the British working classes she uses as her example. Her focus, and that of the present author's M.Phil. research, the style-led consumption of culture, is a social practice where youth groups attempt to 'impregnate an adult social order'; one founding condition of youth subcultures in the aftermath of WWII that created the earliest British urban tribes from the Teddy Boys to their successors the Mods and rival Rockers. The investigation of this 'impregnation' is McRobbie's goal and even though her focus is feminist in both nature and content, she extrapolates to wider social groups thereby examining the wider effects of postmodernism. Providing a 'basis for the production of new meanings, new cultural expressions' postmodernism leads minority groups to develop from consumers to producers, directly related to new opportunities in the culture industries, part of which is now labelled 'new media'. This is an important area of the work of the cultural promotion and wider altruistic behaviour observed in the Oaxacan art community.

Empowerment and agency through both the consumption and production of media images


204 McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, p. 3.

have spread around the world demonstrating how resistance by forging new identities and new forms of work in self-employed, freelance capacities in the creative industries that allow culture to be a new source and means for political debate. The study of the Oaxacan art community provides numerous examples of this phenomenon, not, as McRobbie reveals of her inventive label of 'subcultural entrepreneurship', on the magnitude of 'sprawling network of micro-economies initially inside the youth cultures and then extending far beyond them', but of almost purely specialised services such as frame-maker, artist's model, painter's assistant, critic, curator, art runner and gallery assistant. Even non-art positions are intrinsically related where artists have created other business interests, such as the Café Central bar, gallery and cultural co-operative founded by painter Guillermo Olguín in 2000, whose original central function was the internal and external communication of the community's actions and output.

Members of this community of individuals and subgroups, do more than just passively receive images but understand, as McRobbie observes in her work, that 'media interdependency is both an economic and a cultural imperative'. The present research tracks the development of this realisation in the subjects studied, neatly summarised by McRobbie: 'people's usage of and experience of the media increases not just because there is more of it, but because it crops up in more places.'

**Questioning the theoretical framework**

Mexico is unlike certain other countries in Latin America 'where the social project represented a self-denial of history – for example, in Argentina and Uruguay. The lack of visual references to the past may be explained in these countries by: 1) the prevailing individualism in conceptions of culture and cultural politics; and, 2) the authority of elites that overestimated writing. The formation of modern culture in these countries did not see the works of artists and writers 'inscribed in the collective patrimony because they often were formed in opposition to popular cultures'. The formation of modern culture in Mexico can be noted to be highly contrasting to these other Latin American countries in these terms, from the specific attention having been paid to religious indoctrination using the indigenous population's connection to creative arts during the early colonial period and the focus given to the visual arts by the post-Revolution Education Minister, José

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209 García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, p. 94.
210 García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, p. 94.
211 Subversion, syncretism and the use of art in this way are the themes of Delia Annunziata Consentino, 'Under the shadow of God: Roots of Primitivism in Early Colonial Mexico', in *Primitivism and Identity in Latin America: Essays on Art, Literature and Culture*, ed. by Erik Camayd-Freixas and José E. González (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).
Vasconcelos.

The Mexican Muralism movement was spearheaded by Dr. Atl (b. Gerardo Murillo, 1875 - 1964), a pioneering figure in the history of Mexican art who became director of the National School during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), teaching many of the major artists of the next generation, who would become Latin America's most acclaimed artistic movement to date: Jose Clemente Orozco, David Siquieros and Diego Rivera. By 1920, General Álvaro Obregón was in the presidency and revived the public education secretariat with university head José Vasconcelos at the helm. Vasconcelos sought to initiate a plan of the salvation and regeneration of Mexico through culture, he established an art education program on a large scale creating the Mexican School of Painting which in its first phase was Mexican Mural Painting, or Mexican Muralism, that came to acquire prestige, international dissemination and acclaim.

As a federal state within what Pieterse has categorised as a 'nation with an overtly hybrid identity', Oaxaca, the state and the city, are hybrid forms, the Oaxacan art community is also a hybrid form; an indicator of profound changes that are taking place as a consequence of mobility, migration and multiculturalism. This determines the variety of hybridity the current research is investigating and promotes the Oaxacan hybridity as having a valued meaning, not a restricted level of meaning held by cultural phenomenon, such as combination musical styles and fusion gastronomies, that 'involve a limited range in expression'. The Oaxacan art community substantiates a hybrid of varieties of hybridity, it creates and promotes cultural output from transcultural experiences that are 'plural, hybrid cultural forms of expression'.

Lazarus states that 'Bhabha tends to use the concept of “postcoloniality,” as he has defined it, against nationalism'. Discussing how the field of postcolonial studies 'is deeply and constitutively informed by “post-” theoretical protocols and procedures', he includes Bhabha in a list of 'prominent figures prominent figures in the field … [Who] have all written at length to condemn […] any commitment to universalism, metanarrative, social emancipation, revolution'. The present research acknowledges that its own hybrid framework may suffer from a process Lazarus describes as 'their own "avant-gardist self-understandings" notwithstanding' when describing how 'critiques have served to make it incumbent upon post theorists to take cognizance

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213 Nederveen Pieterse, 'Hybridity, So What?', p. 221.
219 Lazarus, *Nationalism*, p.11.
of and attempt to defend their own positions and assumptions against them.\textsuperscript{220}

The present research chooses to consider the communities and groups studied without specifically engaging the term 'subaltern', or its imperialist or overused meaning. After Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the present research treats Oaxacan subjects, including the artistic community, as groups that 'see what the mechanics of discrimination are. They are within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern'.\textsuperscript{221} From Spivak, the present research reads that if subaltern groups are denied access to both mimetic and political forms of representation, these forms are given more positive roles in the creation of identity and agency by Bhabha's language metaphor that can be criticised for being dependent on the language relationship between the coloniser, dominant or self and the so-called subaltern's other. The present author proposes a clearer analysis of the Latin American subject using Bhabha's emphasis on the creation of agency from the interactions between oppressed minority groups whose presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group that is represented in resistance and subversion.

The analysis presented here reflects the work of Nelly Stromquist and Karen Monkman, whose ideas discuss the wider effects of globalisation: 'changes in the economy, labor force, technologies, communication, cultural patterns, and political alliances that it is imposing on every nation'.\textsuperscript{222} This interpretive framework, concentrates on the convergence of relations in social spaces 'where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other'.\textsuperscript{223}

Bhabha's treatment of nationalism, migration and diaspora are regarded as useful to the present study, 'it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history - subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement - that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking'.\textsuperscript{224} Bhabha's treatment of migration and physical borders as engaging with 'a temporality that makes it possible to conceive of the articulation of antagonistic or contradictory elements'\textsuperscript{225} is used by the present research as an important method in the analysis of opposing or interacting groups and concepts. Bhabha's notion of a partial, shifting culture\textsuperscript{226} is applied to the artists studied as subjects, generations, a community and as part of civil society in Bhabha's terms:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{220} Lazarus, \textit{Nationalism}, p.11.
\item \textsuperscript{221} Leon de Kock, 'Interview With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa', \textit{ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature}, 23/3 (July 1992), 29-47 (p. 46).
\item \textsuperscript{223} Mary Louise Pratt, \textit{Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation} (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, p. 172.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, p. 103.
\end{itemize}
Being in the 'beyond,' then, is to inhabit an intervening space, as any dictionary will tell you. But to dwell 'in the beyond' is also [...] to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; to touch the future on its hither side.²²⁷

Hardt and Negri see postmodernism and postcolonialism as 'indispensable sentinels during humanity's current passage', and include Latin America in their list of places where 'as a political discourse, postmodernism has a certain currency'.²²⁸

In our present imperial world, the liberatory potential of the postmodernist and postcolonial discourses that we have described only resonates with the situation of an elite population that enjoys certain rights, a certain level of wealth, and a certain position in the global hierarchy. One should not take this recognition, however, as a refutation. It is not really a matter of either/or. Difference, hybridity, and mobility are not liberatory in themselves, but neither are truth, purity and stasis.²²⁹

The present research accepts this view, but also that of Pieterse: 'Against the backdrop of deep time, the current hybridity discussion seems superficial, for it is entirely dominated by the episodes of colonialism and nationalism of the last hundred or couple of hundred of years. What is striking is the spell these episodes cast and the preoccupation with boundaries this involves.'²³⁰

Jameson's postmodernism, 'no longer involves any kind of Eurocentrism, posits and presupposes the absolute difference of capitalism itself. What one wants to observe, then, about a global postmodernism in which differences [...] are theoretically repudiated is that its own condition of possibility posits the far greater modernization of other segments of the globe than was the case in the modern (or classical imperialist) era.'²³¹ Lazarus sees this point as 'hugely consequential':

To conceptualise capitalism as a world system is to situate modernity as its action-horizon [...] This is a modern, but not a Western history. Nor does it suppose that the “development” that has marked the history of the West within modernity corresponds to the telos of modernity. On the contrary, (capitalist) modernity is characterised by evenness: that

²²⁷ Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 7.
²²⁹ Hardt and Negri, Empire, p. 154.
²³¹ Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 382. Emphasis in the original.
is, by the dynamics of development and underdevelopment, autocentricity and dependency, the production and entrenchment of localisms (to a point approaching irreducibility) within larger processes of globalisation, incorporation and homogenisation. In the capitalist world system, we are all modern subjects, which is not to say that we are all 'modernist' or 'Western' ones.\textsuperscript{232}

Jameson's concepts of the 'postmodern group consciousness'\textsuperscript{233} and his revelation that "cognitive mapping" was in reality nothing but a code word for "class consciousness"\textsuperscript{234} throughout Postmodernism, indicate the present work's direction towards conclusions and generalisations to be made upon analysis.

The present hybrid theoretical framework, combines Benedict Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community'\textsuperscript{235} with that of Brewer's 'ethnographic imagination'. It treats the artists studied as ethnographers of their own imagined community, which itself is mobile and contingent as knowledge is learnt and transformed into social agency. Subversion and resistance are represented in their contemporary art and promoted through the community's integral marketing machine that is explicitly open to being out-sourced and even partnering community's projects.

Contesting capitalism in this way, as in the direct action taken during the Oaxaca Conflict, acknowledges the revolutionary 'stop making capitalism'\textsuperscript{236} ideas forwarded by writers such as John Holloway. The investigation of applicable solutions for 'ordinary people'\textsuperscript{237} through the development of a historical approach in a Latin American context that learns and responds to globalisation with a recentring of its own values.

\textsuperscript{232} Lazarus, Nationalism, p.25. Emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{233} Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 347.
\textsuperscript{234} Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 418.
\textsuperscript{237} Holloway's strong focus on 'ordinary people' throughout Crack Capitalism reflects that of Hobsbawm cited earlier.
Chapter 2. The foundations of Oaxacan contemporary art

Rufino Tamayo attended the National Academy from 1917, rejected the political inclinations and creation of public art enforced by the Mexican Muralist movement and chose to live outside Mexico, in New York and then Paris, for almost three decades. Tamayo's independence was founded on a will to represent Mexican life drawing on the colours, textures, fantastical and mythological elements found in pre-Hispanic and indigenous art, initially within a Cubist composition that later developed to more abstract forms.

At the end of the 1940s and into the 1950s, the nationalism promoted by the Muralists still reigned, but by the mid-1950s what was to be known as la ruptura 'the rupture' was gathering momentum from the initial push of the return of Tamayo and his attack on the muralist prospectus and manifesto.238 Many artists began to believe that art with a message was not the only way forward. Even Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), the wife of founding Muralist Diego Rivera (1886-1957), occupied both camps. The ideas of the emerging generations were nationalist but also had different elements that showed learning from surrealism and discussions of metaphysics. The attraction of these artists to fantastic realism in place of social realism, inspired by Tamayo, was particularly evident in the work of Francisco Toledo.239

Other than just perhaps the first inspiration for an art different to that of the Big Three, Tamayo is seen as a founder of the controversially-labelled School of Oaxacan art and his continued influence in conceptual, formal terms is undeniably strong. Tamayo is world-renowned as a modernist icon, in terms of the present work and its questioning of traditional linear narratives, the overlap or interaction between his work and postmodernity may be stronger than many believe. His period of employment in the department of ethnographic drawing at the National Museum of Archaeology (1921–26) in Mexico City is universally cited as responsible for the development of his interest in pre-Columbian art. The present author posits that growing up in the mountainous, rural landscape of the Mixteca Alta and then, from a young age, living the comparative experience adolescence of adulthood in Mexico City was a strong precursor to this development, in the same way as this factor is also important in Toledo's background and training.

The origins of postmodern thought and behaviour in Oaxacan contemporary art can be traced to the artistic training, personal life and civic participation of Toledo. After having

238 The term 'la ruptura' was originally coined by Octavio paz about a group of artists from the 1920s but was applied by critic Luis Cardoza y Aragón in México: pintura activa (Mexico City: Ediciones ERA, 1961) to describe the 50s-based generation of emerging artists.

239 The bibliography of the present work includes references to retrospective catalogues of the work's of these artists. Specific works by Toledo are presented in Plates 79 to 82.
previously visited and then deciding to move to Paris in 1960, he was back living in México by 1966. The intriguing intricacies of Toledo's experiences during this period are well documented in the 'Biographic Portrait' by Angélica Abelleyra240 and developed upon by Olivier Debroise in his essay 'Insurgent Toledo'. These experiences are indelibly linked to Toledo's acquaintanceship with: Rufino Tamayo, who 'named Toledo his heir' whilst acting as his promoter and selling his paintings;242 and the poet and writer Octavio Paz (1914 – 1998) who was, at that time, the Second Secretary at the Mexican Embassy.

Of primary importance is the recognition of Toledo's rise to fame and some amount of fortune during this period. Tamayo's influence on Toledo's career must be considered in conjunction with the fact that the latter had already exhibited his work in Mexico City and in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1959.243 Tamayo's mentorship brought Toledo into the fold as a 'Salon painter' who had established himself along similar lines to surrealists Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo, who were 'also creators of fantastic bestiaries.'244 Debroise writes that an 'older woman linked to the Surrealist circle decided at this time to support this raggedy young man. She offered him a grant in return for work, and in a few years Toledo became famous.'245

An important actor in the creation of Toledo's fame and consequential fortune within Mexico was the now gallery owner Ramón López Quiroga, a contemporary of Toledo's who undertook the task of transporting the painter's works from Paris and selling them in Mexico City and to art collectors across the country.246 An element of controversy surrounds the actual monies earned and the relationship between the costs, commission and remuneration. A fraction of the largest collection of art by Francisco Toledo in the world is on sale at the Galería López Quiroga in Mexico City.

Two themes are important to the present study: 1) that the artist was placed in geographical and temporal proximity with the 'untheorized new forces'247 of the times; and, 2) the permanent

240 Angélica Abelleyra, Se busca un alma: Retrato biográfico de Francisco Toledo (Mexico City: Plaza y Janés, 2001).
243 The Mexican gallery owner Antonio Souza is credited with igniting Toledo's career. Toledo met Souza through painter Roberto Donis during his late teens as a printmaking student in Mexico City. The best source for the details of this period is: Elena Poniatowska, 'Francisco Toledo I', La Jornada, 17 July 2010, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2010/07/17/opinion/a12a1cul [1 December 2012].
244 Debroise, ‘Insurgent Toledo’, p. 252.
246 The only known documentation of this role is a large batch of letters that were written between Toledo and López Quiroga and rumoured to be possessed by the latter in the form of a priceless work of art that could contain evidence of the monetary controversy mentioned here.
247 Fredric Jameson, 'Periodizing the 60s', Social Text, 9/10 The 60's Without Apology (Spring - Summer 1984), p. 208.
influence on his life and work of the personal and romantic relationships he upheld and formulated during this period.

Toledo was therefore absorbing and participating in the recognition of new intellectual and political social energies. This was due, in large part, to the company he kept and the romantic encounters and interpersonal relationships he established. Many minor details point to what would become the reasons for his initial commercial success: sex. These include: Debroise's implication that it was Italian writer and painter Bona Tibertelli de Pisis's influence that made Toledo adopt a cross-cultural, even ethnic look whilst in Paris; Debroise's reports on the negative labelling of Toledo's work as 'a sort of hyper-sexualised surrealism' that he, Debroise, calls 'phallocratic imagery';248 and, Abelleiry's retelling of Toledo's story of how impressing Octavio Paz upon offering an extraordinary alternative noun used for the penis.249

It is posited that the combination of the actual sexual adventures of the individual, the results of these encounters or relationships and the sexually explicit content of Toledo's work connect the Oaxacan artist to the sexual revolution so prominent in the founding ethos of postmodernism. Before the chronological step can be taken towards this characteristic feature of Toledo's early work, Debroise's analysis can be used to cement this position:

In a country as unbalanced as Mexico, how has it been possible for people like … Francisco Toledo to not only emerge, but to endure, with no other weapons in their early years than wit, slapping the world in the face and getting away with it, and climbing out of pure sexual impulse – yes, sexual – to the top of a cultural class practically immobilised in the defence of its (minimal) privileges.250

It is accepted that Toledo was open and sympathetic to growing tensions and changing attitudes in the 1960s in the period preceding 1968. The artist's reaction to the massacre at Tlaltelolco in Mexico City evidences this notion. It, too, initiated a chain of events undoubtedly based on interpersonal attraction.

On 3 October 1968, the day after the Tlaltelolco massacre, Toledo took down a show he was preparing to open at an official institution in Oaxaca as an act of solidarity in-keeping with similar actions taken in Mexico City. Toledo then proceeded to offer the work to representatives of the UNAM in order for it to be auctioned and raise funds to aid political prisoners.251 A group

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248 Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 252.
249 Abelleiry, Se busca un alma, p. 45.
250 Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 252.
251 Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 252.
comprising some of the leaders of the Student Movement involved in the massacre were on the run from government persecution and ended up sheltering in his home in Oaxaca, after having heard of his impactful act. One of the group was Elisa Ramírez Castañeda, who became Toledo's first wife and the mother of two of his children. Debroise writes that as Toledo's imagery did not find a natural place in dominant 1960s discourse or with counter-cultural positions, it was Elisa who influenced 'Toledo's slow but inexorable shift to the left, or as she puts is, to “an ultra-radical liberalism.”'

2.1 Politicisation

'Ramírez dogma' as Debroise names it, directed Toledo's work towards an anti-establishment position: 'Elisa, a feminist, a precursor of all sorts of discursive alternatives, a devoted collector of Zapotec myths and legends, and a translator in various languages, including some indigenous ones, infiltrated Toledo's Juchitec mythologies.' Formally, Toledo's work did not change, but was seen to engage directly with 'feminism, with the beginnings of what would be called queer studies, incorporating Lacanian perspectives, rhizomatic platforms and other poststructuralist philosophical systems.' Centring the zoophillic resulted in being 'provocative, mainly for urban, mainstream collectors, delighted by having discovered some sort of sexually unleashed Walt Disney: they shamelessly exhibited and acquired Toledo's subtly immoral watercolours for the simple reason that in the 1970s, just to talk about sex was to be modern.' An exacting description of these primary formal features: Zapotec mythology, fauna and sex is provided by writer Carlos Monsivais:

What interests him is the immense zoological garden and the infinite pairing, where rabbit, fish, deer, goats, mules, cows, iguanas, native women, he himself, in a perpetual tribal circle, are on the verge of concupiscence or of being transformed into a landscape of melancholy portrayed in daybreaks or dusks melted down into images.

Jameson labels sexually explicit material as one of the offensive features of the 'postmodern revolt' against the archaic attitudes of modernism and the use of this and other devices were originally scandalous and overt expressions of social and political defiance. 'Ramírez dogma', has

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252 Debroise cites an interview with Ramírez Castañeda of 1 June 2006 in Olivier Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 252.
256 Carlos Monsivais, 'Off with Toledo’s head, said the gut-sluiced iguana’, in Francisco Toledo, by Francisco Toledo, pp. 77-87 (p. 83).
257 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 4.
been questioned by Howard Campbell, a long term investigator of the Istmo region, who 'suggests that Toledo's thinking about sex and gender is more related to the influence of his Zapotec relatives, women [...] and is “connected to the Zapotec penchant for laughing about sex in daily life.”' Particular attention to attitudes towards sex and sexuality in this region is given during the discussion of the work of Flores and Pastrana in Chapter 3.

This chapter opened tracing the 'origins of postmodern thought and behaviour', whereas this brief discussion of the changes inspired by local culture and those inserted by Ramírez Castañeda into Toledo's work itself, provides evidence for postmodernism, as the 'cultural logic' proposed in the precise, accepted Jameson analysis. This reading invokes the form of distinction between postmodernisms in Oaxacan contemporary art introduced by the present work. Such a distinction is characterised as having two interconnected elements: temporal and spatial. A temporal element directly related to the 'abuse' of postmodernism towards neo-liberal ends referred to above using Hopenhayn's work and linked to capital and multinational expansion through the globalised marketing of products, services and the mass media itself associated with globalisation. The spatial element being important in the postcolonial context and particularly important in the geographical, economic and political conditions 'suffered' by Mexico and Oaxaca. If Toledo's early work discussed here is distinguishable as representing a stage before, then the postmodernism in the work of Flores, Pastrana and other young artists reflects elements characteristic of a globalised, media-saturated Mexico after; and continually dominated by, neo-liberal capital and political expansion.

Toledo's work in general can be read in terms of globalisation through the acceptance of his accelerated development being a Mexican artist in Europe, a condition greatly enhanced by meeting and training alongside artists from other continents, too, including Anjolie Ella Menon (b. 1940, Burnpur, West Bengal, India), who, apart from exposing him to her own cultural heritage, also directed Toledo towards forms and aesthetics from the Byzantine Empire. Debrose groups this category of international experience and knowledge in a concise treatment of Toledo's impact on Mexican contemporary art that also frames it temporally:

A new mestizaje of western and non-western materials and references, sometimes using indigenous objects and techniques, sometimes resorting to elements taken from native traditions in Africa and Australia [...] a new hybrid art emerged from these works, challenging the urban and western references that had dominated Mexican contemporary art

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259 Abelleyra, *Se busca un alma*, p. 44.
in the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{260}

Toledo's life and work has been read in the postmodern terms of sexually explicit content and an enhanced global knowledge for a painter from his native time and place. Tamayo's influence on Toledo's work, commonly considered to be centred on the minimal use of colour and the attraction to indigenous flora, fauna and related themes does not completely explain the success the latter's work or its content. In the postmodern terms inherited by the present research, the playful, highly-sexed bricolage of the conceptual and formal components are the foundation of ingenious cultural production. Plates 79-82 depict works by Toledo that are intended to portray this idea.

The usual relationship of Toledo's work to the magical realism must be qualified as incorporating a surrealist edge that takes it beyond magical realism into the fantastical. The author interprets 'the combination of the technological, the intertextual, the crafty, and the natural in magical realist magic means that the cultural function of the mode as it has developed is not, or certainly is no longer, only to allow its readers to indulge in nostalgic return to a vanished past, offering...\textsuperscript{261} Here, Wendy Faris discusses Michael Taussig's critique that magical realism that 'is more than the standard ruling class appropriation of the sensual vitality of the common people and their fantasy life.'\textsuperscript{262} Faris posits, that it is not only this negative view of subalternity that can be read in magical realism... She uses a literary criticism argument to negate the cultural exploitation Taussig sees as ruling-class appropriation. She posits that irreducible elements in magical realism are not always representative of the magic supplied by the indigenous poor to the rich European tradition of realism. The present work reads, into Toledo's work, a postcolonial element discussed by authors such as Stephen Slemon: 'magic realism can be seen to provide a positive and liberating response to the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity.'\textsuperscript{263} This perspective must be combined with the foundations of the Latin American literary movement derived from an anthology of contemporary Latin American fiction, McOndo, whose founders 'don’t ignore the exoticism and the cultural diversity of the culture and customs of our countries, but it is not possible to accept reductionist essentialisms, and to think that everyone here wears a sombrero and lives in trees'.\textsuperscript{264} As Faris writes:

By contrast to what they see as a commodified magical realism, Fuguet and Gomez assert that if people fly in the stories in McOndo it’s because they take planes or drugs. The

\textsuperscript{260} Debroise, ‘Insurgent Toledo’, p. 260.
\textsuperscript{262} Faris, ‘The Question of the Other’, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{264} Faris, ‘The Question of the Other’, p. 105.
implication is that, for this generation of writers, magical flights like those in earlier magical realist texts [...] are no longer relevant for the fiction they wish to write or the reality they wish to portray.  

Carlos Rincón reads magical realism, also using a literary criticism perspective, as showing a postmodernist questioning of history.  

This subversion and mutation of magical realism is seen by the present author in the work of Toledo, clearly using Oaxacan indigenous and other local themes, but even more so in the work of the new generation studied here as it subverts and mutates from the Oaxaca School.

The treatment of his formation thus far leaves the political aspect of his work having reached an examination, or perhaps only an expression, of sexual politics, not a clear engagement with the micropolitics of new social movements or microgroups that a Jameson analysis would predict. The application and expression of 'Ramírez dogma' and Toledo's politicisation came in the early 1970s.

A new Zapotec social movement was emerging in the Istmo de Tehuantepec region at this time. The most prominent representative organisation was the Coalición Obrero Campesino Estudiantil del Istmo (COCEI) 'Worker, Peasant and Student Coalition of The Isthmus [region]' which was founded on the 'student movement of 1968' and Isthmus Zapotec organizations opposed to the then fifty-year rule by the PRI. McCaughan describes the COCEI as intersecting three trends in new social movement organisation:

1) one of many efforts to create grassroots worker and peasant organisations that were independent of the PRI, whose then faltering hegemony had rested to a significant degree on its corporatist control of labour and peasant;
2) posing electoral challenges to the PRI by testing the regime's tentative political opening that was designed to defuse and control the democratic demands given voice by the student movement of 1968;
3) identity-based organisation of new social movements worldwide, with its emphasis on Zapotec heritage and demands for greater cultural and regional autonomy.

Francisco Toledo's involvement with the COCEI centred on the providing of space for artists

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265 Faris, 'The Question of the Other', pp. 105-106.
266 Carlos Rincón, 'The Peripheral Center of Postmodernism', in Beverley and others, p. 238.
267 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 93.
268 McCaughan, Art and Social Movements, p. 8.
269 McCaughan, Art and Social Movements, p. 8.
to work on behalf of the movement in the Casa de la Cultura 'Cultural Centre' he had founded in Juchitán in 1972. McCaughan writes that the spaces that Toledo provided were where artists could work on behalf of the movement without becoming COCEI militants. McCaughan quotes artists, including Sabino López Aquino (b. 1960, Juchitán de Zaragoza, Oaxaca, Mexico), describing how working in the Casa de la Cultura's studio allowed them to make 'banners and posters for COCEI marches, taught community painting classes, and organised group exhibitions of their art to support the movement.'

Demián Flores's version of events depicts this image and highlights the international perspective held by Toledo: 'The children and young Istmeños grew up surrounded by a world deeply entrenched in our ancestral culture with images that began to create new collective imaginaries. [...] Reproductions of prints by Durero, printed on crepe paper and distributed and posted in the streets, prints by Ensor, Posada, Asger Jorn in the publication Guchachi' Reza 'Gutslashed Iguana' invited reflection of the Istmeño culture.'

Debroise writes that Ramírez Castañeda's joint editorship, with poet Víctor de la Cruz, of the cultural journal Guchachi' Reza, considered a mouthpiece for the movement, also linked Toledo to the COCEI, even though he was never officially a member. Debroise writes that Toledo gave the organisation 'a never-before seen visibility', supported in McCaughan's direct assumption that 'his status as a world-renowned artist, and the fortune he made from selling his paintings, gave Toledo a measure of autonomy vis-à-vis both the COCEI and institutions of the Mexican state.' Abelleirya quotes Ramírez Castañeda: 'Look at Toledo's woman, doing silly little things,' as an example of the 'snide whispers' that followed her around Juchitán. This is a very common attitude and reaction to outsiders in Mexico, in particular ones involved in abnormal behaviour on local terms like research. However harmless, scepticism about, and the derision of, other-ness create a strange form of sexual jealousy and sexual competitiveness. In hybridity terms after Bhabha this would be explained as verbal resistance resulting from the agency created by the ambivalent encounter with a woman not from the Istmo but married to a famous Istmeño painter.

The efficient management and effective expression, both based on the physical and financial foundations afforded to the organisation by the Casa de la Cultura and therefore Toledo himself, the COCEI won a landmark victory over the PRI in a municipal election in Juchitán in 1981. The

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270 McCaughan, Art and Social Movements, p. 149.
271 McCaughan, Art and Social Movements, p. 149.
272 Demián Flores survey text.
274 McCaughan, Art and Social Movements, p. 148.
275 Abelleirya, Se busca un alma, p. 59.
276 McCaughan, Art and Social Movements, p. 90.
277 Olivier Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 253.
organisation and Juchitán both gained national and international recognition for being the first municipality to rid itself of PRI control; incorrectly, as signalled by McCaughan. He cites his 2006 interview with photographer and activist Lourdes Grobet Argüelles (b. 1940, Mexico City) to qualify that the first municipal victory over the PRI in Mexico was obtained by the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) in 'a town in the state of Guerrero' that the present research has identified as Alcozauca de Guerrero.278

As he would go on to do for a number of decades to date, Toledo promoted the introduction of artists of all magnitudes and from all places. Flores remembers that 'the work of Alechinsky, Tamayo and Leopoldo Méndez in the exhibition halls of the Casa de la Cultura fed the critical thought those of us who had seen, as a point of historical and aesthetic reference, the series of prints Libertad a Víctor Yodo made by Toledo in 1978 to protest the incarceration of members of the politically active section of the COCEI that went missing at the end of the 1970s.'279

Debroise reports that the presence of Toledo and the intellectuals he attracted to Juchitán protected the proudly established Free Council of Juchitán 'from possible repression, but not from local vendettas, which would eventually justify the army's takeover in 1983.'280 In this same year, Toledo was himself physically attacked and held at gunpoint by alleged PRI supporters, an event that caused him to leave Juchitán forever. Living a period of seemingly continual movement, Toledo did not settle again, this time in the city of Oaxaca, until the late 1980s, immediately wielding his financial and political power to propel the cultural sector with the creation of the Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca (IAGO) 'Graphic Arts Institute of Oaxaca' in 1988, the first of many large-scale, highly-impacting projects that helped create a lasting mould for private-public partnerships in the Mexican cultural sector. From then on, Oaxaca became 'the only state in the Mexican Republic that has developed its own tradition of contemporary art.'281

**Oaxacan contemporary art as survival and opportunity**

The direct result of the investment of time, money and political power founded on the system of cultural production and community altruism initiated and, in many ways, operated, by Toledo. He

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279 Flores survey text. The development and changing face of the COCEI to date is discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to the political career of Soid Pastrana.

280 Olivier Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 254.

directed the creative and private endeavours towards the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Oaxaca in 1992 and the PRO-Oax was founded in 1993. He regenerated a disused paper factory in a small town just outside Oaxaca in San Agustín, Etla, that led to the creation of an enormous and enormously influential cultural centre known as the *Centro de las Artes San Agustín* 'Centre for the Arts San Agustín' (CaSA) to be named after the town in which it is located in 2006.

One source that provides comprehensive information on Toledo's community altruism is *Oaxaca at the crossroads: Managing, Memory, Negotiating Change* by Professor Selma Holo. It is difficult to understand Holo's use of 'memory and change intermittently throughout the book, as if reminding herself and readers of her subtitle, *Managing memory, Negotiating change,* which is only explained by repeatedly endowing Oaxacans a remarkable ability to 'manage memory' and 'negotiate change'. This subtitle appears to be a hopeless victim of soundbite culture that hopes to hide the fact that it is not explained or perhaps even explainable in theoretical terms. As the work contains no theoretical basis whatsoever, it is free to roam about Oaxacan and Mexican culture relating cause and effect between X and Y. To quote one such exclamation on the PAN's election 2000 election victory that removed the PRI from federal power for the first time since 1929: 'In Mexico there had been no similar fundamental change for seventy years. It took some getting used to!' Is Holo really speaking for the Mexican population as a whole? If this is the case, on what authority does she do so, and is this a sign of the type of new colonialism discussed in Flores's work? Holo states that 'Oaxaca is virtually unknown for the heroic roles that its artists, intellectuals and private citizens have assumed as they took, and continue to take, responsibility not only for their individual creative production but also for the communal integrity and the quality of life that gives the state and the capital city their distinct flavor.' She labels Oaxaca a 'cultural laboratory', 'a positive phenomenon from which all cities (in Mexico and elsewhere) could learn' and a 'crucible for redefinition of social reality in Mexico'.

The present work asks the question, why not apply this 'phenomenon' to the social reality of other countries, continents or on a global scale? What she describes as the 'multitude of initiatives and experiences in new domains: women's rights, ecology, bilingual education, collectives, and transnational organizations' are all but ignored by the rest of Mexico outside of the cultural and NGO sectors and therefore a very limited amount of people are learning from these experiments.

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283 Holo, *Oaxaca*, p. x.
284 Holo, *Oaxaca*, p. 262.
If the cultural producers learn from, reflect and engage with globalising technology, media sources and markets, then they too are creating globalised cultural output and the hybrid community they participate in and as it gains strength on that level. The present study shows how the Oaxacan art system created by Francisco Toledo is an example of a working strategy to create a necessary, hybrid place in a global present.

2.2 The 1980s and 1990s: Sundown at the Utopia factory

The only text that comprehensively examines contemporary Oaxacan art from an art history perspective is *Atardecer en la maquiladora de Utopias: Ensayos críticos sobre las artes plásticas en Oaxaca* 'Sundown at the Utopia factory. Critical essays on fine art in Oaxaca' by the late English poet and critic, Robert Valerio (1959-1998), who undertook a painstaking, personal survey of Oaxacan contemporary art in the late 1990s. Towards understanding that art, Valerio's classification of the formal elements contained in what has been labelled the Oaxaca School since the recognition of a certain style and formation of that region's art in the latter decades of the last century, is invaluable. This book is not available in English, but the formal description is translated here.  

It is natural, legitimate and praiseworthy that Oaxacan artists are inspired by their mythology, the curious thing is that it establishes an institutional mechanism with the proposition of animating them to continue being inspired by it … This foments a figurative art whose principal characteristic […] is an "archaic atemporality". In the end, this reinforces the old idyll of the New World as a paradise that Europeans deny losing.

'Paradise': this word could be the key to the amalgam of concepts that dominates and feeds a large part of the plastic effervescence that can be presently observed in Oaxaca. From this key concept others are derived: infancy, magic, fantasy, dreams, and at the same time these materialise in the work: in the style (primitivist), the iconography (abundant fauna), the drawing (informal, rapestre or infantile).  

An explanation of the similarities and differences between Valerio's approach and my own provides the perfect opportunity to introduce Oaxacan art and also the practical and theoretical  

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287 The treatment of this text in the present work relies on the author's immediate translation into English of all quoted excerpts, including, for example, the title of the book as included above, in order to facilitate the reading of the same through the minimal use of frequent and complex Spanish-language inclusions. Standard punctuation marks will be used.

nature of the present investigation in its treatment of that art. As the only text to analyse and
criticise Oaxacan art, *Sundown* gains particular power from the accuracy it derives from a series of
in-depth interviews with selected Oaxacan artists or artists that reside in Oaxaca.

Valerio's central themes gel to provide an accurate description and interpretation of Oaxacan
art; other than the direct investigation of the art and artists themselves, these themes include art
criticism, how that practice should be applied to Oaxacan art, how he applies art criticism to
Oaxacan art and how a stagnant Oaxacan art at his time of writing (1996-98) may or may need to
change over the next ten years to better represent 'the immediate and present reality of life in
Oaxaca,' if that is what fate has in store for Oaxacan art. 289

From some specific sections of the text, it appears that Valerio believes that this new
direction is necessary, although his general tone and intimate relationship with Oaxacan art and
artists ameliorates the cutting edges of this idea. With the utmost respect to the art produced during
and before the time of his study, Valerio poses, in both a direct and an indirect manner, the
questions: why isn't this art a reflection of the everyday reality lived by the painters responsible or
the residents of a contemporary Oaxaca and will it be so in ten years' time? 290

My own study has been undertaken ten years on from that of Valerio, and its intention to
discern as far as the postmodern in Oaxacan art can take much positive guidance from his in-depth
analysis and prognostic enquiry. The most direct way in which Valerio's work connects with this
line of questioning is through his concept of the 'inside of an urban bus.' 291 In one of a number of
styles Valerio uses to underline and illustrate his themes throughout the text, nineteen Oaxacan
artworks are described and interpreted in three separate 'Exhibition Halls' that constitute 'A virtual
and semi-arbitrary gallery.' He includes several 'prestigious Oaxacan painters [...] two or three less
well-known artists, and a Oaxacan that is not an artist but a handicraft worker.' 292 The only criteria
for inclusion in his virtual gallery is that the work must have been shown in a museum or gallery in
the city of Oaxaca in that year, 1996. The majority of the works presented were recent, many from
1996, but also works by deceased painters Tamayo, Francisco Gutiérrez (1906-1943) and Rodolfo
Nieto (1936-1985) were included, these created in 1960, 1938 and 1967 respectively.

The last work presented in the second hall of the virtual gallery is titled *Still life: The inside
of the Xoxo-ISSTE at 2130 hours* and is reported to have been painted by Armando Silva in 1997. 293

In the next chapter of the book, that which presents the essay 'The not so wonderful real: Absent
realities in contemporary Oaxacan art,' Valerio reveals that this painting does not exist. He explains

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293 Valerio, *Atardecer*, p. 159.
that he has 'taken the trouble to describe a work that doesn't exist' in order to experience and explore that which doesn't exist, what he sees as a critic's right, in the same way that many sculptors have taken advantage of the sculptural value of emptiness and the 'expressiveness of the hole.'

He is making his point about the lack of pictorial representation of the everyday reality lived by residents of Oaxaca: 'I, like many natives and residents of Oaxaca, take a bus home every night; the bus is an everyday reality.'

Following his confession, Valerio goes on to reveal some of the answers to the third question in the survey he posed to the artists he studied: 'Why haven't I seen a painting of the inside of an urban bus?'

In pondering the implications of this, Valerio argues that it could be for the mere practical difficulties of 'getting on an urban bus with an easel, executing an oil painting and leaving unharmed,' which reminds him of what he calls Ionesco's definition of art as 'a meeting between man and the universe.'

The impact of which leaves neither of the two unharmed.' Valerio asks whether we can attribute a part of the spinelessness of some contemporary Oaxacan pictorial approaches to the desire to walk away from the meeting with the universe unhurt. Here he is again questioning the validity of the work of Oaxacan artists who are sitting on their laurels, determined to paint and sell what they know they can paint and sell instead of making an attempt at innovation.

I believe, upon observing innovation in Oaxacan art in the past ten years since Valerio's study, that even greater fears were and are still held. Ionesco was also at first a fan, and then a critic, of realism, confessing later that, like many thinkers of his time: 'reality is not realistic, and because realism is just one school, style and convention among others and has become academic [...] it is dead.'

For a Oaxacan painter to attempt to represent a reality of the type Valerio symbolises using the interior of an urban bus, he would have to choose a reality with which he is not totally comfortable and much less an expert on. Choosing a reality would primarily necessitate deciding on one's own religious, spiritual or ideological posture and secondarily mean the exposure of this to the world. Oaxacan painters are reluctant to pick one school or any school unfamiliar or unrelated to the Oaxacan tradition or the Oaxacan School. These factors are too closely related to the commercial success of the work produced to not create a preference for a stylistic inertia in those artists described.

296 Valerio's original survey questions are presented here in Appendix I.
297 Valerio's text is published without further references for a lot of his more creative criticism. The reader is directed to the source cited in the footnote below, which presents Eugène Ionesco's general theme which is, perhaps, paraphrased by Valerio.
If any observer sees realism as 'academic,' this too would scare a Oaxacan School painter, something many purposefully ignore or refuse to acknowledge as relevant to their work: artistic integrity and licence being favoured as foundations for creative output. The author has heard many Oaxacan artists talk in this way, memorably being on Day of The Dead 2008 whilst visiting the cemetery of the home town of young artist Pantaleón Ruiz (b. 1974, Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico), who used the phrase 'I don't care about the academic side of it' upon the comment that his work may suffer from horror vacui. This surprising statement came very soon after he had revealed to the present author, that upon seeing his work in Mexico City, Proceso art critic, Blanca González Rosas,300 had immediately commented to him that 'he was just another Oaxacan painter'.301 Guillermo Olguín, who had been the driving force in the trip to Ruiz's home and hometown's Day Of The Dead celebration, had initially remarked to the present author: 'he's not doing anything original yet'.302 What Ruiz could have done to be 'original' would have been to attempt to paint the seventeen years of experience he had had living in the U.S., the stories of which enthralled us in his company. Instead, Ruiz chooses to paint Oaxaca School fare using traditional rug colours and patterns and traditional musician iconography. His family are traditional rug-makers and musicians. The present study attempts to discern and evaluate exceptions to this rule. Turning to a painter who has decided on a school or style foreign to Oaxaca, even in the markedly postmodern, pop artworks of Demián Flores, many of the themes explored are the same as those of the magical realists but now packaged in the most up-to-date and instantly-saleable way. Many other themes are new and address contemporary issues and this is not doubted, also a postmodern, pop art style is highly relevant and not so foreign to the advertising-saturated contemporary Oaxaca documented here.

To conclude this discussion on the most relevant of Valerio's line of inquiry to the present study, it is valuable to return to Valerio's artist-subjects' responses to his thrid question : 'Why haven't I seen a painting of the inside of an urban bus?' The responses published in the text range from:

1) indicators of Oaxacan sentiment on the topic of modernisation and even provincialism: Luis Valencia immediately associates the idea of the inside of a bus with realism, he expresses that his work is 'much more surrealist, realism doesn't attract me much'; Felipe Morales (1959, San Pedro Mártir Ocotlán, Oaxaca, Mexico) associates the idea of painting a bus, or as Valerio harshly writes, 'even the bus itself', with Mexico City: 'When one paints something like that, immediately one thinks of Mexico City';

300 Biographical information not available.
301 Informal interview with Pantaleón Ruiz, (2 November 2008).
302 Informal interview with Guillermo Olguín, (2 November 2008).
2) the 'obsession' with commercial success: Sergio Hernández (1957, Huajuapan de León, Oaxaca) ‘… because we live obsessed by money. What's happening now is that we're in a dynamic of making money, of thinking about money. … He who comes to Oaxaca to buy a painting doesn't come to look for a painting they could find in Mexico City’;

3) the fundamental elements of Oaxacan art for this 1980-1990s generation: Filemón Santiago (1958, San José Sosola Etla, Oaxaca, Mexico) discloses the nature of Oaxacan art: 'I believe that it could still even come; somebody will come along with that curiosity … Maybe Chicano art has had that advantage of taking the popular, that what's happening there [in the U.S.] but we are very much given over to the magical, to the mythical. And I don't know if instead of helping us, it hurts us some times. We're not very close to our reality; we're trying to see everything through dreams. It could be that this is right; perhaps we don't want to see our reality. But I feel that the moment will come when it will have to be seen. We're trying to see it from a distance, that cruel reality.'

Valerio investigates the causes of this fundamentalism that may divert Oaxacan painters away from realism. The idea of the attraction of the primitive that appears to be best understood by Europeans and North Americans when expressed in exotic and fantastic terms, is one created outside of Oaxaca, Mexico or Latin America and is, to date, the strongest characteristic of this region's cultural output. The art of the fantastic: Latin America 1920-87 shown in 1987 in Indianapolis, united 29 artists in its attempt to cover 67 years using the ideal of the fantastic to define Latin American art. The curators explain in a prologue to the catalogue, 'during every stage of the project planning it was important to develop the idea that fantastic, as this element is that which defines the assertion of Latin American hearts in the frame of Western culture of the 20th century.'

Primitivism, applauded and rewarded the investigation of such works as Japanese stamps and African masks in the 19th century but these were seen in a different light and broke the frame of art at that time meaning Western artists had to readdress and redefine this frame and art itself. Latin American art was only given the chance to fill a hole left rather than expand existing horizons. The work of Rodolfo Morales was described in the late 1960s as 'The wonderful real', Valerio asks what of 'the painful real, horrible real or embarrassing real', when considering how little Oaxacan artists

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303 Valerio's survey responses cited comprising 1), 2) and 3) here, are from Valerio, Atardecer, p. 180-181.
treat the contemporary themes around them, not least of all poverty. Other than poverty, Valerio lists deforestation, sickness and drug-trafficking as types of ecological, social and economic problems absent from Oaxacan art.

One explanation for this is the *ruptura*’s rebellion against the monolithic movement created as a reaction to the historic political events so important to the development of Mexico at the start of the twentieth century. The sentiment of the times is reported succinctly in this quote from an interview given by Toledo (FT) to Valerio (RV) in 1996-7, when asked why little ideological content was found in the Oaxacan art at that time.

FT -What is happening is that there has been an abuse in the denouncing of Mexican painting of a certain age; maybe it is also a reaction against broken chains, arms, torches.\(^{305}\)

RV -You are referring to Muralism?

FT -Yes, and what followed Muralism. When I began printmaking at the Fine Art School under a teacher from the Taller Gráfico Popular, we all resisted his instructions, we all wanted to do something different to what he wanted. He used to say 'print a homage to Chinese comrades who are fighting, a protest against the atomic bomb' things that the Taller Gráfico Popular were in to.\(^{306}\)

Other artists who participated and created a new, independent profile include, José Luis Cuevas (b. 1934, Mexico City, Distrito Federal, Mexico) and Manuel Felguérez (b. 1928 Valparaíso, Zacatecas, Mexico). Cuevas called Rivera the supreme pontiff of superficial, folkloric and coarse art in his 1956 *La Cortina de Nopal* 'The Nopal [indigenous, symbolic Mexican cactus] Curtain'.\(^{307}\)

In 1996, Cuevas said, 'I would say that the de-politicisation of artists reflects the general de-politicisation lived across the country. Painters do not have much critical sense of what's going on.' This contrasts greatly with the generations who directly involve themselves in both the Oaxaca conflict and the controversial federal election campaigns and result of 2006. Cuevas did go on to say in the same interview: 'There lacks, however, a necessary element within fine art … the sense of combat, the polemic sense.'\(^{308}\)

\(^{305}\) Breaking from the chains of colonial slavery, raised arms and burning torches were common symbols of the Muralist movement.

\(^{306}\) Valerio, *Atardecer*, p. 176. The Taller Gráfico Popular was a movement within Mexican art that continued the communist tradition of founding unionised groupings and was created at the dissolution of the Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios 'League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists' in 1937.

\(^{307}\) Ades, 'Francisco Toledo', p. 34.

The development of Mexican art in the second half of the twentieth century or of the thinking of its artists must have coincided in a considerable and measurable manner with that of liberating times in the 1960s and what the current work sees as postmodernism to have created younger generations positively involved in social activism through their work and their position as artists. Toledo remains an example apart, from an earlier generation, yet highly motivated to provide opinion and solution on social problems and this is done in a neutral manner and it cannot be said that his work itself directly discusses everyday issues of the kind Valerio deemed absent.

In the case of Oaxaca itself, its regional status and oft-cited resistance to change is directly reflected in its art as a desire to 'maintain an identity in spite of intrusion of Europeans [...] and the violent arrival of the industrial modern age.'\textsuperscript{309} Commonly viewed as a cold resistance we can finally explain effective iconography of Oaxacan art, a resistance to representing 'neither the modern age nor a loyalty to progress.'\textsuperscript{310}

Here we have the central axes for an investigation to postmodernism in Oaxacan art. Can work created in this first decade of the twenty-first century be accused of leaving important issues including political absent from representation? Or are the artists studied, by purposefully instigating social projects of all types and levels of impact, becoming living elements of their work itself? To become adept at social criticism from within civil society requires other skills than just the capacity to formally create two-dimensional saleable expressions of magical realism. Are the facets of society seen necessary to adorn so accessible that a minimal knowledge of their use leads to competence in the field of social activism however the impact of that activism may be interpreted? The hyper-real media environment that Oaxaca has not managed to divert around it is a vital tool in creating the market for globalised products.

The important difference between the Valerio study and the present work is the former's concentration on the work of the critic. Valerio delves deeply into this theme but this is not the objective of the present transdisciplinary anthropological and critical investigation. Criticism of the art discussed and of the criticism it receives is included. For an example, we can turn to the work of Pantaleón Ruiz. Critic Jorge Pech Casanova's catalogue text for Ruiz's first major individual exhibition, \textit{Transiciones} (2007), exhauted Ruiz's new and unsung voice and work as being of great value for his presenting of an indigenous Zapotec painter attempting fine art illustration in a modern, contemporary world.\textsuperscript{311} This does not differentiate from the large majority of literature on


\textsuperscript{310} Holton, \textit{Gráficas Magníficas}. Cited in: Valerio, \textit{Atardecer}, p. 177.

\textsuperscript{311} Jorge Pech Casanova, 'Transiciones', in Pantaleon Ruiz, \textit{Transiciones} (Exhibition catalogue, Universidad De Bellas Artes, Oaxaca, Mexico, 2007).
Demián Flores's work but the two could not be more different in style, actual background or upbringing, being similar only through sharing some Zapotec origin and having spent their young adulthoods in postmodern, urban centres, which Flores discusses and Ruiz ignores.

The important similarity between the work of Ruiz and Flores is the interest in the development of Oaxacan art, acknowledging a stagnant phase that it was attempting to come out of before the political instability of Mexico began to write a new chapter in the history of Oaxaca and its art.

Valerio quotes an English painter Sebastian Aplin resident in Oaxaca at the time of his study, as labelling the art community an 'artistic-political situation that will consume itself before long.' Aplin had also written in 1995 'there is a generalised stagnation in Oaxacan fine art […] Oaxacan painting has had a fair amount of commercial success in recent years but instead of being a motivation for new experimentation the result is a repetition of known forms of creation from what some call "the Oaxacan school" the most alarming thing about this situation is that there exist very little painting that steps outside those parameters and that questions society's values.'

The present research posits that this is a postmodern, capital-based strategy on behalf of the Oaxacan painters of that 'middle generation' or los copiadores 'the copiers' - a somewhat taboo term to describe that generation accused of copying the Tamayo, Toledo or Morales style which corresponds to a roughly discernible generation of artists younger than Toledo and older than the new generation signified by Flores, Pastrana and Ruiz.

Sergio Hernández, invariably categorised in this way, provided the honest response to the Valerio Question 3 above that is worth repeating here: 'because we live obsessed by money. What's happening now is that we're in a dynamic of making money, of thinking about money. […] He who comes to Oaxaca to buy a painting doesn't come to look for a painting they could find in Mexico City.'

The research undertakes a real-time analysis of the art of Demián Flores as his career unfolds from an already strong international position as an emerging young artist. Interpretation of his work makes direct links between the imagery, iconography, art history references and socio-political significance of everyday life in Mexico and the stages of chronological, artistic and political history of Mexico as a young intellectual painter sees and represents them to an interested, international audience.

The incredibly complex nature of the composition of the Mexican collective and individual personality is key to this information gathering and presentation process. Explanation of these

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312 Valerio, Atardecer, p. 292.
313 Valerio, Atardecer, p. 196.
314 Valerio, Atardecer, p. 181.
factors will coexist with the formal interpretation of the cultural product described as a series of case studies highlighting these important Mexican personality traits through popular culture references, current political events and the thorough description of Mexican-ness as it prescribes everyday life to the point of provoking continuous altruism from its greatest artists, and makes mugging victims of its television celebrities where other postmodern, globalising nations make only pedestals for them. There is no way this explanation can be properly realised without considerable inspection of Mexico's violent political history.

'I can't imagine Toledo painting a painting that represents the repression of the Loxicha peoples,' commented artist Juan Alcázar (b. Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1955) to Valerio during his study, 'but I do imagine him validating a scholarship for someone who lives in that region'. Toledo himself observed: 'At PRO-Oax, a lot of those who participate are painters; they have a certain conscience and they are a source of support, but painting is a different area.' As will be shown in Chapter 4, young artists turned to directly expressing political opinion in their work.

If the capital-based strategy of the majority of Oaxacan artists creates an Utopia factory of cultural product, the present work is correct to apply and defend the Marxist-structuralist postmodern theory of Frederic Jameson to Oaxacan art as a system of cultural production. New additions to the structure of that system challenge and propose a new type of cultural product with a very different aesthetic, its engagement with the political creates the opportunity to treat the Oaxacan art scene as a microcosm and model for society and its evolution.

Valerio calls the stagnation a lack of dissidence in Oaxacan art. The research introduces alternative proposals by young Oaxacan artists and seeks to prove the recognition, acceptance of the changing nature of society's values and contemporary themes in postmodern times and marks an equal representation and manipulation of those changes to document and criticise their accelerating effect on culture at all levels. It is proposed that the cause of this shift in expression and direction for Oaxacan art was the perceived unequivocal need to create and retain standing as artists by closely following the model of community altruism developed by Francisco Toledo.

Splitting the commodity: the community altruism of Francisco Toledo

The dialectic set up by Foster in *The Return of the Real* that concerns 'the political in contemporary art' would read the 1980s-90s generation of Oaxacan artists presents only a reproduction of the conditions of production: Foster's productivist model where political force is gained only through

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representation. This corresponds to the capitalist neo-liberalism of the time. Conversely, the 1960s art of Toledo presents a 'deconstructive strategy' that offers resistance to the capital-based strategy of modernity. This is also how the new generation studied in the present work would be classified, it questions the 'Oaxaca School', the meanings, techniques, styles and forms of Oaxacan art and the negative effects of capitalist neo-liberalism or globalisation: Foster's resistance model. More profoundly, Toledo's creation of the Oaxacan 'culture system' being based on the return of Tamayo and the work of others resisting the ideological requirements of the Muralist system classifies these forms of early post-Rupture Mexican contemporary art as political resistance to oppressive policy within Mexican art.

Valerio argues that other Oaxacan painters that appear, on canvas, to have the same interests, are merely riding a wave of success. Monsiváis agrees with this idea: Francisco Toledo 'has lent his name to a highly varied method of creating a pictorial world and has founded a School (or inspired a stream of futile images of his own').

The current research posits that the decision to ride that wave is an erring postmodern, capital-based strategy that may incur aesthetic or conceptual criticism in Valerio's arena and have a negative effect on the destiny of Oaxacan art, a point of overlap between Sundown and the present work. Valerio's work, comprising multiple styles, visual material, invented art works and a critical perception of the Utopian or universal aesthetic of Oaxacan art is a postmodern work itself in no uncertain Jamesonian terms.

If Toledo's work 'throw[s] light on a personal sediment (ethnic, social, literary) that admits no separations between content and form,' the multiple-faceted nature of his life suggests a contradiction and hints at an awareness or simply the practice of historical materialism. As we learn from Gary Genosko's comprehensive study, *McLuhan and Baudrillard: The Masters of Implosion*, the theoretical approaches of Jameson and Baudrillard reach rare alignment in their treatment of reification as it was developed by George Lukacs on the basis of Marx's analysis of commodity relations, specifically commodity fetishism.

Genosko states that for both Jameson and Baudrillard, reification is 'indispensable for an understanding of the postmodern condition,' as a foundation of consumer culture, it 'perpetuates a deep conviction within the consumer that the production of the product in question – attributable no doubt to other human beings in the generic sense – is nonetheless beyond anything you can imagine' according to Jameson.

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317 Monsiváis, 'Off with Toledo's head', p. 83. Punctuation in the original.
318 Monsiváis, 'Off with Toledo's head', p. 83.
For Baudrillard, reification is the only critical advance in Marxist thinking capable of rising to the challenge of his diagnosis of the passage from the commodity to the sign form in the post-industrial historical stage in which we currently live, the third of Baudrillard's three orders of simulation: 'A post-industrial phenomenon. Mechanical reproduction is transcended in the conception of signs and objects in terms of their reproducibility. This order is dominated by what Baudrillard calls the "code": the rules governing the combinatorial possibilities of the terms of a closed system and the appointment and holding of their relations in an abstract separateness.'³²¹

The current thesis proposes that the stability and perceived efficiency of Toledo's model of production for Oaxacan art can be explained by the divergence of the two theories: a Jamesonian analysis leaves us content with a commodity form (based on labour) but a Baudrillardian one demands credence for the sign form (meaning, and not labour power, is the essence of the commodity). This separation is represented by the distinct natures of the aesthetic activity and the ideological activity within the Oaxacan art system. The historical materialism seen in the reaction to the Muralists' oppression directs Toledo to act as a social/political/democratic/pluralistic activist but to paint/draw/print/sculpt as an indigenous Oaxacan artist. The sign applied by society to him as an artist is absorbed and reflected in his activities carried out as a powerful member of civil society, but the commodity he and his system produce is free of ideological content that may affect the stability of the value, related to the explicit or (non-ideological) implicit attractiveness.

In terms of the future of Oaxacan art, this work discovers to what extent the unexpected turn of events, that came in the form of the Oaxaca Conflict, redirected Oaxacan art to act and produce in an ideological manner and debate how this may affect the long-term stability or development of the system of cultural production of Oaxacan art. The reaction of the U.S. art market to what they saw as disagreeable ideological content during the height of the Cold War was a factor in the decline of the Muralism movement in the 1950s; the effect the perception of its political content has on the future of Oaxacan art could be a measure of how society may have changed during the period demarcated by postmodernism.

The politics of leadership

In an article published in 1999 in the national daily newspaper El Financiero, that, as its name may not immediately communicate, publishes the largest and most comprehensive cultural section in the country, critic and artist Carlos Blas-Galindo referred to Toledo and Morales as disputing the cacicazgo cultural oaxaqueño 'Oaxacan cultural chiefdom':

³²¹ Genosko, McLuhan, p. 90.
To Tamayo it is owed that the renowned native artists of that state (Oaxaca) organise the funding or at least manage the undertaking of works that consolidate the cultural infrastructure of the entity. However, between the less-happy consequences of that posture one finds the Oaxacan cultural chiefdom, that Francisco Toledo and Rodolfo Morales dispute today.322

The translation here of cacicazgo from the original Spanish quote is literally correct but also an amiable one where, in local terms, a cacique would be much better described as a tyrant, despot or even overlord, in accordance with its historical use to describe power wielded by politicians in a localised or regional manner beginning in colonial times and continuing to the present day.323 Such a reading of the Blas-Galindo article was taken by Toledo who reacted to the 'offensive term' in local Oaxacan newspaper Noticias five days later. Quoted saying that the resources he had managed were paid 90 per cent paid for by his own means as he had received little in the way of donations, 'with the sole idea to serve and to provide what was lacking' to his generation when it was being educated; specifically 'because there was nowhere to exhibit nor to learn.' Toledo is quoted as concluding the interview by declaring that he did not wear the coat of a tyrant.324

There is also some implied criticism in the apposition used in the original Spanish article, where artistas renombrados originarios here translated as 'renowned native artists' can also mean 'renamed natives', which could be read as a reference to Toledo's official birthplace as being Mexico City and not the magical-realist rural Oaxacan paradise Juchitán, besides referring to the selective nomenclature used by many painters with multiple first and surnames, including Toledo, whose full name is Francisco Benjamín López Toledo. Neither of these facts are of a particularly secret nature nor ever denied by Toledo himself, who often, as in the Abelleyra biography, refers to his being born in Mexico City as an accident.

The notion that being from Juchitán, often given great importance by writers, curators and investigators seeking to apply Indian-ness and extract exotic worth from the city and the individual's Zapotec roots, is questioned by Debroise's informed observation: 'Maybe if he had lived as a child in Juchitán, and not just spent his vacations there, Toledo would not have built a myth

322 Carlos Blas-Galindo Mendoza, El Financiero, (26 September 1999). Cited in Se busca un alma, by Angélica Abelleyra, p. 189. The exact reference for the primary source are not given by Abelleyra and proved very difficult to retrieve from the original archive at the newspaper's head office and from a digital archive that dates back only to 2000.

323 Term notably applied to the Ulises Ruiz Ortiz style of government that led to the Oaxacan Conflict in 2006; documented and analysed in Chapter 4 below.

324 Noticias Voz e imagen de Oaxaca, (31 August 1999). Cited in Se busca, by Abelleyra, p. 189. Full bibliographic references for this and other material in this key text are not given. The exact reference for this article is now not available from the original publisher; this newspaper's digital and part of its physical archive were destroyed in direct action taken during machinations by the Ruiz government in the run-up to the Oaxaca Conflict.
around the town of his Zapotec ancestors, recovering oral legends', that Debroise calls a 'tropical-vaginal utopia whose name was uttered with closed lips.'

Debroise relates the selective nomenclature used by Toledo to the similar action taken by Mexican Muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros 'who was born in Mexico City […] but wanted people to think he had been born in the revolutionary state of Chihuahua, where everyone wore guns and cartridge belts.' Debroise's concise interpretation of Toledo's own motives links this decision to the important question of Toledo's relationship with sex and sexuality.

Taking the maternal family name implied an erasure of paternity and its attendant virility, an embrace of a primitive womb (the non-sexual grandmother in the matriarchal societies of the mythical tehuana), and above all, a pansexual innocence that ended up structuring a diluted or (liquefied) machismo.

The discussion of Blas-Galindo's publication that concreted the attitudes of various groups and individuals at the time and since, a journalistic moment that coined the phrase cacique cultural that is still used constantly in relation to Toledo and his work in Oaxaca by members of the cultural sector across the country, concludes by linking the artist to another of the 'principal characteristics intermeshed with changes instigated in the 1960s and what has been defined above as the recognised temporal origin of postmodern thought and behaviour. The response to the article by Oaxacan critic Enrique Franco Calvo, who wrote an article titled 'Criticism and derision' in the long-standing counter-culture magazine Generación, discredited Blas-Galindo's opinion and emphasised the cultural promotion practised by Toledo. 'His work comes out of generosity and that awards him a moral authority, and, why not, political', Franco Calvo stated, after having labelled Blas-Galindo's remark an 'affront'.

This is a succinct way to underline that Toledo's political power is directly connected to his having invested heavily in terms of time, effort and financial capital to earn what Blas-Galindo had gone on to describe as an 'excessive hoarding of decision-making […] it is an exaggerated state that Toledo must be consulted about everything that has to do with visual culture and the arts. The Oaxacan artistic community has enormous decision-making capacities and this richness is not being made the most of.'

Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 250.

Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 250.

Debroise, 'Insurgent Toledo', p. 250.

Enrique Franco Calvo, 'La crítica y el escarnio', Generación, 25 (October, 1999), p. 55.

Blas-Galindo, El Financiero, in Se busca un alma, by Angela Abelleyra, p. 190.
2.3 The contingent structure of the Oaxacan art community

The present research identifies a number of artists in Oaxaca whose works and careers are best explained by applying Bhabha's beyond theory to their relationship to their contemporaries. Artists who are both individuals and loosely connected here as components of an in between group, include Alejandro Santiago (b. 1964, Teococuilco, Oaxaca, Mexico) and Luis Valencia.

Santiago personifies a clear avenue of evolution in Oaxacan art. Best known for his sculpture, Santiago created a series of ceramic statues titled *2,501 Migrants* in 2003. The title refers to the number of inhabitants of his tiny home town have now migrated to live elsewhere who have followed the traditional migratory path to the U.S. in search of the 'American dream', or at least money to feed their families. Santiago includes himself as Migrant number 2,501, as he too has left the small town to live in the City of Oaxaca and in order to seek provision for his family. The project has been extended to include the creation of six-metre tall ceramic sculptures and a sculpture park set in Santiago's hillside ranch that know plays host to the original *Migrants* as they roam amongst the trees.

Holo addresses the migration issue from the perspective of the Latino population in the U.S.: 'Living as both Mexicans and Americans in the United states, they are Mexicanizing, and to some extent also reconquering, the land that was once Mexico’s.' Referring here to the states of California, Texas and New Mexico that were ceded to the U.S. after the Mexican-American War from 1846-1848. The unofficial recuperation of these states, known as the ‘Reconquista’ is a fervent political issue in the U.S. and in particular the border states where President Bush agreed to the building of a wall to traverse the entire southern border as a preventative measure against illegal immigration.

In April 2008, an Absolut Vodka advertisement published only in Mexico caused a huge stir in the U.S. as 'In An Absolut World', the vodka company or at least advertising agency Teran/TBWA, believed Mexico would be that much bigger and returned the three relinquished states in a modified aerial map of North America. The advertisement and the Reconquista issue have been given much publicity by ultra-conservative television news sources including Bill O'Reilly and syndicated columnist Michelle Malkin. The issue of migration became of even more pressing importance in 2010 after the governor of the state of Arizona, Jan Brewer, signed a law introducing, amongst other things, the inquiry and examination of any person's immigration status upon there being reasonable suspicion that that person may be an illegal alien.

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330 Holo, S. *Oaxaca*, p. 239
331 Attention was given to this advertisement and its message by numerous news sources worldwide, the specific information described here can be found at Michelle Malkin, 'Absolut arrogance and the advertising agency behind the reconquista ad', michellemalkin.com, <http://michellemalkin.com/2008/04/02/absolut-reconquista/> [Accessed 4 April 2008].
Riding a wave of resurgent interest in his work during the period of the present research, a chance meeting with the son of Carlos Slim Helu led Santiago to paint the vehicles and helmets used by the Telmex Nascar racing team in 2010.

Luis Valencia was born in San Antonino Castillo Velasco, Ocotlán, in the Central Valley Zapotec region of the state of Oaxaca. He, too, is Zapotec, but no longer speaks the language regularly. Also birthplace of Valencia's mentor and inspiration, the contemporary artist Rodolfo Morales (1925-2001), the town and small district of Ocotlán lie less than an hour from the city of Oaxaca, a factor which has brought its cultural output permanently in to the spotlight. Cultural tourism directs visitors directly to the homes and workshops of handicraft artists such as ceramicists the Aguilar sisters and the headquarters of the Cultural Foundation established in Morales's home. The Foundation, which also has an office in the very centre of Oaxaca, manages multiple cultural projects from the architectural renovation of the town of Ocotlán's sixteenth century temple and former convent and another 15 churches across the district, to the Santa Ana Zegache community workshops project now supported by Demián Flores.

Luis Valencia's life as an artist started in the fields he used to work as a child. Working the land in order to more successfully produce food for the family, he would often come across small clay figures that had made been made thousands of years before by his direct Zapotec descendants. He explains how he used to feel the man who had made the pieces when he held their work in his hands. He didn't know that they could be sold to make money or that he could learn how to make them himself and make even more. A local artisan offered to show him how and he accepted, becoming the strongest breadwinner in his family before becoming an adolescent.

Luis Valencia possesses a huge respect for his race and is a strong believer in oral history. He has told me a number of local stories from the times of the Spanish conquest. Stories of what the only survivor of his town, a little girl, called "shiny men" when describing the chainmail-wearing invaders upon her arrival at the next town. He learnt such stories from his grandfather who in turn had learnt them from his. Valencia's ceramics are of all shapes and sizes but are most commonly depictions of the Spanish Conquest. Three-dimensional representations of battles with gruesome detail such as a Zapotec woman having her arm cut off by a chain-suited, blond man's sword are excellently executed and a typical piece will include a large number of such scenes, the background debris and a strong message.

Valencia's talent with ceramic art brought him to the attention of great Oaxacan painter, Rodolfo Morales who found Valencia a place at the prestigious Rufino Tamayo workshop in Oaxaca.

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332 Formal interview with the artist for journalistic purposes, (September 2001).
333 See Plate 57.
and also took him to a library for the first time - Valencia was in his early forties and from then on began a regime of weekly visits to this same tiny Oaxaca Municipal Library to learn to read.

When the author met Valencia in 2001, an invitation to his home and studio led to viewing and naming some works in progress. The paintings, having recently diversified from ceramics, had already been sold, having been commissioned and paid for in advance. Representatives of Spanish bank Banco Santander had learned of his successful ceramics seminar in Sulmona, Rome, in 1997 and had arrived at his front door in San Antonino. This was the only method available to communicate with Valenica, before late in 2011.

At the end of October 2002 Luis's son Alejandro was fatally wounded by police while being interrogated at Ocotlán prison. After two and a half days in a coma, Alejandro died. Valencia overcame this tragedy by turning to God and the Christian church. When the author visited him late in 2005, Valencia was to be found a number of blocks away from his home, physically, and more likely than not, financially, helping with the construction of a new church.

On the 1 January 2009, Valencia was one of several artists invited to the Segunda Fiesta Grande del Maíz Criollo 'Second grand festival of national maize' in the Oaxacan town of Zaachila, a Zapotec stronghold since the beginning of the construction of Monte Albán and during the times when the pre-Hispanic village of (San José) Mogote was flourishing. Valencia exhibited a work titled El tren revolucionario 'The Revolution Train' that he had created for the Museo de Arte Popular de la Ciudad de México 'Mexico City Museum of the popular Arts', the handicraft-specialist gallery administered by the Mexico City governing body, as part of its 'The History Train' collective exhibition that was mounted that year as part of the bicentennial celebrations of Mexican Independence and the Revolution. At this event, Valencia revealed to the local press that his son Jorge had sold ceramic works to Microsoft founder Bill Gates. As discussed above, Valencia had used no modern forms of communication until autumn of 2011 and so it was not until another personal visit in February 2010, that the author discovered that Luis and Jorge had created and delivered a piece of ceramic art approximately 8m by 3m. The installation of the piece meant the two Oaxacans had lived in Gates's lakeside mansion for two months.

Reading Valencia's career in postmodern terms is rewarding for the present study. He received no formal training until his early 40's. He did not go to a Mexico City art school or travel at all during the first four decades of his life. He is a Zapotec from Oaxaca but his mentor was Morales and not Toledo. Until the second decade of the second millenium, he had been practically unreachable but he has created work for one of the most influential figures in the developement of

334 See Plate 56.
335 Héctor Cuevas, 'Segundo feria del maíz', Noticias Voz e imagen de Oaxaca, 2 January 2009.
information technology.

Discussing both biological and religious hybridity questions Jameson's concept of the flattening of time in postmodernism. Santiago and Valencia both have adult sons who are emerging as innovative and successful members of the Oaxaca art community.
Chapter 3. Towards a new Oaxacan contemporary art

Geographical and historical factors landscape the modern-day world of post-ruptura Mexican art. Contemporary art represents a new stage in the nation's development and is evidence of Mexico’s greater interaction with the international community. Even though the Ruptura took decades to achieve and even included a short-lived 1980s stage known as neo-Mexicanism, for its return to a native, religious and historical symbolism, Mexican art received the necessary help of a catalyst or even catapult that to project itself into the second half of the twentieth century.

The Massacre at Tlatelolco in of 2 October 1968 is a watershed event in Mexican history that cements the nations development in the global and social terms of the present research. A brief review of the national context of Mexican contemporary art at the start of the second millennium is necessary.

Three cities: Monterrey, Mexico City and Oaxaca, are the three corners of a very obtuse triangle that represents the relationship between art production, promotion and sale in Mexico. There are great differences between these three cities and they represent the modem-day facade Mexico shows to the world and also three distinct historical phases in the country's development. Noting the geographical location of the Mexican Republic and the individual Mexican states is as important as knowing the influence of its domestic physical and political geographies.

The economic power of the northern industrial city of Monterrey is second only to that of the national capital, Mexico City. The relationship between these two cities in terms of business and commerce is reflected in the relationship and respective positions they hold in the Mexican art world: Monterrey is a north-reaching sales centre for art produced nationally; meaning it serves both northern Mexico and the specialist collectors and the affluent sectors of the Mexican-American population that comprises the art market north of the border in the U.S.A. Mexico City is both a national and international point-of-sale and a centre of production; facilitating creation, promotion and sale through its status as national capital and the related capital investment in services, resources and infrastructure proportionate to this status and its centralised location in both political and physical geography terms.

Throughout the rest of the country, only the city of Oaxaca, the geographical, political and legislative centre of the state of Oaxaca, demands a footing on this credibility ladder as primarily a centre of production and minor point-of-sale through the artists themselves, corredores 'art runners' and Oaxacan-art-enfacing galleries that exhibit also works by national and international artists on a much lesser scale.
Of Mexico's other cities, Mérida, perched overlooking the Gulf of Mexico in the eastern state of Yucatán, boasts the Museum of Contemporary and Cultural Centre of Yucatan (MACAY) that is completely funded by public money and also responsible for and fed by local private projects. The city of Tijuana has turned its fortune, in many ways seen as misfortune, as being the infamous border town between Baja California and the U.S. state of California, to creating a post-modern Mexican laboratory that expresses the results of a constant influx of Chicano culture and the cultural mixing of US and Mexican cultures that can be seen as no less than a 24-hour a day process. Traditionally seen as the flagship crossing-point for migrating Mexicans that partying young Americans take full advantage of due to its close proximity to large urban centres and student populations in the wealthy American state, Tijuana's rabid urban culture has developed into an almost non-racial no man's land and breeding ground for petty crime and smuggling opportunities. The city has created a new graffiti culture and has a history of punk that has recently produced music success stories whose popularity has converted them into international levels of recognition.336 Demian Flores's exhibition Match took place in both Mérida and Tijuana before venturing across the border to Los Angeles in 2006.

The Tijuana section of the U.S.-Mexico border has been converted into a space to represent the division in migratory and diasporic living by performance artist and visual poet Guillermo Gómez-Peña (b. 1955, Mexico City), who has 'made multiculturalism a central motif in his writing'.337

In fact, the prefix “multi” is integral to his concepts: multicultural, multilingual, multiracial, multiethnic, multimedia, multilayer, multifocal, multiple repertoires, multiple occasions, and son on. “Inter” is another such prefix: interdisciplinary, interchangeable, intercultural, intersection, intermediary, intervene and so forth.338

Shifra Goldman states: 'In their own way, Gómez-Peña's prefixes are the equivalent of García Canclini's “hybridism”'.339 The present author has been present at a number of Gómez-Peña's interactive performances in Oaxaca, large, very dark rooms full of hugely varying amounts of light noise, people, a sexually charged atmosphere through nudity, excessive audience participation and there function in his work are best described by Debra Castillo, who uses Thomas

336 The former punk singer and now commercial pop music star Julieta Venegas is the best example; her fame and impact having led her to be named as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador on 30 September 2009.
338 Goldman, Dimensions, p. 61.
339 Goldman, Dimensions, p. 61.
Foster's work as reference:

Much of the importance of this performer's work involves reframing agency around the staged resistance to understood norms of clear communication, around refusals to speak such that speech/silence/babble becomes a way around the containments of monological national discourse.340

After Virinder Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk, who state that 'one of the main implications of diasporic consciousness is an ability to be at the forefront of creativity, bringing, as Homi Bhabha calls, 'newness into the world'.341 Bhabha's proposals are also wider: 'it is by living on the borderline of history and language, on the limits of race and gender, that we are in a position to translate the difference between them into a kind of solidarity.'342 The present work posits that the Oaxacan art community creatively adapts to the rapidly-changing, globalised world in exactly this way. The collective behaviour observed signifies the creativity Virinder and others speak of being applied to the creation of solidarity, or ways to fashion solidarity, too.

As the third-largest city in Mexico, Guadalajara benefits from a financially prosperous position. Its geographical location does not give it the same advantages as Monterrey but it is much closer to Mexico City, boasts a very a strong University and spin-off tertiary and quaternary sectors, in particular in the software development and technology industries as well as being the capital of the state of Jalisco, financial beneficiary of the town home to the eponymous alcoholic spirit, Tequila. An enormous city, it is home to many forms of culture and experiences a troubled search for identity other than just a site of business interests for American venture capital. Guadalajara was also rumoured as a potential site of one of the new Guggenheim Museums, a further extension of the investment the city and local monetary sources have made in the exhibition of culture not necessarily from the state of Jalisco.

Monterrey

Monterrey has used private money from corporate sources such as the Cuauhtémoc Moctezuma brewery and innumerous smaller fonts of Mexican businesses based on American money or American business models to create an American-looking city.

To facilitate this introduction, an exemplary explanation can be given: the relationship between Monterrey and Mexico City relies on the northern city's proximity to the U.S. and

342 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 170.
subsequent attraction to investors and immigrant skilled and professional American workforces and emigrant Mexican populations in search of salaries to send home. The young city exemplifies some of the traditional roles of art in society: investment opportunity, in particular towards promotion of national identity and patriotism; the location and relocation of funds and assets; and the acquisition and exhibition of status symbols and material wealth. These mercantile roles operate on both national and international levels and are greatly heightened in a developing nation whose society and economic activity is selectively-, or, under-policed and wholly affected by migration and large-scale organised crime that includes political figures, government institutions and money laundering.

The largest single gallery space committed solely to contemporary art in Mexico is Monterrey's Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (MARCO), an enormous structure built with corporate funds from such large companies as the brewery mentioned above. The space was designed by architect Ricardo Legoretta Vilchis (1931-2011), a student of architectural innovator Luis Barragán (1902-1988), to be a contemporary reflection of the contemporary art contained throughout its eleven halls.

**Mexico City**

The national capital is a monument to PRI politics and the centralisation policy this party exercised during its unabated reign over the nation from 1929 to 2000. The relinquishing of support for the arts by the PRI government who no longer saw necessary the optimum use of the ways of controlling cultural output was a direct result of its totalitarian power. For 71 years it had ruled Mexico, initially addressing the political importance of culture and investing heavily in the aestheticisiation of politics but also similarly eradicating, through control, any opposition from the institutions which produce images, therefore no opposition was being represented and none disseminated.

To return now to where the previous chapter left off, the research introduces a comprehensive exhibition and text, *The Age of Discrepancy: art and visual culture in Mexico 1968-1997* (2007). Accomplishing the incredible feat of representing all of Mexican art of the period covering the lead period up until that of the present research did not go unscathed by the nation's critics. One type of criticism, made by *La Jornada* culture commentator, Merry MacMasters, focused on how the details of the exhibition's efforts to reflect the times and specifically the effects of the 1968 massacre, were not upheld when by addressing how exhibitions, such as *Exposición*

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343 Distance from Monterrey to Mexico-U.S. border, 139 miles (Monterrey to Nuevo Laredo-Laredo crossing), 179 miles (Monterrey to Matamoros-Brownsville crossing).
Solar, run in conjunction with the 1968 Olympics, were forerunners to important process that formed the Salón Independiente artistic community group that rehoused and supported projects independently as protest.\textsuperscript{344} Blanca González Rosas, of Proceso, criticised the group of curators 'preferences', their 'strong institutional power' and 'the close relationship it holds with gallery owners and collectors'.\textsuperscript{345} She concludes, 'this exhibition not only demonstrates the difficulty we have in Mexico to be inclusive and dialogue with the protagonists of the past, but also the pertinence of restructuring the participation of gallery owners in exhibitions of institutional relevance.'\textsuperscript{346} These criticisms highlight important themes in the present work: the highly commercial nature of the Mexican art world, that, even more so than in traditional, mercantile ways described in relation to Monterrey, but exhibiting a pandering to public-private partnerships that may not be beneficial to the supposed public sector of beneficiaries; a blurred dichotomy between academic curating and commercial criticism.

The present research relates these themes as almost an auspicious postmodernism of reaction, after Foster, where culture still is being used to quash reaction for power and capital gain, but within Mexican art itself. Duopolic markets can be observed in all sectors of Mexican industry. The extent to which this happens in art reflects a general tendency towards a very commercial academy. Television programming schedules, newspapers and other forms of media are full of academics involved in round table discussion or dialogues that necessarily fit with the editorial line of the employer or news source.

This dichotomy was concretised to the author when comparing a Mexico City's comprehensive guide to Mexican contemporary art published in 2006, during the very public preparation of the UNAM \textit{Discrepancies} exhibition, 'Arte Contemporáneo Mexicano: Cómo, cuándos y Porqués'. This guide provides information on the boom experienced in the form of art studied towards and over the end of millennium period, it contained very little overlapping information, particularly for the 1990s period being researched here. Where the two discussions, the commercial academic one of \textit{La Era de Las Discrepancias},\textsuperscript{347} and the commercial, 'Arte Contemporáneo Mexicano: Cómo, cuándos y Porqués', did coincide, it was in reference to two artists were used, Abraham Cruzvillegas (b. 1968, Mexico City) and Gabriel Orozco (b. 1962, Jalapa, Veracruz, Mexico).

Cruzvillegas, through his exhibition, \textit{Tratado de Libre Comer. Moi et ma circonstance}

\textsuperscript{344} Merry MacMasters, 'Exhibirá el MUCA el arte creado en torno al movimiento de 1968', \textit{La Jornada}, 12 February 2007.


\textsuperscript{346} González Rosas, 'El espejismo de la discrepancia'.

\textsuperscript{347} Olivier Debroise, 'Entry and Exit: A New Internationalization of Mexican Art 1987-1992', in \textit{La Era de la Discrepancia}, ed. by Olivier Debroise and others, pp. 338-347.
shown in Montreal in 2000, discussed the NAFTA agreement, its title translates as 'Free To Eat Agreement: Me and My Circumstance' in the three relevant languages. While Gabriel Orozco is perhaps the most successful artist of his generation. Two of his notable works are an intervention with a full-size Citroen DS shown in Paris in 1993 and a intervened human skull Black Kites from 1997. An integral moment of Mexico’s participation as the special guest country at ARCO 2005 in Madrid was the presentation of a comprehensive book on Orozco. The book, *Text on the Work of Gabrielle Orozco* is a compilation of critical work, interviews and presentations by different authors written between 1992 and 2000 that had to be translated into Spanish for the first time for this presentation; underlining Orozco's international acclaim and well-known focus on New York where he has built a career alongside that of Benjamin Buchloch, post-modern critic, writer, intimate compadre and world expert on Orozco.

Related to the present research, both publications trace Orozco's return from studying in Spain and the informal arrangement of 'The Friday Workshops', where a small group of artists met and worked together in Orozco's house, amongst other examples of this setting up of independent groups. In some cases, much more exclusive than others, this tribalism, however does reflect earlier periods in the history of Mexican contemporary art such as the Grupos (Groups) of the late 1970s and 1980s. Best known of these, Grupo Suma, created work from an austere lifestyle that, combined with the tribal nature of the structure of the most innovative sectors of contemporary art, reflected the post-1968 political mood that was to lead up to the founding of the Partido de Revolución Democrática 'Democratic Revolution Party', Mexico's first nationally contending Left-wing representation. The work of Demián Flores shows appreciation of the aesthetic style of both Grupo Suma and Gabriel Orozco, whereas the collective behaviour and innovation characteristic of this period was also reflected in the unwitting but entrenched foundation of the Oaxaca School.

By the 1990s, the contemporary art world in Mexico had for decades relied on a handful of galleries in the rich Jewish district of Polanco and the three state-run museums to repeatedly exhibit work by known Ruptura artists: the Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo, the Museo de Arte Moderno and the Museo de la Ciudad.

The first part of the first decade of this century and therefore this millennium saw a surge in the popularity of Mexican contemporary art. Numerous exhibitions appeared throughout exhibition spaces across the world and Mexican critics asked themselves whether these artists were not to become victims of an international fashion and whether or not this 'boom' was not a passing

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349 Debroise, 'Entry and Exit', p. 342.

350 Alvaro Vázquez Mantecón, 'Los Grupos: A Reconsideration', in *La Era de la Discrepancia*, ed. by Olivier Debroise and others, pp. 197-203.
explosion. Martin reports that it was 'impossible to distinguish individual dates or names as founders of anything that could be close to a movement for Mexican contemporary art in its current form.'

The example of the Freeze exhibition curated by Damien Hirst in 1988 creating Young British Art and also Cubism have been used to define how recognised movements are generated. In the case of Mexico City, it would also be 'improper' to speak of movements, schools or stylistic currents but to recognise that geographical and physical movement had occurred during this time. The news, reproduction and innovators of practices that were already established in the provinces such as Oaxaca, united in the capital and gave exposure to the collective of new proposals and it was not the generation of a new artistic language.

The Phillip Morris Company sponsored the U.S. leg of an international touring exhibition titled *Mexico Now: Point of Departure* that featured 13 emerging Mexican artists 'whose work is forceful and full of invention', the exhibition re-examined the traditions of Mexican art and charted 'new creative territory' through photography, sculpture, installations and other works numbering 40 in total. The show visited six cities in the U.S. from 1997 to 1999 before travelling to Puerto Rico.

From 2000, the desire of curators to be the first to discover what was going on in Mexico was the foundation of the boom. It is suggested that this phenomenon was not linked to local practice but was really a by-product of the reorganisation of art markets that facilitates the survival of the monopolistic centres such as New York and London through obliging them to renew and widen their capacity to absorb cultures on the periphery. When the Fundació JUMEX opened its doors in April 2001, Adrian Dannett of *The Independent* labelled Mexico City 'the hottest happening spot' for contemporary art, 'for the cognoscenti of truly cutting-edge art, Mexico City is like London in 1990'.

The overnight political change in 2000, the victory of the PAN party over the national monolith PRI party was not able to effect the boom until the threads were showing around the edge of the Fox presidency even though from the very start the administration had no idea how to handle the cultural sector and had to arrange a meeting of industry leaders, held in Oaxaca early in 2000, to even to begin to discuss cultural policy that seemed never to be implemented. The PAN party had economic knowledge and power from its conservative roots and was not threatened by an

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intellectual community too weak to loosen its grip on the nation's hope of the 'change' promised by Fox during his victorious campaign. Much of this economic knowledge and power was due to the work of Felipe Calderón seen by many at this time as the brains of the PAN and perhaps their future, he became Mexican president in 2006.

Traditionally, the strongest player in the Mexican cultural sector had been the Ministry of Culture (CONACULTA). During the Fox administration this was under the direction of Sari Bermúdez, who was later heavily criticised as being largely responsible for lack of support for contemporary art during the boom period. The management of the sector by Bermúdez was not the only clear example of the new party's disappointing effort in fulfilling its campaign promises or instigating the infamous change advertised by Fox. The future of the artistic community would be little helped during this administration. Diminished and unrealistic budgets and a lack of vision meant most museums remained happy to exhibit their permanent collections. Demián Flores forwarded this issue in a letter he wrote on 16 February 2005 that accompanied an application to receive financial aid from the Pollock Krasner Foundation that resulted in the acquisition of a $20,000 bursary:

Presently, Mexico lives a crisis within its cultural structure that can be seen reflected in the lack of support for artists that prevents us from securing a form of subsistence through the commercialisation of our work. 356

From late in 2004, Flores had been organising a move to Oaxaca, an art-capitalist strategy to optimise Oaxacan kudos while reducing living costs and the emotional and physical costs of life in Mexico City. Valerio first discusses Flores's work when considering new Oaxacan perspectives 'not of any novelty on national or international levels'. 357

[There] exist, among the diverse successive generations, individuals that, without being forcefully novel in the national or global spheres, are refreshing and healthy in the Oaxacan context: the conjurer's games of Marco Antonio Bustamente and the constant and fruitful graphical labour of Demián Flores. 358

Valerio uses Marcos Bustamante as an example of the artist following a national

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357 Valerio, Atardecer, p. 316.
358 Valerio, Atardecer, p. 316.
phenomenon and so this description is taken to mean that if Flores's pop art style was not of his own
invention, its existence or application as a new form of contemporary art from Oaxaca surely was.

Oaxaca

The proliferation of contemporary art-related premises in Oaxaca, as a result of general observation
from 2004-2011, is shown in Figure 3. This proliferation reflects the continual growth in the sector
and the mobility of the existing businesses and institutions. The Arte de Oaxaca gallery is the city’s
oldest gallery and was founded on being the first true outlet for Oaxacan painters such as Toledo
who redirected collectors' and critics' eyes on work of early and developing generations of painters.
The Galeria Quetzali has the greatest impact on promoting and selling Oaxacan contemporary art.
This small gallery is perfectly located on a pedestrianised cobbled street that leads to the Cathedral
of Santo Domingo; the religious centre of town that is the greatest post-Colonial tourist symbol of
Oaxaca and annexed by the Cultural Centre discussed above.

For a number of decades the Galería Quetzali acted as the sole representative of the best
artists and up-and-coming talent as well as visiting artists, but this has changed somewhat in recent
times. It must be remembered that a considerable proportion of Oaxacan art is sold through local
specialists and confidants that very often include personal or social contact with the artist as a major
part of the game plan of their selling pitch. Having withstood and perhaps benefited from dealings
of this nature, the Galeria Quetzali has survived and multiplied its offerings; it now has a baby sister
approximately four blocks away. The Bodega Quetzali offers a much larger space where larger
format works and works of different genre such as sculpture, photography or even dance – an
addition to the opening night of works by acclaimed photographer Alberto 'El Negro' Ibañez.

A major achievement of this gallery was its presence at Feria Internacional de arte
Contemporáneo (ARCO) de Madrid in 2005 as part of the Mexico's particiaption as the 'Invited
Country' under the *Mexico at ARCO* project that enclosed 17 galleries showing 1300 works by a
270 artists who were selected to 'show a wide and plural offering with the presence of the most
extensive of present-day Mexican art.' The curators commissioned to stage this massive presence
were quoted as saying 'we wanted to give a dynamic diverse energetic vision of Mexican arts.'

The selection of galleries was based on three types: the most historic; contemporary galleries
established for between 10 and 15 years; and those they wished to give the opportunity to present
themselves at an international fair for the first time.

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360 Carlos Ashida and Julián Zugazagoitia, 'Mexico at ARCO’, in *Feria Internacional de arte Contemporáneo, ARCO’05* (Exhibition catalogue, Madrid, 2005).
361 Ashida, 'Mexico at ARCO'.
To represent their stable of Oaxacan talent, the Galería Quetzali took the work of four young artists: Emi Winter, Jesus Lugo, Demián Flores, Guillermo Olguín; besides works by Francisco Toledo. None of these artists accompanied their works but it was a huge opportunity for these young talents. Though Flores and Olguín are both known as Oaxacan artists, Flores had never lived or worked in Oaxaca by this time and left the state of Oaxaca to be raised in Mexico City as a child. Olguín was born in Mexico City and Jesus Lugo is a Mexico City painter born-and-bred contracted to the Galería Quetzali. Emi Winter, the daughter of American archaeologist and anthropologist Marcus Winter, being the only one to actually have been born in the capital of Oaxaca. The Galería Quetzali stand was erected in conjunction with the Juan Martin Gallery that also works closely with Toledo.

Competition for the Quetzali and Arte de Oaxaca galleries multiplied between 2000-2006. Discontent with the augmentation of commissions and lowering of retainers, these new spaces were often the brainchildren of individual painters investing in the direct sale of his or her own work, or individuals associated with the art world with access to an indispensable central location.

The IAGO is located on the Santo Domingo plaza and pedestrianised area, it holds works and events promoting culture by local, national and internationally acclaimed practitioners in all fields. Halfway between the Santo Domingo end and the Zócalo end of Alcalá street, resides the MACO. This museum is essentially a multi-saloned gallery housed in a spectacular and huge colonial building that is adaptable and flexible to showing art of any form in many ways.

3.1 New Oaxacan Contemporary Art

It has been implied by this research and other writers that there is a new generation or new 'wave' of contemporary artistic output in Oaxacan art. It is not possible to group this new wave by age, style, background or even race or nationality, but by an arbitrary category that is best delineated by relative geography, time and an explicit non-commonality of aesthetic style. Expressly, this category includes the authorship of critically acclaimed work created in Oaxaca or by Oaxacan artists during the first decade of the twenty-first century that does not overtly adhere to the aesthetic style of the controversially-labelled Oaxaca School.

The present research takes a cross-section of this larger group in order to form a general perspective of this new wave and this is further reduced to the manageable number of two subjects of similar age and background: Demián Flores and Soid Pastrana to provide evidence of the

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362 Famous for his investigations into Monte Albán and its discoverer Alfonso Caso.
363 Holo, Oaxaca, p. 150.
influence of postmodernism. The reduction to a detailed discussion of Flores's representation of contemporary Mexico induces a valuable interpretation of a postcolonial developing nation whose geographical location and history produce a type of postmodernism simultaneously unique, comparable and indicative of future development in critical representation and thought on a global level.

3.2 Demián Flores Cortés: the hybrid

During filming for the documentary on Flores for the documentary series Otro modo de ver: la plástica contemporánea en Oaxaca 'Another way of seeing: Contemporary plastic art in Oaxaca', the art critic and Casa Lamm director, Germaine Gómez Haro's, first question to leading Flores critic and then director of the IAGO, Fernando Gálvez Aguinaga, was whether Flores's style was 'neo-Pop.' Gálvez Aguinaga supported his existentialist answer that the lack of anything created in recent times being neither new or original meant that 'everything is "neo-this" or "post-that".'\(^{364}\) He said that the genuine way to qualify a given cultural product was to discern its meaning in a given context and its ability to express that meaning without previously imposing upon it parameters of judgement that may be held due to aesthetic similarities or conceptual resonances of by now-deciphered movements.\(^{365}\)

There was no doubt to Gálvez Aguinaga that Flores used a Pop art style, but investigating the reasons why a young Mexican artist would use that style to represent his contemporary existence was a more productive way to interpret his work. Perhaps controlled by a consciousness of the medium through which it was intended to be consumed, documentary film for television release on a state-supported cultural channel, this lucid response to a simple question was followed by an introduction to Flores's background. Charged as being of utmost importance in most artists' development or the development of their influences, in Flores's case his background is guilty on both of these counts. All reviews of Flores's work are obligated to describe his upbringing from his birth in the small, practically rural Oaxacan town of Juchitan and his nuclear family's move to the megalopolis of Mexico City at the age of 14. Flores himself repeatedly cites this as the reason for his unfettered interest in 'the hybrid'.\(^{366}\)

Flores categorises the style of his work and the influences or movements that it reviews or responds as: 'The hybrid as a vision and contemporary artistic strategy.'\(^{367}\) At first it appears that

\(^{364}\) See Plate 28.
\(^{365}\) Primary research undertaken during the filming of Otro modo de ver: la plástica contemporánea en Oaxaca, dir. by Albino Alvarez (Casa Lamm/Canal 22, 2007).
\(^{366}\) Flores survey text.
\(^{367}\) Flores survey text.
Flores is avoiding referring to his work as postmodern, in particular as he is prone to the use of mestizaje to describe cultural mixing. However, Flores's further categorisation of his own style reads: 'My proposal detonates diverse creative axes as strategies to develop a reflection of mestizaje as a sign of our contemporary-ness.'

It is implicit in this statement that Flores knows he is not the creator of these 'diverse creative axes', and therefore his use of them to reflect 'cultural mixing as a sign of our contemporary-ness' can be nothing other than a learned borrowing of learned, borrowed practices - a process that itself reflects the cultural mixing that is the contemporary-ness he seeks to represent. Using hybrid art to represent hybridity is a postmodern practice.

The use of mestizaje ignites the idea of the conquest and colonialism but undoubtedly means more, as this idea is not the contemporary-ness of Mexico in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Another clue of the postmodern nature of Flores's work is his continued referral to his own juchilangés, based on the nonce word 'Juchilango' devised from juchiteco 'from Juchitán' and chilango 'non-native resident of Mexico City', to denote a person who is from Juchitán but lives in Mexico City. He used this word to name an exhibition of his work, an early-career retrospective, first shown in 2008.

Colonialism is not a causal factor in his being juchilangés but it is a new form of hybridity, Flores labels this as 'a reflection of the contemporary.' It is revealing that only the analysis of Flores's categorisation of his style has provoked such deep investigation into the representation of cultural mixing. Even before exploring the magnitude of the differences between the cultures of which he sees himself a hybrid, it is asked where Flores places his notion of a 'contemporary hybridity.'

This knowledge is a direct result of Flores's learning the use of the perceptual equipment provided by postmodernity.

Flores describes himself as 'a person who dialogues with the ancestral Zapotec cultural from Juchitan and with the experience of being located in a Mexico City located in globalisation,' giving us clues: Mexico City being 'located in globalisation' and also his citing of the seminal work of García Canclini. For García Canclini, who Flores regularly cites as the intellectual basis for his work, 'the hybrid is the postmodern.' Flores focuses on:

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368 Flores survey text.
369 Demián Flores, Juchilango: Visión crítica de la obra de Demián Flores (Exhibition catalogue, Casa Lamm, Mexico City, 2008).
370 Flores survey text.
371 Flores survey text.
The appropriation of emblematic images of the past, fusing them with elements of popular and mass cultures to represent metaphors of hybridity. Every piece is a container of diverse languages, formed from the deconstruction and iconic decodification and their visual incorporation, giving new elements of meaning. Each work will organise and stick together signs, references and cultural practices, found and modified images, apostrophes on the history of art and multiple formal language. In this way, the result is betting on the impure, for a mixture that contains the ironic-recreational, socio-political, and eventually, the absurd.\textsuperscript{373}

During his teenage years, Flores's family moved to Mexico City where he went on to study at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas de la UNAM 'National School of the Visual Arts of the UNAM'. After successful early shows and a marked amount of interest received as a printmaker, Flores completed a two-year residency in Paris and returned to Mexico City in 2003. After which, he says: 'Two years were enough to make me aware of the fact that the city had worn me down and I had worn down the City of Mexico.'\textsuperscript{374} He decided to move to Oaxaca to return to his native state, 'to share the learned and the lived, and, for the cultural offering that the large, rich and diverse city offered me, as a revitalising injection for my work.'\textsuperscript{375}

On many occasions, Flores has blurred the distinction between art and handicraft that is so commonly posed in Oaxaca and a theme of the work of Garcia Canclini, notably: 1) his cow that was entered in the Mexico City Cow Parade, that was painted by \textit{alebrije} 'traditional carved wooden animal figure' workers and later intervened by Flores; and 2) a surfboard he designed and had made by San Bartolo Coyotepec black clay potters which was an unsuccessful attempt to interact with the November surf tournament in Puerto Escondido in 2005, which was then replaced by Flores aligning surfboard fins on the famous Zicatela beach to represent upside down surfboards that would be washed away by the sea itself.\textsuperscript{376} The imaginary Flores creates, he says, is aimed to describe:

The multiple realities that are juxtaposed and create a cultural palimpsest that is contemporary Mexico. […] In my work I appropriate emblematic images of the past, fusing them with elements of popular and mass cultures to represent metaphors of our hibridity. Every piece is a container of diverse languages, formed from the deconstruction and iconic

\textsuperscript{373} Flores survey text.
\textsuperscript{374} Flores survey text.
\textsuperscript{375} Flores survey text.
\textsuperscript{376} See Plate 29.
de-codification and their visual incorporation, giving new elements of meaning.\textsuperscript{377}

Plates 4, 5 and 11 best show this imaginary, although the reader is invited to view all the works with these ideas in mind. Ofrenda Propiciatoria 'Whipping Boy Offering', shown in Plate 4 shows American pop icon Popeye being sacrificed on top of the main pyramid at Monte Albán. The Oaxacan civic ceremonial centre that dates from around 2,500 B.C. was the subject matter of the Flores series of that name from 2001. It is present as an architectural golden splendour as a direct reference to the theft of that gold and other riches by the Spanish Conquest and refers to the human capital, cultural detriment and financial exploitation of Mexico by globalising companies and intracontinental policies such as the NAFTA. The painting in Plate 9, Morir Por la Patria 'To Die For One's Country', is of an accompanying set of paintings of Monte Albán created on large canvases with a paint laden with gold-leaf. The painting depicts a Mexican man proudly intertwining himself with his nation's flag as a symbol of his motherland. Patriotism, directly and to represent loyalty and diversity, is often present in Flores's work. His 2011 series, La Patria 'Motherland', is totally dedicated to this theme and treats with respect the mestizaje that has founded his nation as well as commemorating the centenary of the start of the Revolution and the bi-centenary of the start of the War of Independence, events that triggered large-scale public celebrations in both 2010 and 2011.

Mexican popular culture dominates the underworld in the form of Kaliman, a comic book super hero that first appeared as the title character in a radio show from 1963. The most important thing about Kaliman is that he has no superpowers, he is a normal human being who can act at peak performance of human ability due to the perfect application of esoteric knowledge he has learned. Kaliman's popularity, success and Flores's use of him, reflect the use of witchcraft, pre-Hispanic traditions, customs and philosophies in everyday contemporary Mexican life and are a tribute to cultural backgrounds and indigenous roots. Flores introduces a masked Mexican wrestler positively enjoying the 'Mexican' underworld. This is Flores's strongest and most consistent imagery,\textsuperscript{378} it reflects struggle through the use of Mexican popular culture, so strong is this symbolism, that one of the founders of the PRD, Marco Rascón, invented a wrestler named Superbarrio who has appeared at Left wing political events since the 1970s. Rascón was jailed for armed robbery as a member of the Partido de los Pobres 'Party of the Poor' that used guerrilal tactics in the 160s and 70s in the state of Guerrero. The armed robbing of banks was these group's sources of income. In an informal interview with Flores early in November 2004, Flores answered questions on the origins of pop art.

\textsuperscript{377} Flores survey text.
\textsuperscript{378} See Plates 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18 and 27.
by saying: 'To you Europeans and gringos, popular culture was always based on the industrial, here popular culture is the taco stand on the corner, Mexican wrestling. I paint that.'

The media saturation and marketing bombardment that Mexicans live, as the clearest postmodern layer of the 'cultural palimpsest' to which Flores refers, has been summarised by the inclusion of Plates 35 to 43. A Oaxacan furniture shop's theft of the fame and familiarity of HSBC's logo signifies Mexican humour, confrontation with globalisation and blatant disregard for other people's products, inventions or ideas and attraction to lawlessness. The commonly-used phrase ¡Qué viva México, cabrones! 'One up for Mexico, land of motherfuckers', is uttered and exclaimed equally upon the successful completion of under-the-table dealings or spurious transactions. The enormous advertising hoardings shown in Plate 36 are at least 20m wide and up to 30m tall. Advertising and promotional materials cover nearly all surfaces in Mexico, from table tops in the real world, to all available space on professional sports teams' kits and online media sources. The natural world is not off limits, the VISA card shown in Plate 37 is approximately 8m tall and 15m wide, its location just past the toll booth between Mexico City and the city of Cuernavaca delivers its message to huge amounts of motorists that create the nearly-permanently jammed unique route out of the capital.

Plates 39 to 41 show Dr. Simi advertising. A case for Taylor's theory of creative adaptation, Plate 39 shows accountant Víctor González Torres transforming into fictional trademark, Dr. Simi. By 2005, González Torres had turned a single store into a chain of Farmacias Similares 'Similar Pharmacies' that sells generic pharmaceutical drugs in 3,239 stores across Mexico and has spread through Central America as well as Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Peru and Columbia. Dr. Simi sells 'The Same, But Cheaper' to the tune of $400 million in sales in 2004. Gonzaléz Torres is known as a marketing genius, using the cheapest of tricks to gain in his market. He parades promotions women in public and has young men dancing in huge Simi suits to loud music outside his shops, similar in size to the inflatable in Plate 40. González Torres positioned himself as an independent candidate for the 2006 Federal election. Not permitted to participate without being accredited to a party, he ran anyway, brandishing his Simi-socialism. Upon his defeat, González Torres hit back at winner Calderón by offering staple foods at discount prices and even free in the months after the election as Calderón began immediate price hikes. His use of the media is as strong as his financial resources will allow; he has his own TV show, radio show and a continent-wide newsletter that has a print run of 600,000 copies.

The Telcel joint doll and cellular telephone package offered in the advertisement in Plate 42

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signifies the greed and lack of regulation in Mexico's marketing industries – completely controlled by the Televisa-TV Azteca duopoly and the alliances these two media groups control with duopolies in the tourism, soft drink and sports industries. For young girls who play with dolls, being told that 'Her Telcel is the same as yours' is a moderate example of unfettered targeting of unprotected market sectors.

The appropriated ready-made in Plate 43 is my only contribution to the plastic art world. As a Chinese copy of a Japanese toy, the concrete product of an animated cartoon that soared to incredible global success from their joint release in 2002, the *Beyblade* replica was bought by an Englishman in southern Mexico. It deserves the name it has been given: 'Museum Piece 2003'. I position it as perfectly representative of its time and analyse it with the *Beavis and Butthead* MTV animated series studied by Kellner. However, 'Beyblade' was created 10 years after *Beavis and Butthead* and did not require the related sale of 'products, which in turn proliferated its [*Beavis and Butthead series*] images and effects'.

380 The combined launch of the cartoon series and the toy was an instant success in both markets almost immediately after leaving Japan's media shores. In Flores's terms, this palimpsest means that in:

> Each [piece of] work organises and sticks together signs, references and cultural practices, found and modified images, apostrophes on the history of art and multiple formal language. In this way, the result is betting on the impure, for a mixture that contains the ironic-recreational, socio-political, and eventually, the absurd.

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The range of Flores's work can be comprehensively introduced using the completed *Novena* be introduced using the completed *Novena* series that was first shown in its entirety at the 'Eduardo Vasconcelos' Baseball Stadium in the city of Oaxaca as the axis of a special multidisciplinary event involving the invitation of a group of writers from Mexico City to Oaxaca in order to participate in round table discussions, a program of cinematic presentations and an exhibition of stamps; all in the name of celebrating baseball. The exhibition was held in a specially constructed space within the baseball stadium and included reproductions of some of the strongest elements of the work in various locations throughout the park itself and its structure. These images, including the enormous wall drawings shown in Plates 30, 31 and 32, that remain for the aesthetic pleasure of Guerreros fans and stadium visitors until they are removed by time and weather.

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381 Flores survey text.
The locating of the inauguration of Novena, its immediate and continued future use as public art in addition to host and instigator of a week of related cultural events reveal as much about the motives and objectives of the artist responsible as do other innovative constituent parts of this series. Even after the initial stimulus of thirty-feet tall drawings on external walls, entrance to the gallery space further delighted those present due to Flores's cunning alteration of baseball paraphernalia which became appropriated and highly significant ready-mades.\(^{382}\)

Baseball bats were designed by Flores and made by a traditional bat-making carpenter in Mexico City. The traditional shape of a baseball bat was altered in seventeen different ways, including: incorporating the shape of traditional Mexican kitchen utensils to symbolise history, ('historicise' in Jameson's terms); an extremely vicious spiked end instead of a hitting end to represent violence and conflict; a bat with a u-bend around the 'sweet spot' where the ball would ideally be struck that represents a cunning trick or the impossibility of perfection and a 'double bat' with matching 'double bat' hanger representing love and human relationships. In removing the bat from the game, Flores refers to a version of baseball that is played in Juchitán, Plate 11 depicts a player of this game, Ta ladxi, where running with the bat is replaced by running with the head of an indigenous person.

The baseball caps were simple, solid colour, cotton caps stamped with famous commentators' catchphrases. The catchphrase embossed on the cap owned by the author reads 'Player without audacity is a hook without bait,' attributed to infamous commentator, Pedro 'Mago' Septien. It refers to the complex nature of the relationship between players, especially that between the pitcher and the batter. This statement could refer to any players in any sport or social situation in which human beings confront each other in a competitive manner; it reveals the natural desire to 'wipe the smile' from a confident opponent's face. Flores does not hold back depicting conflict or confrontation.\(^{383}\) There exists a very strong connection between the Mexican identity and the notion of struggle. For a Juchitecan and indigenous person, this may even be heightened, but Flores is also hoping that there is some hope for the struggle between his and other local cultures against global forces.

Screen-printing on to white leather which was then cut and hand-sewn to make the baseballs for the Pelotas Patrias 'Patriotic Balls' piece included in the Playbol! series. Collections of balls adorned with the faces of historically famous Mexicans, such as presidents, comprised some pieces, and well-known images and icons used in some of his other series, including all-in wrestlers from his Arena Mexico series of 2000. The function of these objects is to be hit as hard as possible, over

\(^{382}\) See Plates 31 to 33 and 12.

\(^{383}\) See Plates 13 to 16 and 18.
and above a simple act of patriotism. Is Flores implying that this would be a deserved fate for the personalities pictured in the earlier of these works and the spreading of a positive message if carried out conceptually to those in the second series, which include Mexican revolutionaries and the common Mexican expletive ‘¡Pinches gringos!’ (Bloody yanks!) amongst other designs? A seemingly confusing approach, this could reflect the blurring of patriotism and humanism in the former PRI government's use and discussion of these political figures, their motives and their achievements throughout their 71-year reign over a post-Revolution Mexico. Flores explains this in his answers to my survey questions:

A dynamic resistance in cultural identity has a lot to do with the fate of peoples and their arts, in this, the artists must respond to the social context, to their historic present and not only a market that legitimises commercial values such as happens with a lot of artists in Oaxaca that solely direct their art towards the satisfaction of the market, resulting in decorative, caricatured folkloric art with an old-fashioned expressive validity. The so-called Oaxacan School alters this aesthetic originating from the artistic tendencies of the second half of the last century, and of a spent visual rhetoric, as are the languages derived from imaginaries and Platonic geometry and from sickeningly sweet colours.384

The consumer capitalist conditions pressed upon it in recent decades by the globalising superpower have left Mexico depending on its northern neighbour for internal and external economic well-being. It is not for Demián Flores to ponder and pick up the pieces of the Old World's trashing of his native country and indigenous culture but to realise and advertise the ongoing and potential damage of this new threat.

Here, the present research arrives at what many writers and curators believe is the crux of Flores's work. It is best to quote the curator of Novena, Antonio Calera-Grobet, to properly introduce the concept:

Between tradition and modernity, the treatment applied by the artist to baseball converts it to a personal laboratory for analysing the concepts of territory, memory and identity that, as propulsive jets of inexhaustible sentiment, they continue to build a clear and dear trinomial in Flores's trajectory.385

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384 Flores survey text.
It has been traditional for Mexican cultural producers, and therefore Mexican culture itself, to endlessly grapple with basic analysis and synthesis of the original racial and cultural *mestizaje* caused by the Spanish conquest. Above, Calera-Grobet uses 'tradition' to refer directly to that indigenous Mexican-ness so ruthlessly butchered by the conquistadores, but this word also invokes the continuous calamitous debate that the conquest has left behind. The traditional regurgitation and rewording of this debate is an enormous hurdle to the evolution of a nation undeniably rich in natural, spiritual and cultural resources that progress and civilisation has never allowed it to exploit, export or enjoy on its own behalf.

Thanks to the hybridisation of local and foreign identities, those of the Oaxacan past and those belonging to a present modernity both metropolitan globalising, thanks to the invisible darning of said world views, the artist demands an eclectic or amphibious disposition on the part of the viewer […] not the dissection of elements but to the fusion that constitutes us.386

Clearly, Calera-Grobet understands Flores's ethnographic motivations and creative direction and can confidently recognise and support the proposal that the all-encompassing notions of globalisation and postmodernity are the principal preoccupations of contemporary thinking and its expression. The colonial history and contemporary migration and economic issues that define modern Mexico create an individual example of cultural *mestizaje* that necessitates a multi-layered investigation if one is to determine its effects on cultural identity.

The painting in Plate 5 depicts, in a sealed tomb, Bugs Bunny as if happily beginning or ending his TV show, but little does he know that he's in the hands of Zapotec or Mixtec Indians that only have one end to their ceremonies, rites and rituals. Mexican popular culture icon, Memin Pinguín, defecates in an almost adjoining tomb. Memín Pinguín is a highly successful comic book character in Mexico and across Latin America. The very poor Afro-Mexican boy first appeared in the 1940s and has remained in print. A controversial acknowledgement of race in the region, the character caused international debate in June 2005 when the Mexican Postal Service issued a series of stamps featuring the character of Memín as part of its 'History of Mexican Comics' series. The stamps were considered offensive by a number of African-American community groups and politicians in the United states, including Jesse Jackson. Latino civil rights organizations in the United states, also called the stamps racist. The Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, Luis Ernesto Derbez reacted to defend Mexican popular culture and historian Enrique Krauze published a

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The significance of representing defecation in Mexican art remains ambiguous but is most likely related to the marking of territory, purposeful deprecation as an offensive, provocative or challenging act of defamation towards a person or property. If a combative message is not sought, defecation as an involuntary act brought on by extreme fear is a much less likely interpretation than the desire to express an acceptance with natural, animalistic behaviour such as bodily functions.

Many writers have discussed how Flores achieves such clear discussion of these notions. Firstly, Flores presents a wide range of media, from the caps and bats described above, to video shorts and graphic animations. His now open compositions in painting display a collage technique that is no longer based on mixing materials as he had done in the *Arena Mexico* and other series based on Mexican all-in wrestling and is purely iconographic. The time-frames, meanings and the huge range of sources of his elements interact physically and conceptually in the same way as cultures overlap and commit violence against each other revealing Flores's driving ambition: representing struggle, conflict and mixing.

Secondly, Flores takes images and icons from the various cultures he sees being mixed before him: the urban sprawl of Mexico City; the Zapotec villages in the state of Oaxaca and the larger-scale appropriation enforced by globalisation and the Americanisation of everyday life through popular culture and mass media marketing. These are the central themes of the *Lulú* series of 2004, shown in Plates 6, 7 and 8. The use of whom English-language audiences know as Betty Boop and Donald Duck refers to the appropriation of these characters and logotypes by Mexican soft drink company Boing in the 1940’s. Warner Bros. studios long attempted to sue Boing’s use of their copyrighted material representing characters who were renamed Lulú and Pato Pascual south of the border, never receiving any compensation or even decent trial. Plate 7 shows the cartoon heroine also trapped in a tomb and is a very dark work. Relating the viewer to Monté Albán and to his earlier work, this painting evokes Tomb 7, a famously fruitful tomb found at the pre-Hispanic ruin that contained spectacular bejewelled stone carvings, jewellery and sculptures.

The catalogue information used as a background in the engravings discussed here promotes products with English-language brand names but their specifications are explained and described in Mexican Spanish using international references in their categorisation. A good example is *pinzas para cortes ingleses* ‘English-style cutting pliers’, which is now commonplace in his society and is used in innumerable cases across nearly all fields of industry. The figures of baseball players used

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Krauze, E. 'The Pride in Memín Pinguin', *The Washington Post*, 12 July 2005. Krauze rightly acknowledges that 'The misinterpretation of this postage stamp may have been partially caused by the recent careless and unfortunate language lapse on the part of [then President Vicente] Fox, when, in defending the very real worth of Mexican labor to the economy of the United states, he said that Mexicans take jobs that "not even blacks want to do" -- words that quite understandably offended African Americans in the United states.'
in the paintings of the *Novena* and *Playbol!* series more often than not appear with interchanged heads, anything from the universal traditional clown get-up to the infamous MAD magazine logotype.

A medium so suited to expressing a discourse involving multiple layers of meaning, the *Novena* prints exemplify how Flores presents elements unrelated as much in real time and space as much as they are within the surreal space they inhabit on the paper. The speed at which human beings in developed societies now live gives them little or no time to analyse and investigate what is happening to them as individuals, cultures, nations or as a race. Flores forces the viewer to take the time to define and link each element by providing only the most subtle of visual clues to the code needed to decipher their relationship and discover the meaning of his discourse. The subtlety of these clues and the fact that an initial viewing of Demián Flores's expressive visual language cause European and North American observers to assume that his is the work of a standard Pop Artist, pinpoint the nature of his development as human being as a Mexican, Oaxacan artist who grew up and lives in what has been, during this period, the world's largest city. Moreover, this indicates an important aspect of the task he and those around him must undertake in the near and mid-term futures to assure that the originality of his stance and the direction of its meaning are not lost in a perhaps passé commercial milieu of similar, older and better-known cultural product.

Demián Flores is from Oaxaca but could not paint or create in formal ways more different from those characteristic of traditionally successful Oaxacan painters such as his predecessors: Tamayo, Morales and Toledo or those of the intervening generation or similar age to him, who deliver canvases embossed with an almost totalitarian use of imitation of these said founders of the controversially described Oaxacan School. This is of utmost importance in the analysis of Flores and his work. He, like English, American and Japanese artists of his generation after Hardt and Negri’s categorisation of countries or regions other than Europe and North America that have been influenced by postmodernism,\(^\text{388}\) has grown up in the greatly over-hyped, consumer-driven marketplace of unrelenting urban surroundings under the continual barrage of marketing campaigns. His world is not one which fits the image comprising abundant fauna, magic, fantasy and dreams that are some of the characteristics of Oaxacan art that Valerio so neatly lists in *Sundown* and so rightly claims are the effect of the same European and North American market demand that makes the New World a paradise that Europeans deny losing.

Christine Frérot calls him an 'iconographic and cultural cannibal'.\(^\text{389}\) Death is always present in Flores's work and the darkness of his paintings indicate morbidity and sadness for the themes he

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discusses. The reader is redirected to almost all of the Flores works included in Volume II to identify darkness and death. Frérot identifies the La Patria exhibition of 2010 as being about painting, its representations and a critical look at the grand age of nationalistic Mexican art. If this is a hybrid description of Flores's work, it can be related directly to Muralism, as art historian Justino Fernández wrote of one of the movement’s founders, José Clemente Orozco:

If anyone wishes to intern themself in human misery, no other painter like Orozco, will give a better impression of it. […] His Latin soul […] he soul of a beaten and bitter Indian, mixes Italian and Spanish influences, has survived its own misery to give the world a number of masterpieces that are a reflection of that which for him is humanity, from which one can gather that he finds himself lost in a dark night and only perceives sadness and pain.  

References to death are an important feature of Mexican art that reflects the culture's respect for the inevitable end to all life and is honoured yearly through Day of the Dead celebrations that are as intricate as they are meaningful. Everyday behaviour in traditional Mexican communities, such as the Oaxacan population, reveal an acceptance of death and a tongue-in-cheek reaction to 'her' presence or bidding. Day of the Dead celebrations include a calavera 'skull' (in this case, literally 'talking skull') contest in which participants write death-related rhymes or comedic stanzas about other people present at a certain celebratory event and is also extended to the mass media where the hypothetical reasons for, or the circumstances of, famous people's, often politicians', deaths are celebrated in a published form. This tradition has spread to social media sources in recent years.

The Invention of the Mexican Character by Roger Bartra provides national evidence, in the specific terms of postcolonialism after the Revolution and the lackadaisical and melancholic nature of the Mexican character. Revelatory, is his description of Latin America's 'mythical time' or 'paradsiacal time', the 'emanation' of which is not conceivable to the civilized, Western or pragmatic Anglo-Saxon mind. The present research wishes to apply this relationship to the treatment of death by Mexicans in particular. If, after Heidegger, deconstruction and post-structuralism are

393 Bartra, 'Paradise Subverted', pp. 9 and 15.
based on the necessary contemplation of death, then a Mexican or Oaxacan subject would be very well poised to be learn a positive analysis of history and how to discern authenticity. After Bartra on mythical time, this could be more evidence for a pre-postmodern Mexican or Oaxacan subject, lacking knowledge of other Latin American cultures' celebration or acceptance of death.

The argument to turn to now, is what Flores has done with his evolving status.

La Curtiduría

La Curtiduría is a booming art project started by Flores early in 2006 in a huge building, a former tannery that perfectly suits the project and where he found his first working home in Oaxaca. In one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Oaxaca, the location is surrounded by cobbled streets with a huge Jesuit church at its centre. The Barrio Antiguo de Jalatlaco was the traditionally spirited if not criminal East end of the city, once famed for its street crime as a distant satellite on the other side of the river which has since been built over to create the impressive Calzada de la República.

Playing an active part in social actions during the Conflict itself, Flores put forward the name and the space of La Curtiduría. Two publications were created during this time from within the new institution's walls. The first was directly related to the felling of rare, ancient trees during the restoration of the Zócalo and became an excellently detailed map of historic trees Oaxaca. The other publication was called La Patria Ilustrada and included direct discussion of the conflict and text by the then IAGO director Ernesto Lumbreras and poet, writer and knowledgeable art runner, Tamara León. These texts were later published in Mexico City culture magazine, Generación.

La Curtiduría began by offering the local residencies to visiting artists. Early projects including using the place as backdrop of photo shoots as well as exhibition of work in all genres of followed by parties or other events. La Curtiduría has often been used to host small scale fundraisers for worthy causes as well as longer-term projects selected by Flores and his staff. The institution employs some full-time staff including curator Olga Margarita d'Avila from 2007-2009 and Monica Villegas from 2009.

The first resident of La Curtiduría was El Salvadorian-Canadian artist Oscar de las Flores (b. 1975, Santa Ana, El Salvador), whose drawing talent has meant he has etched a name for himself in Oaxaca and across the continent since arriving in 2006. He has worked with a number of print workshops in Oaxaca, including that of Estebán Chapital and Francisco Limón (1967, Toluca, Edomex, Mexico). The image in Plate 55 shows his talent, the fine lines and never-ending composition of the work first astound the spectator then draw his or her eye to the Nike Swoosh logo in the only noticeable white space on the page.
Taller Gráfica Actual (TAGA)

It was around this time that Flores decided not to stick exclusively with the powerful Galería Quetzalli in Oaxaca and underlining this point by beginning a commercial allegiance to Manuel García the young owner of a new and upcoming gallery which is located on the first floor of a colonial building on one side of the Oaxaca Zócalo. Throughout 2007, Flores and García worked to begin a new graphic art workshop, TAGA, another space Flores had found for himself to work in once activity at the La Curtiduría began to impose on his business-like nine to five working practice.

Santa Ana Zegache Community Workshops Project

Rodolfo Morales originally created the Zegache project to preserve the town's artistic heritage and revive the region's former vocations. The townswomen are taught a vocation that makes them responsible for taking care of the town's legacy, in the form of restoring and saving its seventeenth century Dominican church by saving architectural elements and artistic surfaces.

In 2004, in collaboration with La Curtiduría, and with the financial support of the Alfredo Harp Helú Foundation, three traditional mirror intervention projects were undertaken and shown as exhibitions, on top of the provision of labour created by Morales. Working from an original eighteenth-century design, 25 renowned Mexican contemporary artists created interventions or modern interpretations. Their work was donated and the artists authorised five reproductions of each intervention, which were made by Community Workshop members.

3.3 Soid Pastrana: the postmodern primitivist

Soid Pastrana is also from Juchitán, the influence of Francisco Toledo on his life and work is equally as strong as that measurable on the life and work of Demián Flores. Pastrana was not involved in the Oaxaca Conflict, Juchitán mostly kept out of the battle, being six hours away from the City of Oaxaca. Pastrana has used his local power to gain a political role in Juchitán, as the Regidor de Cultura 'Culture Alderman' of the local government that took possession late in 2010.

His work is of great importance to the present study as he provides an excellent example of postmodern primitivism, a little-used term, it is borrowed here from Erik Camayd-Freixas, who defines it using examples such as Argentine Antonio Berni (1905 - 1981) as an artist who 'turned art back from surrealism to social critique'; Fernando Botero (b. 1932, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia) for widespread parody of Renaissance masters and Latin American institutions, from the church to the military; and, José Gamarra (b. 1934 Tacuarembó, Uruguay) and Luis Felipe Noé (b. 1993,
Buenos Aires, Argentina) who have parodied primitivism itself.\textsuperscript{394}

The postmodern 'nature' of Pastrana's primitivism comes from his clear evolution as an artist as response to his own national migration and even more so to his international travel and periods of work abroad as far away as Jakarta in Indonesia. The present author has studied this aspect of the painter's work since 2002. Pastrana is quite prepared and more than able to compare what he learns outside of Juchitán to what he learns within it and has no trouble relating the experiences on any level. It is only in the most recent Oaxacan criticism of Pastrana's work, by Pech Casanova, is this factor addressed:

Pastrana responds to a magical conception of reality, but his vision is not that of the primitivist satisfied by his own 'ingenuity'. His experience as a traveller and relating with artists from other latitudes have modified his conscience, they have opened his eyes to a postmodern conception. If in Oaxacan painting to capture magic thought means to go bury one's self in imminence (well, 'the magical' represents less a form of thought than a commercial label), the call to irony in pictorial discourse allows the airing of stale elements to aspire to a transcendence that distances itself far from what the Mexican province confuses with "transcend" whose meaning is not but riding on the shirt-tails of notoriety.\textsuperscript{395}

Exhibitions such as for the Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal 'The Federal District Human Rights Commission' reflect Pastrana's ongoing efforts to use art as a powerful presenter of wrongs and an influential instigator of change. Progress in southern Mexico, and Oaxaca in particular, is weighed-down by a terrible history on human rights issues. His investment in these significant extensions of his field has produced a number of fantastic opportunities, including being selected to create a mural dedicated to Benito Juárez, at the Casa México in Havana, Cuba.

Pastrana's greatest achievement in his new political role was to organise the first official homage to Toledo on Juchitán soil. The town council named Toledo an \textit{hijo predilecto} 'lit. honoured son' of the city during a series of events involving film-makers, writers and many of Mexico's cultural personalities, all invited to Juchitán. Pastrana is well known in his home town and in particular his home neighbourhood, where he has promoted the legalising of local pirate radio station, \textit{Radio Totopo}, in conjunction with the creation of a Zapoteco-language children's library.

\textsuperscript{394} Camayd-Freixas, \textit{Primitivism}, p. xv.

\textsuperscript{395} Jorge Pech Casanova, 'Instrucciones secretas de un vuelo', in Soid Patrana, \textit{Anatomía de una rueda} (Exhibition catalogue, El Agora de la Ciudad, Jalapa, Veracruz, Mexico, 2009).
Contemporary of Oaxacan painter Guillermo Olguín, the latter has remarked that many see Pastrana's work as chillingly reminiscent of that by Mexican painter, Jesús Urbieta (1959-1997). 'Reincarnation' is not a word often used in a culture that pays so much attention to death and its effect on life, but it seems to fit both aesthetically and in other ways. Urbieta was also from Juchitán, his son is also named Jesús Urbieta and is an emerging contemporary. The younger Urbieta, chooses to be known as Chu Huinni, the Zapotec equivalent of 'Jesús Junior'. This is a clear postmodern doubling strategy that simultaneously distinguishes his identity and his work from those of his father, in an art-capitalist fashion, but also foregrounds their descendancy, socialises that issue and the 'existence' of his father. Chu Huinni is a founding member of the Nueva Ola Istmeña 'New Istmo Wave' movement, alongside Michel Pineda (b. 1990, Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico) and Sabino Guisu (b. 1989, Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico), the son of Sabino Lopez, that was first concretised at Pastrana's Juchitán Book Fair and homage to Toledo in 2011. Pineda is an innovative emerging talent, his counter-globalisation work includes the practice of dismantling mass-produced Chinese toys bought in Oaxaca and returning them by post to the manufacturer. He is also a member of Colectivo Bicu Yuba, their most recent work is shown in Plate 84, it represents a stencil intervention on an oil on canvas art piece, from which the stencil section is then presented in other places. In the piece shown, La Princesa Encantada 'The Bewitched Princess', the face of Toledo is stuck on the famous body and flowing white dress of Marilyn Monroe to discuss cultural icons. The day of the exhibition, the Colectivo began plastering walls with the stencil.

Similarities between the Pastrana and Jesus Senior's lifestyles have also been noted. Both Pastrana and Urbieta grew up in the physically tough environment of Juchitán where a sun's heat, so strong that to step out into it or to come round a shaded corner into its direct path gives a sensation similar to being struck in the face by a cricket bat and an accompanying temperature that envelopes and withers living and inanimate entities alike, creates a population whose largest sector is a bizarre, urban poor, an almost stereotypical but largely unemployed proletariat, that drinks and fights in a concrete maze set against a touchable middle-ground and backdrop of rural paradise. I make no gender distinction here, as Pech Casanova writes: 'the women and the men light up with the same ease as birds flap their wings'.

The magical upbringing Juchitán hands out to its children is rarely rewarded in adulthood. A close, tense and very hot ball of human interaction moves at as slow a pace as possible. Only very recently in national terms, within the last decade or slightly longer, have men from Juchitán joined the migratory workforce. Being extremely close to the sea, the city has always had a plentiful supply of food; fish is served for almost every meal in a large majority of homes. Only with the

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396 Pech Casanova, 'Instrucciones secretas para un vuelo'.
most recent increases in costs of living have local families needed to generate extra income.

Visiting Juchitán made the author immediately aware of what he had not understood about the fantastical Oaxacan primitivist painting on view in the colonial, tourist- and U.S.-leaning city of Oaxaca. The necessary adaptation to extreme climatic conditions including buffeting coastal winds to accompany the battering sun has created a culture where the necessary optimal preservation of energy leads to an environment as tough, tense and prickly as the cactus itself, an analogy also used in the description of the difficulty of Mexican life in general. The harshness of the physical environment is a result of the same natural conditions that caused the extraordinary natural beauty of the Istmo region. Pastrana's work invariably takes Juchitán to the world. He did not live in Mexico City in order to paint about the national capital, but to paint about Juchitán in Mexico City. He refers directly to his home city in his work, see Plates 45 to 47, and also to his home neighbourhood, see 'Afternoon in La Séptima' in Plate 53.

This relationship is reflected in the human environment, where the difficult everyday life appears to have created the beauty and in turn the power of the women of the region. The best evidence for this power is the emergence of the Muxe subculture which could almost be described as a tribe. It is based on the Mexican tradition that obliges the youngest daughter to remain at home to care for the mother during her old age. Mothers in the Istmo region, through their domination and perceived localized matriarchal society, have created a tradition whereby the youngest son, or even the most effeminate of those if a daughter is not available undertakes this role. This has created a division of the society where men dress and behave as women, taking women's names as identifiers that are not legally or officially recognised but are used throughout the community on a permanent basis. It is extremely difficult to discern between homosexuality and Muxe culture within Juchitán, it may be that no difference exists as the word 'Muxe' is used for all description of male homosexual behaviour, irrespective or origin of the subject or the location of the object of any corresponding enunciation. It is possible to see clear benefits from membership to an accepted, localised subculture rather than a universal or global sexual minority. Tribalism of this nature is in-keeping with Mexico's pre-colonial past and colonial period besides reflecting the independence demanded by Juchitán and the Istmo region.

Homosexuality appears a much more open and even ubiquitous source of cultural behaviour in Mexico, even if only for the root of joking behaviour, such as the albur 'play on words' tradition that almost entirely relies on innuendo discussing phallic imagery or objects, such as tacos and chillis, macho behaviour and the sexual treatment of women or men.397

397 See Plate 7. Flores clearly uses Boing's victory over Warner Bros. to create an extreme visual retort to the studio's attempt to interfere in Mexico.
The parameters of the subculture are not rigid and it is very common to see Muxe in many Oaxacan towns and even Mexico City. They do not dress as women all of the time but rather as very effeminate men with makeup and hair styles associated with the female sex. Their fame spreads due more to their flamboyant parties, mirrors of the Isthmus region's Vela tradition that unites families, towns and communities who traditionally met to perform rain dances in August and September. The Muxe Velas are held in the first week of November and there is a smaller event held in Oaxaca City. As with traditional Velas, the cost of entry is one crate of beer, an ingenious adaptation of the tradition of bringing a present to a social gathering. The organizers of any Istmeño party, be it a Vela, wedding or Christening will arrange for a local beer vendor or even a representative of the host to sell crates of beer only metres from the entrance to the event. In this way, guests do not bother themselves with present-buying and nobody arrives empty-handed. Due to the heat, smaller bottles of Mexican beers known as a Coronita 'small Corona' are sold in order to prevent the contents from warming up too quickly, adversely, men are always served with two of these small beers as one is not enough in local eyes and so one is forced to drink quickly or at least be resigned to drink at least one whole warm beer. Ades remonstrates with common misconceptions of Istmeña women:

Because of their short stay in the area, outsiders – be they anthropologists, sociologists or writers – having seen these things, leave with the impression that Zapotec women are Amazons or that they live in a matriarchal society, when the reality is quite different […] arranged marriages and a very tough life.  

Toledo's daughter, poet Natalia Toledo, echoes this: 'many people, from Eisenstein to Anais Nin, have disseminated their impressions of us, along with many inaccuracies and generalizations. Through poetry, I decided to give my version of who we really are, without falling into the familiar stereotypes that Juchitán is a matriarchal society, that we dominate our men'.

Voyeur: The eye at the keyhole, a collective exhibition of work by 38 different was a project initiated by Soid Pastrana. Voyeur included work by Demián Flores, Jonathan Barbieri, Christian Pineda, Niña Yhared and Sabino López as a short list of those whose work is best known by the

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398 Ades, 'Francisco Toledo', p. 36.
400 See Plate 49 for Pastrana’s contribution to this exhibition.
present author. In the catalogue text for this exhibition, the founder of respected counter-culture magazine *Generación*, Carlos Martínez Rentería, describes the effects of the economic and artistic crisis that meant the drying-up of resources for the cultural sector. He champions the 'independent initiatives such as the one instigated by […] Soid Pastrana for organising and creating this exhibition with the minimum of support but a great enthusiasm and love for art.'

Pastrana's work has taken a drastic turn since choosing family life over life in the street and under the influence of most vices. This is seen in the way a lot of his work is now much less populated. A painter who says of himself in his online profile: 'A painter who abandoned graphic design to dedicate himself completely to the visual arts and partying', references to this lifestyle were much more subtle when his behaviour would have been clearly apparent in their use. For 2010, Pastrana created a series of work based on American writer Charles Bukowski, allowing the show's publicity to label him as the 'Zapotec Bukowski'.

It could be surmised from analysing a marked change in the style, and partly in the content of his work, but not the form in which it or he are promoted: word of mouth and respect for self-possession.. If these were once obtained, as traditional in this macho culture, through heavy drinking and the recreational and practically professional use of all kinds of vices, then he now only participates in these activities through his work. Since Pastrana's social rebirth it is only his work and the publicity used about it and him that lives in a Bukowskian way. This difference has caused major changes in Pastrana's productivity, from ready-mades based on local culture, he has also created regional Tehuana dresses using his art as embroidered design, exclusive handbags and will be working with footwear manufacturer Converse, who have had a long-term project combining skilled handicraft workers with their products in Pinotepa de Don Luis, in the Mixteca Baja region of Oaxaca.

### 3.4 Cultural promotion as a capital strategy

The level of Toledo's personal investment in, and the creation of a model to support and innovate, private-public partnerships in the arts and other arenas, is reflected in some aspects, by the careers of Flores and Pastrana. In similar and other ways, these types of investment are reflected in the life of Guillermo Olguín. A postmodern trait in itself, it is difficult to distinguish between this artist as somebody working in art or someone using art to work as positively as possible in as many ways as possible in the world around him, while also creating and reinvesting profit. Holo labels Olguín 'the

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401 Martínez Rentería, C. 'La provocación de lo prohibido en una mirada'. *En el ojo del voyeur* (Exhibition catalogue, Galería Calles y Sueños, Juchitán, 2009).
402 From artist's profile, on soidpastrana.blogspot.com.
403 Dual exhibition between Living room Gallery and La Calaca Gallery, Los Angeles.
most Toledo-esque⁴⁰⁴ of the new generation painters she studies, in art critical terms. For the present research, this label can symbolise another connection in the undertaking of large-scale and international projects outside of art itself and signifies the 'third space' between Olguín and the preceding 1980s-1990s generation characterised by a practical attitude towards capital gain.

One such project that has proved an invaluable resource for the Oaxacan art community, Olguín, the growing mezcal industry and the nightlife of Oaxaca, is the Café Central, an establishment of multi-functional nature as bar, gallery, cultural centre and meeting point for those within or related, in professional or other terms, to the artistic community. It has the tactical advantage of possessing a geographically central, physical base of operations for the various projects contributed to or undertaken by Olguín himself. The range of these projects is quite large and include political activism to ecological and environmental protection. An example of these is the 2004-2005 project that led to the return of an indigenous jaguar caught in Rincón Bajo region of Sierra de Villa Alta in the northern part of the state of Oaxaca was returned to the wild after a 14-month dialogue between affected townspeople, a conservation committee that included Olguín and national natural resource authorities.⁴⁰⁵

A brief history of the establishment and the projects undertaken or contributed to by Olguín provides an insight in to the community altruism undertaken by this artist and also charts the history of the recent years of the development of the Oaxacan art community. The Café Central was officially opened as the Salón Central in 2000 in a location, four blocks west of the Zócalo on the very busy street of Hidalgo, a space that Olguín had used as his studio for a number of years. It underwent a number of name and personnel changes in the early months and years due to the utopian idea of employing local young artists and aspiring creatives from all fields proved less than successful for making money than it was in providing a forum and base for an identifiable group of Olguín’s acquaintances. The name changes were the first reflection of a need to remain as far below the local municipal bodies' radars as possible and 'Café Central' and the 'Colectivo Central' were attempts at this that simultaneously implied the presence of an alcohol-serving bar and nightclub. Licensing problems are always an issue in Oaxaca. The last few years of the last century and the most of the first decade of the this century had been under ultra-conservative PAN control, which won the seat of local power from the PRI, which had run the Oaxacan Municipal, state and the Federal governments for so long. In real terms, this means the numerous laws and by-laws concerning the consumption and sale of alcohol are continually changed and 'updated'.

Olguín's principles would not allow him to follow the traditional route and accept an

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⁴⁰⁴ Holo, Oaxaca, p.150. Plate 83 shows a typical Olguín painting.
⁴⁰⁵ Oaxacan artists organised the fundraising committee and produced calendar of their own work with a jaguar theme. The NGO created for this project, Pueblo Jaguar AC, is no longer operational.
exclusivity deal with one of the two national Mexican breweries, both in the hands of multinational corporation, in order to receive a licence from those they had begun to stockpile as no new licences had been made available for the centre of Oaxaca from the mid-1990s. One solution was to apply for a federal licence, as held by Oaxacan gay nightclub 502, which requires a closed-door and other related policies that regard the establishment as a private club, or, as it turned out, the simulation of the act of 'being in the process of' applying or receiving this fictitious form of licence kept the Central out of administrative trouble for a brief period. It did not resist the incursion of new municipal bodies under a re-empowered PRI who had regained the local presidency and acquired the governorship of the state under dubious circumstances at the end of 2004, marking the reign of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, the central figure in the Oaxaca Conflict.

On 12 August 2005, the Central was raided by the municipal police force that used considerable force: the manpower delivered eight police transporters to be used to forcibly close the city block that accommodates the establishment before entering violently using tear gas. The timing of this raid is key: Olguín had been involved in events to protest the unannounced renovation of the Zócalo, a state-sponsored politisation of the ownership of the tourist site Hierve el Agua and the renovation of local monument the Fuente de las Siete Regiones. After the raid, cultural events were still held on a smaller scale in Olguín's new studio in a less central part of the city and the Central itself was revived in the northern neighbourhood, the Colonia Reforma, where a controversial simulacra of it remained operational into 2006 before the Central 'proper' re-opened in its original location with officially-recognised licensing later in April of 2006.

This action highlighted the fact that the spotlight was on the artistic community and this was soon to be underlined by the firing of the director of Oaxaca’s Institute of Graphic Arts, Fernando Gálvez de Aguinaga. A well-known art critic and commentator who had been head-hunted for the job by the Institute’s founder, Francisco Toledo, Gálvez had already had his life threatened and told to leave Oaxaca after being violently bundled in to a car in recent weeks. Having recently become a father, Gálvez did leave Oaxaca and revealed to the author during a brief visit one month later in September 2006, that Toledo had never officially relieved him of his duties and would not answer his phone calls or any form of communication he used to inquire as to why he had been fired. His sacking came the day after the Institute had played host to a meeting of the new Comite de Vigilancia Ciudadana 'Vigilance Committee' to analyse the illegality and anti-constitutionality of how the Zócalo 'ornamental and civic town square' renovation project was undertaken and how the Comite could unite separate groups within the local civil society towards preventing further scandals of this kind.406 Some forms of independent media reported Galvez’s call to integrate the

406 Chapter 4 summarises the origins and causal conditions of the Oaxaca Conflict.
Vigilance Committee back into Pro-Oax was the cause for Gálvez’s swift exit. Gálvez had published penetrative articles in the local and national press on the controversial renovation of the Zócalo, the state-run Museo de Los Pintores Oaxqueños (MUPO) that included direct attacks on corruption and cronyism in the state government.407

Olguín, then, is a direct descendant of the Oaxacan School whose apprenticeship shows primarily in the community altruism behaviour emitted and also in aesthetic terms, a feature of his work that is observably changing away from the Oaxaca School with time. This creates further questions that constitute the hypothesis here tested: has an aesthetic liberty been gained for the younger generations by the acknowledged success of their predecessors? Was this new freedom ignored or considered too risky commercially to take advantage of by the generation or group of painters known as the locally 'copiadores', described by Blas-Galindo as the 'copistas'? Is it the result of a greater investment in time abroad and/or interacting with ideas or persons ‘foreign’ to Oaxaca, time spent interacting with an increased range of media sources and technological innovations in communication, namely a postmodern upbringing in personal and professional terms, that causes the generation of Oaxacan painters studied to be led by individuals that are not inhibited in developing a new style unrelated on first sight to the Oaxaca School?

By the end of 2009, Olguín's commercial vision and experience with the Central meant he had exported the concept to New York City. The creation of the Casa Mezcal in the Lower East Side neighbourhood of Manhattan has provided an ambitious opportunity to own and operate a very similar establishment in a major global centre. The promotion of Oaxacan, Mexican, and Latino culture, amongst others, focuses, as the name suggests, on the alcoholic beverage mezcal that is linked historically and biologically to the state of Oaxaca. Having developed the mezcal brand Los Amantes through his Central and La Mezcalería 'The Mezcal Bar' businesses, Olguín has lead a strong and growing relationship between the Oaxacan cultural sector and the mezcal industry that depends exclusively on its reputation for traditional process of handmade elaboration.

The impact and relative power of the cultural sector has induced development in the mezcal industry. As globalisation affects even drinking habits and tastes, capitalist tendencies towards exoticism have an important significance for Oaxaca. Mezcal is made from 11 types of maguey, or 'agave', endemic to Oaxaca. The state of Oaxaca is the official home of mezcal: the town of Santiago Matatlán proudly boasting the title of 'The World Capital of Mezcal' from where an international industry has been developed, including the constitution of a certification body, the Consejo Mexicano Regulador del Mezcal, in 1997. Although 60 percent of the country’s mezcal is

produced in Oaxaca, mezcal producers in the states of Guerrero, Guanajuato, Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí and Tamaulipas can also be granted the 'Appellation of Origin' if their mezcal fulfils the strict requirements.

The traditional process of production is what makes mezcal so unique. It is not a mass-manufactured product like tequila. It is difficult to produce, its production requires many hours of physical labour, on the part of both humans and animals. It is almost exclusively produced by single families or collectively by tiny communities in minute settings. The involvement of the cultural sector is highly relevant and potentially highly beneficial. A number of major Oaxacan artists, including Jonathan Barbieri, have developed and successfully exported mezcal brands in recent years. The commercialization of mezcal will always be difficult due to the inherent traditionalism in both the process and the growing of the right agave in the right place at the right time. It takes, on average, 10 years for an agave plant to mature enough for distillation. The primary constituent cannot be rushed or replaced by a laboratory equivalent.

The evolution and the act of the cultural sector's promotion of mezcal and thereby the promotion of Oaxacan culture, highlights a recent and extremely sophisticated manner in which this changing, developing-world culture is being presented to the world. The diffusion of Oaxacan culture in this way directly engages with rural and traditional identities, processes and commodities as they react to globalisation.
Chapter 4. The Oaxaca Conflict

A very complex series of political machinations on a national level led up to the Oaxaca Conflict in 2006. Changes in law and political manoeuvrings between the PAN and PRI during the Fox presidency of 2000-2006 attempted to negate the threat by the mayor of Mexico City, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), as the Left's first serious opportunity to gain national power since Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's controversial defeat in 1988. The PRI, internally and externally, worked towards regaining the federal seat of power.

Though supposed political enemies, the ruling PAN party and the PRI allegedly collude against the threat by an emerging Left, formally founded by the watershed event of the creation of the Partido de Revolucion Democratica (PRD) 'Party of the Democratic Revolution' in 1982.

AMLO, who had earned respect for his work in Mexico City, was conspired against in an attempt to indite him in an illegal land sale after stripping him of mayoral immunity to prosecution. In January 2004, the PRI attempted to undermine his credibility by releasing video tapes of Carlos Ahumada, one of López Obrador’s top officials, receiving a bribe in a hotel room. After the unsuccessful use of these dirty tactics, Mexico saw its largest protest march in history with a 1.2 million people turnout supporting AMLO in Mexico City on Sunday 24 April 2005.

The global political importance of AMLO and the Mexican Left's threat to gain power from the conservative right, cannot be over-emphasised, the long border it shares with the U.S. Has never seen an international opposing of ideologies. The power of the Left's insurgence on to the world stage with the 2005 refusal, by Mercosur countries, to sign the Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas (ALCA) 'Free Trade Agreement of The Americas' at the IVth Summit of the Americas in 2005. Based on the radical criticism by traditional opposition from Venezuela and Cuba was greatly supported by Lula da Silva's Workers' Party-based coalition government in Brazil, Evo Morales's leftist and anti-transnationalism presidential reign in Bolivia, the Kirchner-branded leftism of Argentina and the socialist Chilean coalitions building power through the 1990s and over this period. The American political regimes were having to consider the idea of a future Left president of the kind usually viewed from a greater distance. The platform of the conservative PAN party is based on an economic model that is highly linked and beneficial to U.S. plans for the region.

On a national level, focus was on the PRI-PAN connection, not least of all through

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408 This chapter presents the author's accumulated knowledge of contemporary history, Oaxacan, Mexican, regional and global politics. Academic sources which hold some of this information include the work of Kristen Norget, 'Convergences and Complicities: Local-National Interactions in the 2006 Movement of the APPO', (Americas Program, Center for International Policy, 2009); and, Kristen Norget. 'Caught in the Crossfire: Militarization, Paramilitarization and state Terror in Oaxaca, Mexico', in Cecilia Menjivar and Néstor P. Rodriguez, eds, When the state Kills: Contemporary state Terror in Latin America (Austin: University of Texas Press), pp. 115-142.
speculation of the religious beliefs that allegedly unite ex president Carlos Salinas de Gortari and Vicente Fox and his wife Martha Sahagun, supposed members of religious group Opus Dei, and its more rigorous Mexican 'branch' known as the 'Yunque', a right-wing Catholic group known as the 'Anahuac' in Spain. Not unrelated to the election of Ratzinger as Pope Benedict this information was first relayed to the present author early in 2004 by a PAN official in Oaxaca, Victor López, who was, at the time, close to Felipe Calderón, the economic brains behind Fox’s general election victory in 1999 who himself became president in 2006.

The links between the Fox presidency and the Yunque was readily referred to during his term, this being used as evidence of his connection to Carlos Salinas and of global networks of conservative thinking. This word was used a number of times by writer Carlos Monsivais, a national intellectual figure whose support for the AMLO presidential campaign and the Left wing's first serious chance to gain power was inspirational for the creative sectors in Mexico and Latin America inspiring the involvement of the Oaxacan art community. Guillermo Olguín and others organised transport for AMLO supporters to attend the post-election Voto por voto, casilla por casilla 'Vote by vote, polling station by polling station' election-recount march in Mexico City on 30 July 2006, at which 2.4 million people attended. They were accompanied by official film-maker Luis Mandoki who's resulting work, Fraude 'Fraud', became an important part of protesting AMLO's defeat by a margin of only 0.56% of the vote.

The effect of these relationships and their influence on national politics has a direct effect on Oaxacan everyday life and therefore culture. Kristen Norget writes:

One of the effects of the contested presidential elections and the very messy aftermath of the post-electoral conflict was that Mexicans throughout the country lost confidence in institutions such as the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) (which had been created in 1990 with great pronouncements of its indexing the deepening of Mexico’s democratic culture), and the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TRIFE).409

It is well-known that political parties use money gained through corruption to finance election campaigns. As the PRI attempted to gather monetary resources towards a strong campaign for their potential presidential candidate, Roberto Madrazo, to stand against Lopez Obrador in 2006, the poorer Mexican states such as Oaxaca provided greater opportunity for large-scale embezzlement and gain originally through the government of José Murat Casab (governorship

Madrazo was to stand as PRI presidential candidate in 1999 against Fox but lost Mexico’s first-ever 'primary' to the PRI's first ever defeated candidate Manuel Labastida.

In 2006, after having staged an extremely extravagant and expensive campaign, Madrazo could not redirect the nation's attention from the test of emerging democracy that was the Left-Right battle in the form of the AMLO-Calderón race, leaving the PRI in a distant third place.

Madrazo's campaign manager, considered responsible for amassing political and financial support that guaranteed the PRI gubernatorial victories in the state of Tabasco since 1992, was Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, (URO) who became the governor of Oaxaca in 2004 under very suspicious means of an alleged computer failure during the vote count late on the night of the election, a common practice used against Cardenas and the young PRD in 1988. Following a tribunal held in Mexico City, judges awarded URO and the PRI the governorship which began 1 December 2004. URO's task was to acquire the funds and votes necessary for the PRI to regain federal power in 2006.

The means of corruption, vote 'acquisition' and fundraising for which URO was famous, began immediately across the state of Oaxaca. Community groups, leaders and the newspaper Noticias Voz e Imagen de Oaxaca documented and protested these actions. As the largest and only Oaxacan news source not subsidised by government funds, the daily newspaper Noticias Voz e Imagen de Oaxaca, became the only respected voice commenting and documenting on the political and financial irregularities that came to light during the latter years of the Murat governorship, the controversial election victory and violent start to the URO government's term of office.

The second of the selected precursors to the Oaxaca conflict, the siege of the newspaper itself, was the third of four incidents, alleged to have been related to the conflict between these parties, that targeted the publication directly. The first of these incidents was a series of torchings of Noticias-supported newspaper stands during the autumn of 2004. The second incident was much more serious involving the death of a young man working at the Noticias stockroom when it was raided and held to a one-night siege from 28 November 2004. Simultaneously to the ceremony at which URO was taking possession, the same building was again illegally entered, even though it was being guarded by the Ministerial Police.

URO formally received the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) recommendations on the case released by the National Commission for Human Rights, but commented publicly through his cabinet members that the Commission lacked the competence and

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410 A well-known acronym for Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. Acronyms are used heavily in politics and bureaucracy and therefore part of common vernacular. The AMLO acronym was imitated in the 2006 federal election battle with the creation of FECAL, for Felipe Calderón Hinojosa. AMLO supporters used this abbreviation. The Spanish adjective fécal translates directly into English as 'fecal'.
the right to involve itself in the case. The third incident was a month-long siege that began in the early hours of 17 June 2004 when a group of bogus Noticias workers began striking outside the newspaper's offices. Due to a formal complaint for a wage increase by some Noticias staff members, a local PRI congressman responsible for the relevant workers’ union organised the strike even though the real employees had long-since reached an agreement with their bosses. Thirty-one members of the Noticias staff were held hostage at the premises for 31 days until 17 July, when the individuals effecting the strike and siege forcibly entered the building and ejected the 31 hostages using violent means also causing considerable damage to computer and other equipment within the installations. The building was guarded against re-use by the newspaper for another 14 months.

During the siege, electricity and telephone services to the building were cut, the newspaper was forced to begin printing from a distinct location which lead to: 1) the robbery of two Noticias distribution trucks and 10,000 copies of the newspaper, and; 2) the declaration by the PRI congressman responsible that he would let the employees leave the building if the paper stopped publishing.

An analysis of the media reaction, media-based action on all levels, from local to national and international, taken by the two sides during the siege provides an indication of how these processes were to be undertaken during the Oaxaca Conflict to come one year later. The newspaper itself, now printing from a different location; international rights organisations writing directly to relevant governing bodies within Mexico and disseminating their actions; international newspaper and wire service coverage, and national media sources paying close, but not quite daily, attention to the situation at all.

On 11 July 2005, indigenous communities throughout the state of Oaxaca mobilised to march all the way to Mexico City to protest against state sponsored repression and the revocation of their constitutional rights. The caravan was stopped by more than 300 heavily armed police. On 14 July 2005, COMPA (Oaxacan Antineoliberal Popular Magónista Coordination) met with Governor Ruiz who officially agreed on a number of the organization’s demands. COMPA also blanketed and brought the demands of a number of other groups to the discussions, forming a local body of the Promotora por la Unidad Nacional contra el Neoliberalismo (PUNCN) 'Promoter of National Unity against Neoliberalism', which included Noticias, the FPR (Popular Revolutionary Front) and the radical teacher’s union called Sección 22.

Santiago Xanica
A very brief case study clarifies the development of the development of the Conflict since Ulises Ruiz took power. URO began imposing municipal presidents in autonomous communities that had
banned all political parties in order to combat corruption in the form of the diversion of federal and state funded municipal grants. Non-party affiliates were not receiving federal government funds for services schools, roadways, clinics and municipal development programs. Organizations such as CODEP (Committee Organized in Defence of the Rights of the People), OIDHO (Oaxacan Indigenous Human Rights Organization), and COMPA, demanded these funds.

Santiago Xanica expelled political parties, upon the imposition of a PRI mayor by URO, community members refused to participate with the new municipal president in mandatory communal work days and chose to organize the construction of a communal home autonomously. In an attempt to violently quell opposition to his party’s rule, Ruiz sent militarized state Preventative Police to suppress resistance to his imposed mayor’s authority. state Preventative Police surrounded community member who were participating in their communal work day, and attempted to massacre them. The massacre was repelled by the townspeople. The police shot and arrested three community members, who were also members of COMPA. As a response to the attempted Xanica massacre, COMPA organised two permanent sit-ins, one in Oaxaca City, and one in Mexico City. COMPA members approached the president of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) José Soberanes, who sent a commission of three human rights observers to join COMPA in a meeting with Governor Ulises Ruiz on 3 February 2005.

The highly unusual meeting with the governor assured COMPA that three demands would be met. First, that there would be respect for dialogue with the Promotora, a dialogue which may have never been realized had it not been for the growing popular power of COMPA throughout the state. Lastly, a new dialogue would discuss community demands in exchange for putting off the Jornada de Lucha, or Days of Struggle. Originally, Ruiz would not meet with the Promotora if Noticias was to be represented at the meeting, this detail, important to the causes of the siege and the Conflict, is evidence of the then recent problems between the newspaper and former governor José Murat Casab, who was nationally humiliated by the publication's comprehensive coverage of how and why he had faked a highly-publicised assassination attempt against his own life.

Protests by these groups, other than against violent bullying towards vote acquisition for the PRI, is in response to these authorities' claiming land for sale and then use by foreign corporations in the agriculture sector. Into the second decade of the second millennium, Oaxaca is still a net food importer,

Informal interviews with Pete Noll, Executive Director of Puente a la Salud Comunitaria, a Oaxaca-based NGO that promotes and gives training on the planting and consumption of the indigenous seed, amaranth.
The native lands and natural beauty of the Istmo region has also been permanently threatened by the construction of the largest wind farm in Latin America, situated on the Pacific coast, to the south of Juchitán. The Parque Eólico Istmeño consists of 207 wind turbines that cover the total land area of 4,767 hectares of coastal plain belonging to the towns of Santa María del Mar, San Mateo del Mar and El Espinal.

Such levels of oppression cannot easily be summarised, the present research informs that the general lives of the majority of the population of the poorest of the Mexican states had been made considerably worse practically overnight with the swearing in of URO on 1 January 2005. The Left-based coalition that ousted URO and the PRI in 2010, for the first time in Oaxaca's history, found evidence of the embezzlement of the equivalent of well over 300 million dollars by URO's cabinet and top functionaries, seven of whom are on the run and being looked for by Interpol. Ruiz Ortiz himself was found guilty by the Mexican Supreme Court of violating individuals' rights during the Conflict in 2009.

On 1 July 2005, the President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, called on the Oaxacan governor to resolve the situation. This call was hardly reported even in the national press and had no impact on the situation. On 3 July 2005, historian Jean Meyer condemned the actions of Oaxaca governor Ulises Ruiz in his weekly national newspaper column. He criticised the lack of action taken by URO on the important projects discussed during his campaign and the realisation projects such as the renovation of Oaxaca’s town centre, or Zócalo.

The huge issues raised by this renovation, which begun overnight with no consultation to any public groups or demonstration of plans or aesthetic changes, showed the URO government's respect for any accountability or transparency whatsoever. This was magnified by the ecological damage caused to enormous Laurel trees that had stood in the for many decades after having been delivered from India.

On 18 July 2005, Proceso, published a six-page article on URO's first six months of governorship entitled 'Six months of horror.' A revealing precursor to the Oaxaca Conflict of 2006, was an article published by the powerful, left-wing magazine Proceso in July of 2005. Under the title 'Oaxaca: Six months of horror', a large photograph of URO was presented on a black background alongside a short introduction that summarized the consequences of URO's status as the heir of the local executive throne from José Murat Casab; having formed 70% of his cabinet from former Murat cabinet members or high-level functionaries, that Proceso causing the ‘continuation

and aggravation of agrarian, social and partisan conflicts.\textsuperscript{413}

The article begins by quoting local and national respected voices of authority such as the head of the Oaxacan branch of the national human rights network,\textsuperscript{414} a Bishop Emeritus of one of the worst-effected regions\textsuperscript{415} and the Bishop Emeritus of San Cristobal de las Casas, Samuel Ruiz García, a respected national spokesperson on human and indigenous rights due to his geographical location being that of the 1994 Zapatista uprising and, theoretically, the closest formal settlement to the Zapatista jungle hideout known as La Realidad 'Reality'. Presenting their words together gives a strong picture of the political situation in Oaxaca one year before the Conflict became a singular, describable event: 'a minefield', 'the lack of attention could provoke an uprising of indigenous groups', 'struggles, and the processing of them, are repressed.\textsuperscript{416}

The Mexican branch of Amnesty International (AI) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had both alerted the Oaxacan government on possible consequences of the numerous conflicts being lived and generated within the state. Rupert Knox, the AI investigator, had reportedly detected: the invalid division of public authority, the violation of human rights, partial application of the law, the negation of legal defence for detainees, the persecution and government-sponsored discrediting of social leaders, apathy in the face of conflict between autonomous communities and the lack of knowledge about the legal authority of international agreements on the question of human rights.

In real terms, by six months in to the Ruiz six-year governorship, the improper handling of conflicts based on land- and political-rights issues had been the direct cause of 27 deaths, 49 people injured and 31 arrests. 61 local political leaders and policemen had been taken into custody and one policeman had been lynched.

This introduction to the political instability of Oaxaca was characterised by the criminalisation of social struggle and was foreseen to have ‘ingovernability’ as a consequence, was reiterated by groups such as the Colectivo por la Democracia, which unites 24 organisations, and an independent study realised on the behalf of a union of 58 NGOs, documents the escalating occurrence and gravity of social and political conflict in the state of Oaxaca in July 2005.\textsuperscript{417}

The political atmosphere and social instability was reflected by the regular diffusion of unprecedented criminal happenings, for example; 14 thefts from churches, including: the sacred figure of the Virgin of Juquila, the goal of thousands of pilgrimages from across Mexico every year;

\textsuperscript{414} Minerva Nora Martínez Lázaro, Coordinator of the Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos 'Bartolomé Carrasco', A. C.
\textsuperscript{415} Arturo Lona Reyes, Bishop Emeritus for the Tehuantepec Region of the state of Oaxaca.
\textsuperscript{416} Matías, 'Oaxaca: Seis meses de horror'. p. 14-19.
\textsuperscript{417} Matías, 'Oaxaca: Seis meses de horror'. p. 15.
the equivalent of $600,000 U.S. dollars from that same temple's coffers and the kidnapping of the priest responsible for the Juquila parish. The local Catholic Church bodies staged a march to protest against the impunity and ever-increasing criminal culture it created. The coordinator of the Comisión Diocesana de Justicia y Paz, Francisco Wilfrido Mayrén Peláez, labeled such crimes as 'the deepest expression of the social decomposition that an insecure and ungovernable state is experiencing.'

The finer points of the political and social 'decomposition' of Oaxaca did not go unnoticed, early in 2005, the CIA and the U.S. state Department issued reports warning that Mexico, ahead of the polarising federal election of 2006, was suffering from instability and political violence that could lead to ingovernability. The Proceso article reveals that southern Mexico was named in these reports. When Ruiz was asked about them, his idiomatic reply, best translated as 'that’s like the pot calling the kettle black,' is indicative of his attitude and flagrant dismissal of external authority, interest or observation of Oaxaca. Regular, public belittling of outside involvement in any area of the Oaxacan political arena included comments on future visits from international human rights organization officials, among others. Noticias reproduced this article in its entirety.

During this period, of extreme importance to Oaxaca as a city and state due to the largest traditional annual festival known as the Guelaguetza ‘Gift’ which attracts national and some international tourism by bringing together indigenous regional dance troupes and musical bands from all over regions of the state. This festival takes place on the last two Mondays of the month of July, this year marking the supposed completion of the controversial and unannounced renovation of the capital’s zócalo. This was not totally achieved, leaving the pedestrian areas around the town square unpaved and those parts that had been finished created from less local cantera verde ‘green stone' and aesthetically and ecologically sound materials than promised. Also, a number of large metal statues had been erected and included in the design.

With the Noticias so-called strike still underway, the Proceso amongst other powerful criticisms of Ulises Ruiz and the violent instability of Oaxaca caused due by the political unrest, President Vicente Fox and his wife visited Oaxaca over the period of the Guelaguetza 2005. On 21 July 2005, the previously more liberal and challenging daily newspaper, La Jornada, published a full, facing-page colour advert highlighting the First Lady’s visit and attendance at the Guelaguetza.

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419 Matías, 'Oaxaca: Seis meses de horror'. p. 18.
420 The relationship between Proceso and Noticias has been strong since its purchase by Ericel Nucamendi in 1976. The management and editorial team of Proceso were impressed with the direction the paper took under that new leadership and promised to make all their content available for Noticias to publish, a major factor in the early development of the newly-acquired state-wide daily. Informal interview with Director and Editor, Ismael Sanmartin Hernandez, August 1997.
alongside the governor Ulises Ruiz and praising the new format that now offered two Guelaguetza festivals on each of the two Mondays that had been introduced by the URO government as a neo-conservative selling off whilst selling out and also the renovated zocalo to which a new procession of the dancers and musicians now directs itself after the brand new evening Guelaguetza.

Norget states that, considering the pervasive loss of faith in the systems created to protect the new process of democracy:

So it should be remembered that, from the point of view especially of Oaxacans, another effect of the 2006 federal election fiasco was that by this time there was a shadow of fraud hovering over both state and federal levels of government. And in the absence of consensus to vindicate their right to govern, both state and federal governments evidently have felt compelled to establish their dominance through other means—namely, the use of force.421

The uses of force she refers to are 'the bloody police repression against striking steelworkers in the town of Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán422, in April, and similar violence against market vendors and their supporters in San Salvador Atenco, a town just northeast of Mexico City, at the beginning of May 2006.

Seen as a precursor to the Oaxaca Conflict, even though not of geographical proximity to Oaxaca, the events in San Salvador Atenco, in the EDOMEX which surrounds Mexico city on three sides, are related due to the political nature of the unrest, the violent repression and the chronological coincidence with pending the federal election that the right-wing PAN party lead by Vicente Fox were predicted to lose. Local social organizations had won an original conflict that happened almost five years previously when the same federal government attempted to initiate plans to build a second airport for Mexico City on communal lands within this area. Promising bloodshed and a fight to the death before allowing the development to take place, short violent skirmishes between protesters and PFP were replaced by legal action from both sides that resulted in Fox being held responsible for illegally obtaining the lands in question. The social organizations in question believed the 2006 'Masacre de Atenco' was a belated backlash to this defeat.

The outcome of the long-term political machinations described above combined with the greed of globalisation, the advancement of the neoliberal programme into Oaxacan territory, and political violence exhibited by the present and past state governors incited the Oaxaca Conflict.

The Oaxaca conflict began as a reaction to the police removal of striking teachers

421 Kristen Norget, 'Convergences and Complicities'.
422 Two workers were killed, one crushed to death and over 40 more were injured, most wounded by gunfire, on 20 April 2006 when police removed striking workers from the SICARTSA steel mill in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán.
performing the annual Zócalo 'formal town square' of the city sit-in that runs from teacher's day 15 May for as long as it takes for the teachers to achieve a better pay negotiation. During his electoral campaign, URO had warned that he would not allow any marches or large-scale protests in Oaxaca during his time in power. As the largest local branch of the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE) SNTE 'National Syndicate of Education Workers,' the Section 22 chapter of this, the national teachers union, has 68,000 members who are all obliged to participate in the strike, being threatened with fines if they do not cover their shifts during the sit-ins.

In 2006, the Section 22 had decided to pre-empt this traditional action and delivered a document stating their demands to the Ruiz government on 1 May 2006 and requesting a formal response by teachers' day. Even though the delegation of teachers presenting the union met with the government on 3 May 2006 and was promised a response, no such response was forthcoming and after a general meeting of all strike 48 hours was called for the 17 May 2006.

An all-out strike began on the 22 May 2006. After one week of the strike, the union published a statement in local newspaper, Noticias, that warned the governor that his lack of response and respect for the teachers' wishes would lead to resistance and a reaction.

The statement confirmed that their search for a resolution was 'neither defamation, a veiled threat nor incitement of violence' but that it was capable of 'forcefulness and strength' due to the organising force of its founding principles and horizontal structure. The statement made the first reference to the violent repression of social movements that very recently occurred in San Salvador Atenco.

The URO government stepped up its counter campaign which had begun upon receipt of the Syndicate's first letter. Anti-Section 22 propaganda was the first stage in a postmodern media war that, if it were not for tragic deaths and long-term implications for the society and individuals concerned, would be the defining characteristic of the Oaxaca Conflict. Even though it had used the media as an informal spokesperson, the teachers' union did not make it clear that they were to involve the public on all or as many levels as possible until the first major action, the closing of all five entrances to the airport of Oaxaca on the 1st of June. As a federal entity, Mexican domestic airports are a sensitive factor in localised disputes and immediately cause tension between state and federal authorities and bring the attention of a much wider audience to a provincial protest. In response, on the 2 June 2006 URO threatened the teachers with fines and docked pay if they did not return to work by the 5 June 2006. The teachers' union held the first of a series of marches, that grew in size which came to be known as the mega-marches, on 2 June 2006.

423 Raúl Vázquez del Departamento de Sociología en Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca Autoritarismo, Movimiento Popular y Crisis Política: Oaxaca 2006.
In the lead up to the attempted violent removal, the teachers' union and its supportive groups blockaded the PEMEX plant and the tollbooth at Huitzo, the Federal government's way of charging for use of the superhighway to Mexico City. The first student mobilisation was enacted: the Rectory of the local university, the UABJO, was the victim of a sit-in carefully arranged for only 12 hours. A second megamarch took place on the 6 June in which 200,000 people participated demanding attention and resolution to the teachers' demands. Increasing tension in Oaxaca meant that the group of delegates from the teachers' union travelled to Mexico City on the 8 June 2006 in search of a solution through an audience with the Federal government. In the following days, the Federal government announced that it could not fulfil the union's demands and that their petition for higher pay and re-zonification for Oaxacan teachers' pay to be permanently upgraded was rejected. The teachers union and the Oaxacan organisations that support it, that had by now been joined and strengthened by numerous social groups of all kinds, braced themselves for an imminent act of repression. The magnitude of the strike was its saving grace for the one-month period before the attempted violent removal by municipal police forces.

At 0430 hours on the morning of 14 June 2006, the state government began the removal of the protesters from the centre of the city. 1500 state anti-riot police with sticks, firearms, attack dogs, pepper- and tear-gas bombs attacked the sleeping teachers, their families and supporters who found themselves on shift on behalf of the union, thought by most as nationwide discontent with the political system based on PRI foundations and mentalities. The police took the headquarters of the teachers' union and a pirate radio station that had been set up to disseminate information to those supporting the strike by force. Even though the police were armed and had the use of a helicopter to deliver the aforementioned bombs only very few people were arbitrarily arrested during the running battles that ensued on the streets of Oaxaca. After only a few hours the striking teachers and associated groups overcame the armed police and regained control of the Zócalo and the centre of the city, even in turn taking their own prisoners including the second-in-command of the failed attempt to remove them.

Response in Oaxaca was immediately one of a mass media nature with local, national and international news sources turning their attention to the now compelling visual drama. A spontaneous march occurred almost immediately following the city and state's recognition of what had happened. 50,000 people took to the streets on 15 June 2006, what was then only a warm-up for the third megamarch to take place on the 16th where unconfirmed reports have counted as many as 300,000 and 400,000 participants. The UABJO students took control of Radio Universidad to replace the ill-fated Radio Plantón and coordinate the collective entities movements. Across the state of Oaxaca, sympathisers made themselves heard with pacific protests and blockades of
municipal headquarters in small towns. A petition was begun to collect one million signatures to demand the destitution of Ruiz and the members of his government responsible for the acts of the day before. The third megamarch, with a 15 km-long procession of protesters had a new single demand, to end the repression by removing URO from office.

On 19 June 2006 delegates from independent Oaxacan organisations met to agree to form the Asamblea Popular del Pueblo Oaxaqueño (APPO) ‘Popular Assembly of the Oaxacan People’. 21 June 2006 became the date of the constitution of this expanding organisation that would become a synonym for the Oaxaca conflict.

A symbolic event with important consequences was the forced cancellation of the 2006 Guelaguetza, due to take place on 24 July 2006. The protesters organised and staged an 'Alternative Guelaguetza of the People' that was attended by tourists, protesters and sympathisers. In 2007, a post-Conflict URO violently repressed APPO and Section 22 attempts to stage an alternative Guelaguetza at the official amphitheatre used for the event. One protester, Emeterio Marino Cruz Vásquez, was beaten, kidnapped and tortured in the wake of this event. A bare-skin diver, Marino Cruz's permanent injuries left him barely able to walk; the limp would be noticeable if one's attention was not drawn to his having lost the ability to speak or hold his head properly, and a large part of his skull. Noticias photographer, Mario Jimenez Leyva, who captured video evidence of the beating and of Cruz Vasquez being taken away, was awarded a prize for this work. Upon accepting the prize, Jimenez Leyva immediately dedicated and forwarded it to Marino Cruz and began a project to generate financial aid in the diver's honour.

The Oaxaca Conflict became an international issue on 29 October 2006 that led to years of criticism for the state judicial authorities being unwilling to solve, or even thoroughly investigate, the case of Bradley Roland Will a U.S. video-journalist and activist killed whilst reporting on a violent fracas at an APPO barricade in a small neighbourhood on the outskirts of Oaxaca. The significance of the incident grew and was the last straw for the federal government who sent in the federal preventive police that night. Long-term repercussions proved even more costly for the PAN government into its second term with Felipe Calderon as President: Hillary Clinton announced in August 2009 that some of the funding for the U.S. Foray into Mexico's drug war would be held 'until Congress is certain that the Mexican Attorney General is thoroughly investigating the murder of Bradley Will, an American journalist killed while covering a protest in Oaxaca in 2006.'

The present research regards Will's death as a pivotal event in the postmodern nature of the Oaxaca conflict's media dependence. Within hours of his death, video that he had taken of himself 424

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getting shot, as he was filming towards his attackers at the time of the shooting, was published on the World Wide Web. Approximately six years after receiving high-speed Internet connectivity, Oaxaca was the source of independently captured, front-line coverage of tragic, anti-democratic events in real-time by one of the victims of those events. The present work compares the timing of the event with: the Virginia Tech. massacre of 16 April 2007, after which it was discovered that the perpetrator had sent video footage of his preparation to national media sources by post; and the Jokela school shooting of 11 July 2007, the perpetrator of which created and uploaded to the Internet extensive video documentation of the preparation of his violent act that remained accessible for a long period. This comparison is to demonstrate the importance of the periphery's 'catching up' over time, read here as the 'third space' contingency in technological development creating agency for the Oaxacan subject, the art community.

The execution of this social agency by the art community is explored in Plate 69. A map of striking teachers-APPO barricades sent out by electronic mail by staff of the Cafe Central. This map was distributed after painter Mauricio Cervantes was attacked at a barricade upon leaving the Central in the early hours of the morning of 1 September 2006. The bar was immediately closed before this map was issued on 10 September 2006, attempting to attract customers by removing entry fees and only opening two nights per week, going in to the fifth month of the socio-political conflict. Plate 71 shows ASARO stencil graffiti work depicting eight URO heads with the texts: 'The innocent', 'the thief', 'the murderer', 'the authoritarian' and 'the faeces Ruiz'.

APPO-authored graffiti depicting Francisco Toledo and denouncing him as a thief, anti-Christ, 'painter to the rich' and 'brother of the bottle' appears in Plate 72 and is from September 2006. Between the time this image was painted on the side of the Alameda Cathedral in the centre of Oaxaca, completely under teachers-APPO control since 22 May 2006, and the date this photograph was taken, some text above the figure's head had been removed, a similar attempt was also made to remove the '666' within the image the painter is painting. The removed text read 'A San Agustin' with a rough sketch depicting the new art school built in San Agustin, Etla, Oaxaca, rumoured to have been built using the local traditional green stone during the renovation of the very centre of a city declared part of the Cultural Patrimony of Humanity by UNESCO in 1987.

An image used by the APPO in Plate 77 associates their struggle with the life and work of Benito Juárez. This image shows the bad manipulation of images and ideals prevalent in the militant left movements across Mexico. The Che Guevara beret and Trotsky red star mix messages in the same way that George W. Bush, Hitler, Vicente Fox and Ulises Ruiz were all interchangeably labelled and condemned as the enemy. The text here reads: 'If for wanting justice they call you guerrilla-fighters, then I too, countrymen, am a guerrilla fighter', in direct response to Oaxacan
government labels of the APPO as nothing more than guerrilla fighters.

4.1 Conflict art from Oaxaca

The APPO movement gave birth to intense artistic and cultural activity whose object was to disseminate the reasons and objectives of the cause. Flores played a strong role in organising, exhibiting and creating Oaxacan Conflict art, a protest art that we can see, from his survey text, has strong meaning for him:

The contemporary Oaxacan artistic occupation hints at multi-dimensional capacities and with an articulation of its social reality. It maintains possibilities of integration between the art and the social, as a form at the visual level and a metaphor at the conceptual level of contemporary 'hybridity', in which one's own ancestral values of social [organisation and behaviour] find and enter in to dialogue with the Other, the global and the universal.425

Graffiti and stencil art

The Assembly of Revolutionary Artists of Oaxaca (ASARO) had its first meeting in October of 2006 answering the call made by the APPO to create sympathetic groups in all fields in order to organise and unify as many sectors as possible. ASARO united 'artistic collectives, independent artists, popular artists and creators from diverse artistic disciplines. Stencil artists, graffiti artists, printers, painters, photographers, videographers, those involved in the theatre, designers, caricaturists, etc'.426

Their manifesto promotes the search for a new and free art committed to a people fighting back, the oppressed and the boxed-in by an imposed and individualistic culture, their intent to use public spaces was realised and became a well-known theme of the Oaxaca conflict, the sectors of society they attempt to represent, in their opinion, a critical force born on the periphery, in the neighbourhoods, small towns rural and young minds.

In answering the APPO's call, ASARO announces itself as being founded to shape an extended front of resistance, in favour of inclusion and at the forefront of the fight generate new rules of the participation and profound change in the consciousness of Oaxacans.

As an artistic movement, as they most commonly refer to themselves, their form of direct contact with people, which is almost stereotypically labelled as 'on the street' and 'in public spaces'

425 Flores survey text.
426 See Plate 71.
within the concluding line of their manifesto, presents a hybrid notion of populist socialism that shows no development from that of the Mexican muralists, their immediate successors and more recent generations of Mexican thinkers whose attraction to revolution and revolutionary thinking is mirrored across all Latin America.

The great and lasting impacts that the Revolution and Mexican Muralism both had on Mexico and Latin America are related by what Isaiah Berlin called 'the capacity to believe genuinely in ideas, to believe in way much more intense than in the West,' in a conversation with Mexican Historian Enrique Krauze, 427 who sees this existing both in Russia and Latin America. The 1917 Revolution in the former being the true inspiration to the process of 'ideologisation' of Latin America as 'Russia with palm trees.' Benito Juarez's reticent attempt to utilise violence to impose ideas between the War of Reform and the French Intervention, the first time the region's liberals had done so, achieved profound and irreversible changes and founded in the region's peoples the tendency to adopt revolutionary ideologies with a religious fervour. The replacing of Catholicism by the radical message of communism was then delayed, but not thwarted by the corrupt dictatorship of Diaz. The socialist ideals of the Mexican Revolution, such as Zapata's struggle for the rights for all Mexicans to 'Land and freedom', earned victory and the admiration of the New World.

Although Mexican Libertarian Socialism had won the Revolution, the nation could not create or install a lasting liberal government. The last century has seen the development of a political left that lies "somewhere between political authoritarianism and ideological dogmatism." 428

The extremely simple and very strong images ASARO created and originally exhibited illegally on any private or public area of wall space in the city of Oaxaca are little more than visual expressions of soundbites taken to extremes using images rarely used or even considered outside of a revolutionary environment.

The highest degree of originality coming from their work is the reaction to it by the arts community itself more than any aesthetic or conceptual ground breaking. It is true that a highly creative, visual expression ridiculing Ulises Ruíz and promoting his destitution was created but can this really be seen as more than a well-designed poster? As has been discussed above there were many were many well-designed posters and informative, media-oriented output of all kinds. It is only the street artists working in a semi-official, almost commissioned capacity that obtained long-term recognition of their efforts. The reaction of the art community, which can perhaps be seen as a second-hand or shielded promotion of the ideals of these collectives, began with a migration from the work from the streets into the gallery environment. I believe this is due as much to the

collective's development of the media they worked in, moving from posters, flyers and graffiti to woodblock prints and as stencil images intervened with localised references of the politicians discussed. As much as this is in complete contrast with their principles and the central aims of their methods of communication, no doubt the success they enjoyed from exposure in other media far outweighed or outweighs any political gains they may or may not have, or may be able to claim some credit for, within the arenas they originally attempted to influence.

Other than the central figure of ASARO, the artist husband of a teacher striking in Oaxaca who came from their coastal home town to join the APPO movement and help through art, another important personality was Guillermo Pacheco (b. 1971, Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico). Pacheco informed me of his involvement with a group of young street artists when I saw him in the street fairly early on in the Oaxacan conflict, which must have been before 14 October 14 as that is the day ASARO was officially formed. The group already had a small place to work and was organised. The help of a very professional artist like Pacheco was of vital importance in creating a working organisation.

This is evidence supporting the theory that the Oaxacan artistic community, with its postmodern knowledge gained from international recognition, is itself a postmodern entity as a direct link to culture, seen as timeless rather than 'ancient' or 'now'.

By the time the Conflict was officially over, ASARO had already received invitations to show in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. The first of these exhibitions took place surprisingly close to what could be described as the official end to the Oaxaca conflict, Graffiteros al Paredon opened on 3 February 2007 in the IAGO. Over 30 works adorned the walls inside the gallery as much as they had done exterior surfaces across the city only months before. At the opening, Pacheco referred to an 'international echo about what was going on in Oaxaca', which is an accurate way to describe international knowledge of the existence let alone details of the conflict and also of promoting the group's goals. Pacheco referred directly to the mischievous nature of the Collective's work, labelling the stencil medium as 'daring' recognizing the fact that producing work on a wall in the street immerses the artist in a stream of strong dynamics but that the direct form of communication is worthwhile as its message is brought directly to the people.

The majority of the works were direct copies of the best images seen on the streets during the conflict, most centred on the despised governor himself including the eight images of Ruiz alleges eight despised sides of his personality. Emiliano Zapata with a Mohican or Mohawk hair style is closely related to punk fashion that has been a very strong inspiration for Mexican youth

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since its invention.

ASARO went on to sell their work through a virtual gallery and an exhibition was organised to show it in New York City from 26 April to 24 May 2007 but this show was never mounted. A large-scale show was exhibited in Oakland from 1 June to 27 July 2007. Curated by Calixto Robles, a Oaxacan native resident in California, he is well-known as the creative and administrative force of the Misión Cultural/Cultural Mission cultural centre in San Francisco. Robles also invited a large number of 'Contemporary Oaxacan Masters' as he calls them in a title of the exhibition. Alejandro Santiago being the most original and successful artist listed while many of the others have been regular contributors to what Valerio described as a stagnant state of creative affairs in Oaxacan art.

A second exhibition of ASARO work took place at the UCLA Fowler Gallery much later, in July 2008, titled *La Tinta Grita/The Ink Shouts: The Art of Social Resistance in Oaxaca, Mexico.* The show was curated by John Pohl, curator of the Arts of the Americas at the Fowler Museum, and Kevin McCloskey, a professor in the department of communication design at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania. McCloskey bought a small collection of ASARO prints with his University's money after having seen the walls of Oaxaca adorned with their early work and had returned to create a constructive relationship with the collective. This exhibition later travelled to New Jersey in the state of New York to be shown in March and April 2008 at the Broadway & LRC Galleries. Much more provocatively titled *Mexican Revolutionary Prints*, this second show was sponsored by the Passaic County Cultural and Heritage Council, the advisory body of the state-run Passaic County Community College.

The most important development of this collective's success is the achievement of opening their own gallery space in Central Oaxaca. As noted above, this may be contradictory to their original goals, motivations and even methods but perhaps can be seen as the only way to continue their work now that the conflict has been lost and graffiti is once again a risky occupation. Inaugurated on 31 October 2008, the gallery and workshop space is named after the revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata and enjoys a convenient location. A spokesperson for ASARO, known only as Mario, commented at the inauguration that Zapata is an alternative space for art that cannot find a place in sectarian or exclusive spaces, and that the existence of the collective is proof that movement is not over but is in a state of preparation and organisation.

The spokesperson, who had worked for 14 years in impoverished communities of African origin in the coastal region of Pinotepa, Oaxaca, referred to this during an interview with the national newspaper *La Jornada*, when recognizing that the social movement had been the cause of a
number of deaths, he commented 'but it is also shameful, the silent deaths of children in impoverished communities', further showing that the collective's ideals have deeper roots and perhaps deeper ambitions than the singular conflict related fight. The inaugural exhibition contained mostly canvases of collage paintings describing and criticising the tragic scenes of physical violence that unfolded on the 25 November 2006, the day the Federal preventative police engaged in an all-out war with APPO supporters and made 192 arrests.

To conclude the discussion of the work of these groups, it is fitting to quote Mario in that their work, however primitive as he puts it at the start, the stencil did play an important role as a visual means to an end, as 'a cultural response to the control of the communications media' that did not allow the people's voice to be heard.\(^{430}\) There may be similar images and reactions from the Oaxacan or Mexican publics about Ulises Ruiz and some Arte Jaguar or ASARO works, but the best in creative terms were representations of more general subjects such as Benito Juárez and Zapata.

An important extension of this work and a mark of the respect for it, was the use of these concepts and aesthetics in the largest conflict-specific exhibition to be held in Mexico City. *Cura de viento* was an exhibition shown in the new La Estacionilla space from 29 March 2007 that ran until 15 June 2007. Primarily exhibiting the work of Oaxacan painter, Sergio Hernández, the show also included: large format photographs by Antonio Turok, a presentation of woodblock prints created at the La Curtiduria cultural space created by Demián Flores; two very impressive large-format paintings that combined talents of Hernández, Flores, Olguín and the son of Francisco Toledo; a diversifying and developing tattoo artist known as Dr Lakra; a large format photograph and painting intervention between Hernández and Turok; and a video installation by architect and visual creative Hector Ballesteros was portrayed on a very large screen on one wall and its accompanying sound of helicopters and group clashes filled the enormous gallery space.

The wispy lines, flora and morbid atmosphere of the work in the painting in Plate 61 is unmistakably Hernandez but the other three artists' touches are as easily identifiable. Extreme black as used for the Mickey Mouse ears on a URO face and intermittent intervened faces of comic characters denote Flores' input, who was also perhaps responsible for the repeated use of the Ulysses stencil although this may have been a collective decision and is where the power of these images, that once were reminding or informing Oaxacans of their daily plight, is respected by these fine artists. Olguín is no doubt responsible for this doubling as a hat or hair for the character on the left and either Olguín or Hernández, as Toledo-esque 'colour-schemers', would have created the

\(^{430}\) Aguilar Orihuela, 'Inauguran exposición Graffiteros'.

range of beiges and and greys that fill the canvas. Dr Lakra is most likely responsible for the darker and perhaps more fantastical elements of this work.

Hernández showed numerous other works, not all relating directly to the conflict but many of them being direct expressions and representations of the artistic community's reaction to the social struggle. Works including The Masses, The Barricade, The Spectator, Shroud and We are all the APPO, providing realistic documentation of this reaction while works such as Graffiti and The APPO child were more abstract but equally poignant reflections.

La Curtiduria took its exhibition, Calavera oaxaqueña: homenaje a José Guadalupe Posada 'Oaxacan Talking Skull: Homage to José Guadalupe Posada', that it had shown on its home turf in Oaxaca in January 2007, being postponed from its original inauguration date of 2 November 2006 by the intensity of the Federal Preventative Police's forceful incursion into the city over the weekend of 28 and 29 October 2006. The exhibition was, according to Demián Flores, part of the cultural medium's related reaction to openly manifest itself and to provide a point of view on what was happening in Oaxaca. The Oaxacan cultural magazine Luna Zeta presented its eighth anniversary edition dedicated entirely to the social conflict. Alongside this, La Curtiduría began to publish its own magazine, La Patria Ilustrada, which in its first edition contained a majority of editorial content reflecting on the conflict. Some of this content was later published in an edition of the Mexico City counter-culture magazine Generaciòn, in its 'Politically not Political' edition; this included the precise text by the then IAGO director, Ernesto Humbreras, and an analytical piece by Tamara León. The homage to Posada consisted of 38 woodblock prints that presented a clear stance on the conflict. 25 of the 150 sets of prints produced were donated to the 25 November committee, the organisation created by Toledo to generate funds to post bail for alleged APPO members arrested on and held since that date.

The photographs shown by Antonio Turok were strong black-and-white images of impacting and defining moments in the conflict, not least of all the image of Will's dead body at the morgue.

**Ana Santos's ¡Ya Cayó!**

A work that resulted particularly important, both in terms of the treatment of the Conflict-related art created and the aims of the current research, is ¡Ya Cayò by Ana Santos (b. 1978 San Pedro Tututepec, Oaxaca, Mexico). The title of the small-format painting means 'He has fallen!' the slogan used by protestors wishfully predicting the demise of the state governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz across all forms of media propaganda and chanted at live events such as marches. The chant was picked up by those as young as primary school age, replacing the name Ulises with that of whoever
happened to fall over in the playground at break time.

The image is of punk-ified celebrated hero Benito Juárez, flooring Ulises Ruiz, with a well-known wrestling move whilst shouting 'Ya Cayó'.

The painting was submitted and accepted to be shown in an exhibition honouring the 200th anniversary of Benito Juárez's birth 21 March 2006. To be held at the Museum Of The Oaxacan Painter, a state government-backed gallery in the very centre of the City of Oaxaca, the exhibition received little interest from the art community for the obvious reason of being highly involved in the unresolved, ungovernable stand-off strangling the City. Within days of the exhibition to open Ana Santos was asked to come and retrieve her entry as it had been prohibited to show it. This act of censorship received national media attention and won a point for the artistic community, perhaps this can be seen as reinforcing their position as a valid voice for the Conflict.

Ingeniously, the artist printed her now-famous design on cheap T-shirts and sold them to all-comers. It is shown in Plate 62, the image is actually of a Youtube transmission of national newspaper La Jornada's Internet TV report where political commentator Julio Hernández López interviews protesters at the start of the seventh megamarch, on 25 November 2006, the day the Conflict came to a violent end.

Distinguishing the levels of media exposure obtained of this single work shows the postmodern nature of the culture examined, they are; painting, T-shirt, newspaper story, television available only on the Internet, and the direct political marketing effect of wearing the image as a T-shirt at a march or indeed in any space or point of time where or when the meaning is known to others.

**Confrontational Performance by Gabriela León**

Protest art that took postmodernism to an extreme. Gabriela León (b. 1973, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico) created an outfit from the materials used in existing and dismantled barricades, including barbed wire and burnt tyre rubber and paraded in catwalk style in the centre of Oaxaca. 'A Sunday Walk' took the artist between the APPO-controlled areas in the north of the centre of town to the town square, passing and interacting visually, if not verbally or behaviourally, with Federal Preventative Police who had created their own combined human, riot-shield and riot-tank barricades to prevent recurrence of any major disturbance in the town square. The performance was made even more spectacular by the presence of digital video cameramen and photographers, who acted as part of the performance by underlining its nature as simultaneously live, but also media protest. The images were also used to create a music video for Mexico City rock group Nine Rain.

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431 See Plates 63 and 64.
The performance incorporated a controversial element due to the revealing nature of the dress (Mexico is still very conservative in terms of public dress), the playful 'stroll' of the artist and resultant sexual connotations. The violent repression by the PFP of a recent social protest in San Salvador Atenco, in May of 2006 had brought numerous allegations of sexual abuse and rape by female protestors and four international observers. The presence of large numbers of policemen and army forces temporarily housed in or around Mexican towns or cities is a documented cause of increase of sexual abuse, pregnancy and relationship deterioration in those towns. That some of the moving and still images of this performance capture the libidinous looks of policemen on duty may be seen as thought-provoking art but they are also the result of provocation. The artist undertook this performance on 19 November 2006, the violent end to the six-month conflict came six days later. Once again, police intervention was alleged to have included sexual abuse and the rape of protesters of both sexes.

The performance constitutes the foundation of a travelling exhibition of the same name; it has been shown at the Illuseum Gallery, Amsterdam and the University of California Riverside Sweeney Art Gallery in Santa Cruz, California where its presence marked the first anniversary of 25 November 2006 violent end to the conflict. Mexican-Canadian artist Maria Luisa de Villa, who was present in Oaxaca during the conflict, created a series of works called Eternal Tropics 'Tropicos eternos' that were shown at the Art Gallery of Sudbury, Canada in May of 2007.

*Juárez llora and other fine art responses by Demián Flores*

Arte Jaguar was perhaps the first organised group of stencil and graffiti artists and was greatly influenced and partly coordinated by Flores. Its members met in the printmaking workshops of the UABJO fine art school, according to their Internet-published manifesto 'reuniting a group of young people interested in integration of street aesthetic with additional graphic techniques, during which time some of its members were developing themselves in the graffiti movement, visual arts, graphic design and architecture'. Identifying themselves with graphic experimentation and public art, the group realised its first street-located works in the middle of 2004. The style and content of some of the stencil works they have produced is consistent with that of the famous British street artist Banksy (b. 1974, Yate, England) whose works have adorned British walls and inspired numerous imitations across the globe as well as having been credited with very high profile works in public spaces such as the Louvre in Paris and at the West Bank barrier in Israel.

The present author is certain such works appeared before 2004 in the streets of central

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432 Plate 70. Flores revealed to the author that the early stencil art found in Oaxaca in the period before the Conflict were the work of Smek, a founder member of the Arte Jaguar collective, who he called 'my student'.
Oaxaca that were work of the founders or even an earlier generation of Oaxacan street artists, of an age no more than a few years older than that of Arte Jaguar. The strong connection between this collective and Banksy's work is its relation to vandalism. Local councils, corporations and other negatively-affected property owners have labelled Banksy's work as such while the largest single gallery-exhibited piece by Arte Jaguar is a 40 by 20 foot graffiti style installation of the word *vandalismo* 'vandalism' covering an entire wall-space of a Mexico City gallery as part of the 'The streets are saying things' travelling exhibition.

The political content of Arte Jaguar's work is now very much tied into the Oaxacan conflict, although having been founded two years earlier and with photographic evidence of their 'free political prisoners' stencil work from 2005, it is clear that their message has earlier and deeper roots. This is supported by the fact that they reveal one of their slogans as being 'we have been killed for having a conscience of dignity and justice' alongside an explanation that this refers to a conscience not only of the present situation but also of how we arrived at this present situation. The rhetoric their manifesto provides centres on the need to claim or reclaim the identity created through a historic past, which certain elements are attempting to make disappear in the name of progress and make us believe the system and its norms which we have been born into are those in which we must live.

However, the transition of their work from the street into galleries and other places undoubtedly came from the 'success', impact or dissemination of their work in other media during and since the conflict. This is to take nothing away from the quality or creativity of their work, using popular APPO slogans such as 'death to the bad government' and stating that the images used in their work are of personalities that rot society and need to be overthrown, or beings who attack with arms their own people. This clearly refers to URO and later images include Calderón. Aesthetically their work is more advanced than that of the other street art collectives in Oaxaca, although using a difficult medium of public walls and buildings some depth and composition can be seen in their images including backgrounds and interconnecting elements. It is not only infamous, revolutionary iconography that is present in this collective's work, but even Mexican popular culture personalities such as actor Pedro Infante and comedy actors Tin Tan and Cantiflas are portrayed wearing the almost standard red Trotsky star in improvised positions relating to the headwear famously associated with Che Guevara. The MCI collective must be mentioned in conjunction with this extra level of creativity, the interaction of various elements of different types, styles or even authors in the work of this group makes them stand out from the Zapata- and Benito Juárez-wielding ASARO collective.

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433 See Plates 19 and 20.
The Arte Jaguar and MCI collectives are, in the postmodern terms of the present research, connected by their use of logos to claim authorship of their work. This is not new in graffiti or street art, but unlike the traditional use of tags, a very easily-readable stencil removes the factor of pseudo-anonymity from this practice, especially if we consider that these groups were later to found their own physically-located establishments.

That the Internet was so important during the Oaxaca Conflict is demonstrated by the website and e-mail addresses that went on being included on flyers and posters to logos such as that mentioned here to full URLs being painted directly onto public walls.

A small group of artists, backed-up by a press release and a letter addressed to the government, requested, that the federal governmental intervene and resolve the conflict without a military-style intervention or removal of the vigilant sit-in in the Zócalo and other places, the barricades but through dialogue, peace and tolerance. For this event, Flores led a group of artists 'to the centre of the city, to centre of our state, to the centre of the conflict, in an act of recuperation of our public spaces and as a gesture of peace and social reconciliation to demand against an armed intervention. The painting was equally directed to the APPO and the Teachers' Union to make dialogue and reason the only routes to a solution [...] As far as we know, the banners effectively walked along with marchers as pacifist flags on behalf of a sector of the Oaxacan artistic community.'

The artists sent a letter to President Fox in which they announce that the conflict 'has affected all of us' and therefore they ask 'urgently' for the presence of a Union Congress Committee to directly assess the situation.

Flores went on to take benefit of an interview he gave to El Imparcial journalist Elisa Ruiz to, 'reaffirm that I am an independent artist without party nor do I belong to any group or organisation, I am on the side of creative liberty and thought. I believe that art is an engine for social reconstruction that has been broken and polarised and we hope this space could contribute in some way.'

Flores's painting *Juárez llora*, Plate 23, could become a symbol for the Oaxaca Conflict, or the art community's role in it. The title translates as 'Benito Juárez is crying'.

The painting of Juárez crying went on show at the Museo de los Pintores Oaxaqueños (MUPO) 'Museum of Oaxacan Painters' as part of the *Juárez Bicentenario*, a collective exhibition celebrating the bicentenary of the birth of Benito Juárez. Flores revealed that Juárez cried so copiously in the painting after the way virgins and saints cry blood due to divine intervention or miracles. Flores claims the painting modifies the Juchiteco attitude towards Juárez. The Juchitecan

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434 Press release received directly from Demián Flores.
bitterness is best expressed in the series of paintings and prints by Francisco Toledo titled *Lo que el viento a Juárez*[^435] that was created in 1986. The phrase and its use by Toledo has its roots in important times in Mexican history and in particular the history of Oaxaca and the Isthmus region.

Before becoming the president of Mexico, Benito Juárez had also held the post of governor of Oaxaca on two occasions, during which he persecuted the people of this distinct region of Zapotec descent. The Istmeño Zapotecs are distinguished by geography and language from the Zapotec peoples of the Central Valley and Sierra Madre regions, the latter being the birth-region of Juárez. The rebellious people of the region had continually fought for independence from Oaxaca, never having accepted the authority of the state's centralised government and choosing autonomous rule from its own capital, Juchitán.

During the French intervention from 1864-67 that took rule of Mexico out of Juárez's and indeed Mexican hands, the independence of the Istmo region was granted. Returning to the presidency in 1867, Juárez, who had maintained the position of governor of Oaxaca apparently by default as the most powerful Oaxacan in the country and the country's history, sent orders to raze the town of Juchitán and kill the leaders of the independent state as punishment for the breakaway.

This event was the primary cause of the dislike by the people of Juchitán towards Juárez that was later incremented by similar actions taken by his only child, Benito Juárez Maza, who became governor of Oaxaca in 1911. In disagreement and perhaps fear of the election of local revolutionary hero, José F. 'Che' Gómez, as municipal president of Juchitán, Juárez Maza sent a replacement of his own choosing. This provoked Che Gómez, whose election was supported by revolutionary president Francisco Madero, to take military action against the Oaxaca government. Juárez Maza went as far as to temporarily sever Oaxaca's integration in to the Federal Republic of Mexico and the situation was only resolved by the standing-down of Gómez's troops after their leader was assassinated on the orders of Juárez Maza. Pastrana has his own opinion of Juárez and often paints using Juárez imagery, see Plate 44.

Flores used Conflict imagery in his series *Oaxaca* of 2007, Plates 21 to 26 show his creation of a range of works on the issue. *La dificil lección* (Plate 24) show URO as a lying Pinocchio as Flores intervenes with a child's wooden toy. He depicts Federal Preventative Police officers as fire-breathing humans which is undoubtedly also a reference to local witchcraft – demons and bad spirits are believed to project themselves from carriers' mouths. *Molotovs* is a direct expression of the local support for the APPO movement and the anger at URO, soft drink bottles were provided

[^435]: This phrase is a commonly used term to mean 'wouldn't even touch me/him/etc' as if 'too good' as in sporting prowess or some abstract level of superiority. Here, it is based on a joke about how much hair cream Juárez wore. His image was based on a perfect side parting and slicked-down hair, so much cream was used, the 'wind couldn't even move it.'
by local people for protesters to make into Molotov cocktails. Soft drinks themselves were handed out and also rags and other textiles were soaked in vinegar and handed out on the streets for protesters to be able to protect themselves from the effects of tear gas. Flores is a huge fan of Coca Cola as a drink, this is very common in Oaxaca, the Isthmus region in particular, and Mexico in general that drinks more Coca Cola per capita than any other country.

This Conflict-related art and behaviour is now compared with that of Toledo, whom, it has been revealed in the previous chapter, does not paint directly about political events, unlike Flores's foray, but uses postmodern tools to force change.

4.2 A non-artistic response: Francisco Toledo and the Oaxaca Conflict

Francisco Toledo's involvement in the Oaxaca conflict began as a measured response to the Zócalo renovations. It developed as the work of a critical but neutral observer and concluded in the largest single act of support for the protesting factions in the creation of a charitable organisation to raise funds to pay the bails of APPO members, rightly or wrongly arrested, and detained after the 25th of November.

Representatives of Toledo's PRO-OAX organisation were originally involved in the aesthetic and environmental impact aspects of the renovation of the Zócalo that began in spring 2005. They were not directly involved, but consulting on the project proposed by artist Luis Zárate, who soon after walked out of the project after development and the deconstruction of the existing Zócalo, began in a controversial manner and before any agreements had been made. This turn of events put Toledo and PRO-OAX on the proverbial back foot in terms of contesting the goings-on in the centre of the city of Oaxaca. Eventually, once the actual and literal dusts had settled and a new Zócalo had been built, Toledo made an appearance centre stage by traipsing an ugly looking commercially-made park bench to the scene of the crime to protest at the last controversial detail, the removal of the original antique solid iron benches that had dated from the Porfiriato. Along with the mass-produced bench Toledo delivered a prepared statement and a petition seeking support and opinions on the renovations and the concrete benches he hoped would be replaced once again by the original iron benches.

Almost the next day, the original park benches were returned to the Zócalo but some controversy still remains as whether these are the originals or similar-looking antiques. There was some reaction to a publicised photograph of Toledo sharing a joke with Ulises during an informal meeting on the topic when the governor agreed to return the original benches. Interviewed on the

436 See Plate 67.
Zócalo renovations on different occasion, Toledo affirmed that he was committed to action that saved the cultural patrimony and respected ecological concerns. He stated that he did believe that the acceptance to return the metal benches was a measure of flexibility on the government's behalf but his comments in the interview published at the end of July 2005 were, if not almost a route-map of what was to come, perhaps a comment on the tension building up in Oaxaca:

Of course I'm committed. For example, for matters that have to do with money, we've put in place a law of transparency, what more do they want … I'm not going to hang from or tie myself to a tree […] I'm too old for that. Carrying a bench to the Zócalo left my arm useless for three days. The young want to participate, tie themselves up, sing, let them do so, but don't ask the old folk to trot at the same pace.438

As the nation's greatest living artist, and for a commitment to community altruism perhaps unequalled in his field or even within Mexico at the time, made his voice the greatest heard both within and outside of Oaxaca. He was unwittingly shoved directly into the spotlight on 21 October 2006 when gunshots were fired outside his house in the early hours of the morning. The next morning Toledo held a press conference at the IAGO showing the gun casings he had found outside his house after being woken by the very obvious scare tactics from those opposed to the work of the artistic community in diffusing a message that the aggressors clearly read as anti-governmental.439

It was the first time in the conflict that the painter appeared on the front page of a national daily, with colour photos of the shell casings in his hand. Toledo used the opportunity to denounce other recent pressures applied to members of his PRO-Oax organisation. They had reported intimidatory behaviour by police who had surrounded a seminar hosted by a pro-works as part of a society wide conference known as the Diálogo por la paz, la justicia y la equidad en Oaxaca 'Dialogue for peace, justice and equality in Oaxaca' that was inaugurated on 12 October 2006 headed by the local church body and opened by Bishop Samuel Ruiz.

The shooting incident drew a strong national reaction most notably from the intellectual community with hundreds of fine artists and writers etc publishing an open letter denouncing the acts against the painter.

The second time Toledo was considered front-page news was on 2 December 2006 as he was quoted as saying Oaxaca was on the border of a civil war as a response to the large-scale arrests and mobilisations made since 25 November 2006. Only Hugo Chavez's re-election in Venezuela

439 See Plate 68.
prevented an image of Toledo adorning new stands once again. Four days later Toledo once again hit the front page of this newspaper with the creation of the Comité del 25 de noviembre '25th of November Committee'.

As a response to the grave repressive action on the part of the state and Federal governments on the fourth of December the 25th November liberation committee was born as an initiative by Francisco Toledo and a group of activists and defenders of human rights.\(^{440}\)

Its first undertaking was to initiate the defence of the people detained arbitrarily by the Policía Federal Preventiva (PFP) 'Federal Preventative Police' on the 25 November 2006 and also the freedom of the people detained during the confrontations between the PFP and the APPO on later dates. Since its creation it has continued to grow and provide the administrative force necessary for the legal defence of those persons illegally or unjustly arrested as a consequence of actual or alleged involvement in the Conflict and managed to free all 400 prisoners after a number of years of full-time effort.

The Committee created its own extremely comprehensive website which details the further work of the committee to date. The artistic community as well as many other sectors of the local and national civil society were fully behind and participatory in its actions. A motivated example is the La Curtiduría homage to printmaker José Guadalupe Posada being realised, in part, to generate funds for this organisation. The Committee was also a major source of information for the United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review report on Oaxaca 2004-2008.

Later work undertaken by the Committee included applying pressure on the Oaxacan state government and police bodies for the alleged wrongful imprisonment of Juan Manuel Martínez Moreno who is accused of killing the American independent video journalist Brad Will, the act that internationalised the Conflict on 29 October 2006. Detained in October 2008, Martínez Moreno was granted protection from prosecution in January 2009 and was eventually released in February 2010. Direct action taken by Francisco Toledo, the Committee's work is the most permanent testament to the artistic community's intention to prevent injustice in Oaxaca.

4.3 A postmodern, globalised Oaxaca

The present research uses the Oaxaca Conflict to illustrate the globalising forces working against Oaxaca, but are also subverted and responded to in kind and with a local nuance. The mass media, now, in Jameson's terms a major element of postmodern group consciousness, 'is now a new (and powerful) social unit in its own right, a collective actor on the historical scene'. The author collated Oaxaca Conflict-related news items concerning protests, involving direct action from both Mexican nationals and local citizens in support of Oaxaca, in London, Berlin, Barcelona and Sydney, amongst many such happenings across the American continent.

Plate 78 is therefore a pièce de résistance for the current research. A mediatic combination of globalised popular culture related to forced, undemocratic political marketing that is intervened in its very publication by an opposing editorial line. The image shown of Australian actor Mel Gibson in Oaxaca in April 2007 is the scan of a supposed newspaper article. The editorial content: "It's a very pretty city, you can see that from the moment you arrive" said Gibson,' in an unclear, white copy over an ugly and confusing graphical background, an extension of the 'article's accompanying photograph, create the deliberate appearance of a manipulated image. Gibson is flanked by what Oaxacan actor Mayra Sérbulo who appeared in *Apocalypse* and the Oaxacan tourism secretary Beatriz Rodriguez Casanovas, strongly rumoured to be the lover of URO at this time.

Published by Left-wing national daily *La Jornada*, the article's appearance is a strange mixture of colours, typography and design very much incongruous with that publication's news or advertisement style. The advert, which must have been placed by the Oaxacan government in order to advertise the fact that Oaxaca was okay to visit for tourists of all kinds up to and including Hollywood superstars, includes neither editorial information such as byline or source, or the usual array of government logotypes and slogans that adorn inserted political marketing. The author assumes that the newspaper, that had been a no-holds-barred supporter of the APPO's Oaxaca Conflict against the URO government, publishing up to twenty pages a day in one day on the situation, was not prepared to publish the material as a news item and did its best to deliver the information in a commercial form.

Other than this media coup with Gibson, Rodriguez Casanovas had been responsible for a number of large-scale projects in and around the time of the Oaxaca Conflict and still holds the post to date. A noteworthy example of these projects was the renting out of almost the entire tourist

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442 Plate 78.
443 The reader is asked to compare the design and layout of the Mel Gibson 'article' with the advertisement published alongside it in Plate 78 and with the *La Jornada* news items in Plate 68.
centre, based in the Alcalá Street and Plaza Santo Domingo areas, that allowed fashion designer Carolina Herrera to stage a star-studded event in the cultural centre that used the length of the Oaxaca's central tourist boulevard as an entranceway to her show. A similar event that was to be held at the Monte Albán pre-Hispanic ruins would have involved the parading of Miss Universe contestants amongst the archaeological remains. This event received much resistance even from international fashion model organisations and was never realised.

Having filmed *Apocalypse* in the Atlantic Mexican state of Veracruz, Gibson later donated one million dollars for the building of housings for those affected by hurricane Stan, that caused the deaths of up to 2000 people through flooding and mudslides in October 2005. A highly publicised meeting with President Fox on 19 October 2005 lead to stronger speculation than ever about links between the Mexican government, the PAN party and ultra-right-wing Catholics and the major players in this religious sector.

The same newspaper had published a news story about concerning the arrest and assault of German artist and Columbia University lecturer, Gandalf Galvan, whilst waiting outside La Curtiduria.\(^{444}\) Flores's comment: 'Even carrying a copy of *La Jornada* under your arm is a crime',\(^{445}\) became a *La Jornada* subhead for its review of the *Homage to Posada* exhibition. The Conflict-specific exhibition became a Day of the Dead altar to the fallen. Twenty-five deaths remain unpunished.

In his book *Oaxaca sitiada*, the first publication to deal with the Conflict after it had ended, Diego Osorno claims that URO was not removed from power as he had blackmailed the PRI and PAN directly, during an implied informal discussion, that if any federal political action was taken against him, he would publicly reveal the details, or what he knew, of the PRI and PAN's calculated attacks on AMLO.\(^{446}\)

The present research learns not directly from the Conflict itself, where well-executed logistical organisation was observed. This is a factor in common with the Occupy movement for which David Graeber and his new anarchism\(^{447}\) seem to be receiving the most criticism; contrary to the consistent nature of the active resistance Graeber proposes, the Conflict was never a single entity and lacked ideological coherence. Towards revolutionary theory in Graeber's and Holloway's terms, the present research draws attention to the role played by Toledo as acting, once again, by example, and the general, well-organised and inclusive participation of the art community.


\(^{446}\) Osorno, Diego E. *Oaxaca Sitiada: La primera insurrección del siglo XXI* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2007).

Chapter 5. Conclusion

The present research confirms the hypothesis that postmodernity provides the Oaxacan art community tools and modes of expression to discuss human thought and behaviour. The creation of the method and opportunity to teach the use of these tools was observed and also investigated.

The present research has identified, in the Oaxacan contemporary art studied, the use of the 'tools' as the author labels them, or the 'perceptual equipment', under a Jameson label, that enable humans to understand the space into which we have 'happened'. The research confirms that the cultural behaviour of the members of the Oaxacan art community not only 'foregrounds the cognitive and pedagogical dimensions of political art and culture' but also posits that those dimensions are fundamental to the foundation and future of the mode of production of the contemporary art studied. The abstract refocusing of labour and the technological advancement of a globalised postmodern world affords these artists the methods by which to create culture and disseminate an altruistic, hybrid, socialist stance that simultaneously teaches how to create and disseminate culture.

The present work applies Bhabha's 'beyond theory', which is itself a liminal form of signification that creates a space for the contingent, indeterminate articulation of social “experience” that is particularly important for envisaging emergent cultural identities. The generations of Oaxacan contemporary art and the agency they create through direct engagement with problematic conditions have been studied. The specific geographical area studied is seen as affected by globalising forces, so the 'third space' between Oaxacan art and these forces strengthens and bestows agency on Oaxacan art and establishes resistance and further dialogue.

By referring to religious and biological hybridity in terms specific to Oaxaca and the Oaxacan art community, it has been shown that there is reason to question Jameson's prioritising of space over time as dominant factors in the cultural language in order to further develop the tools and support that postmodernity has provided.

From Richard's theoretical analysis of 'parody and recycling as decolonising strategies' it has been shown that through refunctioning the copy using its colonial heritage, Latin America, as the periphery, 'disorders the foundational protocol of the before and after' primarily based on how 'the ideology of the “New” as constructed in the discourses of modernity is founded on an idea of

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450 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 179.
451 Richard, 'Cultural Peripheries', p. 158.
time which follows a sequence and rhythm that is completely foreign to Latin America.\textsuperscript{452}

The use of artistic expression to demarcate difference is a pre Hispanic phenomenon in Mexico and Oaxaca, a practise quashed by colonialism and only revived for Primitivist and later nationalist purposes during modernity. The symbolic staging of an alternative Guelaguetza by the APPO during the Oaxaca Conflict is testimony of a traditional sense of cultural hybridity and represents a desire to negate capitalist attempts to commercialise such forms of expression and their meaning for neo-liberal exoticism and tourism purposes. When read alongside Jameson's statement that 'no Marxist or socialist party or movement anywhere has the slightest conception of what socialism or communism as a social system ought to be and can be expected to look like\textsuperscript{453} it becomes clearer that such acts were the fundamental basis for what was regarded to be a well-managed but ill-executed movement, until the first ever defeat of the PRI in Oaxaca in 2010.

As has been shown, on continental, national and state levels, identity has always been based on cultural hybridity even though as historical and contemporary empirical investigation shows, on the local levels of settlement and in ethno-linguistic groups, important variation occurs. From the Istmo example, distinct ethnic groups within the Zapotec race have been a liminal space of historic rivalry. The Oaxacan art community, in the first decade of the second millenium, is a postmodern mode of cultural production based in the city of Oaxaca that celebrates, and provides the tools to express, difference. To expand on what can be learnt from this model, that spans and brings together a single Mexican state, towards commenting on the search for identities on other scales or in other geographical areas, requires the assessment of this community's functioning, role and peculiarities.

As a community, Oaxacan art theoretically embraces and respects difference in all ways 'inter-' and 'multi-' described above in relation to the work of Gómez Peña and uses art and other means to communicate that message. In practice, there are differences of opinion based on individualism within the portrayal of this but as a diverse organisation of human subjects this is to be expected and not detrimental to the workings or goals of the mode of cultural production. The community, founded on Toledo's work and example, is now much greater than its individual parts. The benefits this has to the operation and future of the community are numerous but importantly mean the reduction or negation of the importance of individualism or even dominant individual personalities.

Particular attention is paid to local issues such as preservation of indigenous culture and extreme problems caused by political inadequacies. The creation of localised projects to respond to

\textsuperscript{452} Richard, 'Cultural Peripheries', p. 159.
such a problematic passage through contemporary history are based on expert knowledge of technological and communications media as methods of high impact and international distribution learnt in the creation and marketing of art itself.

The present work concludes that the Oaxacan art community does provide the tools for a successful exit from modernity and entry into a globalised world founded on postmodernity but questions the validity of such terminology to accurately reflect historic changes and civilisational movement through time. The diachronic triggers articulating the logic of its [modernity's] periodicity do not have any equivalent in the clashing juxtaposition of the heterogeneous and intermittent processes which coexist in Latin America. The theory of the 'time-lag', the interstitial 'third space' identified by Bhabha, when applied to the current analysis determines that during the process of so-called 'catching up', peripheral entities learn and develop at different rates. During postmodernity, accelerating technological advancement, particularly in communication, directly fuels the distribution of that technology and also, therefore, the methods of disseminating the celebration or abuse of difference. These tools are the mediatic weaponry of Jameson's micro-political groups or 'new social movements' that greatly enables the pedagogical and performative functions of art in the creation and dissemination of meaning such as political propaganda, protest and aiding the cause of 'neoethnicity'. This idea can be seen in Hutcheon's more recent work:

The architecture which first gave aesthetic forms the label 'postmodern' is, interestingly, both a critique of High Modern architecture … and a tribute to its technological and material advances. Extending this definition to other art forms, 'postmodern' could then be used, by analogy, to describe art which is paradoxically both self-reflexive (about its technique and material) and yet grounded in historical and political actuality.

If Taylor's notion of 'creative adaptation' is applied, using the focus given here by Hutcheon, to the catching up process underway in Southern Mexico since Salinas's 1994 construction of the superhighway and Telmex's 'bridging' of the communicative 'gap' in 2000,

454 Garcia Canclini, Hybrid Cultures.
456 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 48.
457 Wallerstein, The Capitalist World-Economy. The peripheral countries' perceived need and the effort made to catch up in order to actively participate in the current 'world-system' is a recurring theme of this work.
458 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 341.
460 Taylor, 'Two Theories of Modernity', p. 173.
culture, in terms of pre-Hispanic art and archaeology, contemporary art and the cultural tourism associated to both forms, is a major beneficiary but also a major benefactor. Holo is correct to state that Toledo used his the artistic authority 'to act politically in order to achieve his civic ends', but to report that 'within a decade of his arrival in the mid-1980s, Oaxaca had become a city populated with creative people, politicians, wealthy residents, and average citizens, many of them doing his bidding, imitating his ideals, and generally changing their world to suit his vision'\(^{461}\) is to misread his methods and influence and belittle others' lives and other developments.

The present work describes how the controversially-named Oaxaca School may have been born from Toledo's work and the institutions he founded are monuments to momentous changes he has helped instigate in the city's development, but he was not, or is not, continually leading Oaxaca around by the hand showing it how to proceed as Holo would make out. Applying the idea of creative adaptation specifically to the Oaxacan art community generates a much more positive view of the pedagogical nature of Toledo's work and therefore that of the future generations. It has been discussed here that Toledo's altruistic intentions are concretised 'with the sole idea to serve and to provide what was lacking [for his generation's art training]', specifically 'because there was nowhere to exhibit nor to learn.'\(^{462}\) The new generations of Oaxacan artists follow his example by also creating workshops and exhibition spaces. Flores moves evermore into educative projects: the 2010 creation of a university Diploma in Contemporary Art in conjunction with the Foundation Harp Helu Oaxaca and the UABJO in 2010;\(^{463}\) the conversion of his Mexico City studio La Cebada into a community-oriented cultural centre in 2011 and the founding of his El Laboratorio project in 2012 Oaxaca of 2012. Santiago and Olguín's 2011 La Calera project that occupies an enormous, eponymous 'Limekiln' in Oaxaca, reflect, in their large scale and peripheral locations, the teaching and feeding processes they execute and participate in. Art and artists, such as those labelled here as the 'new-new generation' that includes the Nueva Ola Isthmeña, are directed towards traditional centres, like Toledo's institutions in the centre of Oaxaca, and engage outwards into the wider community.

Both kinds of institution were formed on the same principles by similar individuals, which, too, can be related to Jameson's original work. The analysis has observed that central to understanding Oaxacan art as an altruistic community is his idea of capital and profit motive being responsible for a 'nouveau riche public, which, from the age of the "organization men" of the 1950s to that of 1980s "yuppies," […] has grown ever less shameless in its pursuit of success, now

\(^{461}\) Holo, \textit{Oaxaca}, p. 70.  
\(^{462}\) Noticias Voz e imagen de Oaxaca, in Abelleyra, \textit{Se busca}, p. 189.  
\(^{463}\) Noticias Voz e imagen de Oaxaca, 'Firma Convenio UABJO, Fundación Alfredo Harp y Centro Cultural La Curtiduría', \textit{Noticias Voz e Imagen de Oaxaca}, 31, 11/899, 17 February 2010, p.2.
reconceptualized as the "life-style" of a specific "group." Toledó, Pastrana, Flores, Olguín and Santiago are this type of entrepreneur, but cultural entrepreneurs, and not interested solely in their own gain. There is no denying that their actions greatly improve their opportunities for gain but this is not an equitable condition. The type of entrepreneur Jameson describes is formed due to the 'crisis of traditional labor' and 'gentrification on a now-global scale' such as the Oaxacan art system has been, and its members do not gain and selfishly protect the 'knowhow and knowledge of the system itself', but divulge this information, how to use it and how to get more of it: technological and analytical tools relinquished by and through postmodernism. They may be, in horizontal a manner as efficient management and organisation allows, cultural and community leaders, not least of all in financial terms, however, this, Jameson clears up:

This identification of the class content of postmodern culture does not at all imply that yuppies have become something like a new ruling class, merely that their cultural practices and values, their local ideologies, have articulated a useful dominant ideological and cultural paradigm for this stage of capital.

The role the Oaxacan art community then plays, hypothesised in the present work as making up for the lack of local development policy, the implementation of democratic political policy at all or debilitated by corruption and embezzlement practices, is one of teaching how 'the transmission of cultures of survival does not occur in the ordered musee imaginaire of national cultures with their claims to the continuity of an authentic “past” and a living “present” … Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational.'

Learning from the teaching of culture as survival

Chitra Sankaran's discussion of how Anshuman Mondal classifies Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh's work as 'postmodern postcolonialism', led, through the converging of both postcolonial literature and Jameson at discussions of science fiction, to how the present research considers the contested relationship between postmodernity and modernity: 'there is no political or social program really to speak of, no blueprint for the better society, only a belief that something other could potentially

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464 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 352.
465 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 352.
466 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 352.
467 Jameson, Postmodernism, p. 407.
468 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 172.
reside in the silences of modernity'.

The present research observes that the Oaxacan art community derives agency from the 'time-lag' of signification it experiences as a postcolonial, ill-treated globalised subject. The art and behaviour it exhibits embody and promote struggle. If the work of this abstract labour is to create culture and disseminate an altruistic, hybrid, socialist stance, what is the central aim, or, what would a clear rendition of a realistic and practicable stance of this kind be?

Lyotard's later work helps outline this stance: 'capitalism inherently possesses the power to derealise familiar objects, social roles, and institutions' which can be accepted, as 'when power is that of capital and not that of a party the "transavantgardist"or "postmodern" solution proves to be better adapted than the antimodern solution.' Bhabha, in 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern', states how 'the transnational dimension of cultural transformation - migration, diaspora, displacement and relocation, all of which are themes of everyday experience for Mexican subjects create a transnational culture that "reaches out to create a symbolic textuality, to give the alienating everyday an aura of selfhood, a promise of pleasure."'

Here, we must return to Richard and Canclini, to repeat the importance they give to Latin America's pre-postmodernity or 'having had the pride of being postmodern for centuries, and in a unique way.' Bhabha enters here, as, from investigating 'the encounters and negotiations of differential meanings and values of “colonial” textuality', he reports having developed the idea of 'a colonial contramodernity at work in the eighteenth- and nineteenth century matrices of Western modernity that, if acknowledged, would question the historicism that analogically links, in a linear narrative, late capitalism and the fragmentary, simulacral, pastiche symptoms of postmodernity.'

If Latin America was postmodern all along, and after Bhabha, perhaps so were all colonised countries, all Others, all Selves, all political subjects. If, according to this theory, all colonial entities were postmodern long before high modernism then is no evidence for a high modernism and also for much less modernity. Did it take the doubling of experience; explicit, indiscreet appreciation of difference, to bring culture to its true function: to 'reaches[sic] out to create a symbolic textuality, to give the alienating everyday an aura of selfhood, a promise of pleasure'?

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471 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, p. 76.
472 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 172.
473 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 172.
475 Garcia Canclini, Hybrid Cultures, p. 6.
476 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 173.
477 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 173.
478 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 173.
479 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 173.
Ziauddin Sadar takes the discussion back to Fanon:

It is utopian to try to ascertain in what ways one kind of inhuman behaviour differs from another kind of inhuman behavior. The inhumanity of today is not different from the inhumanity of yesteryears for all sources of exploitation resemble one another; they are all applied against the same 'object': man. We need to do much more, Fanon insists, than simply be aware of this reality: we need to take continuous action to transform and transcend this reality.  

This conclusion asks whether discourse, such as the present one, is 'doing' in the terms Fanon insists are necessary. John Holloway writes, 'theory is critique, critique of the forms that conceal, and yet are generated by, human activity. Critique is critique ad hominem, recuperation of the concealed creative subjectivity of people.' Is the present work revealing something from its theorising about the Oaxacan art community, in the same way that those artists are directly revealing their creative subjectivity, using that revelation to help others directly and yet others to foster their subjectivities in a creative way?

Where Jan Nederveen Pieterse has written that 'it is against this backdrop [of capitalisms plural] that hybridity has gradually become an increasingly prominent narrative and a new convention in interpreting local changes, past and present'. This approach contrasts with Holloway's desire to 'crack capitalism' which helps if founding the ideals foregrounded by postmodernity is the objective:

Doing is visible, but as abstract labour: it is the hidden or latent substance of abstract labour. Doers too are visible, but in the way that actors on a stage are visible: as character masks, as roles. [...] Behind the character mask is a latent force, a menace, a potential. [...] Theory, then, is the uncovering of that which is hidden. In other words, theory is critique, critique of the forms that conceal, and yet are generated by, human activity.

What is the present research's theory, its critique? What is its 'doing'? In an expressive speech at Yale in 2012, Subirats's words aid this definition:

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481 Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*, p. 213.


At the beginning of the 21st century we are faced with the absolute power of the military industrial complex and an industrial development that irreversibly destroys natural habitats, threatening the survival of millions of human beings. We are faced with the increasing technological control of human existence and the corporative disintegration of our social and individual realities. The current organization of the academic machinery obstructs its critique and prevents its democratic transformation.484

Subirats calls to restore to society the public function of the university as an active social consciousness, he proposes 'a new critical theory that creates space for a redesigned concept of democracy and a new future for mankind.'485

The artists studied here create hybrid agency from the global, political and immediate problems with which they engage, they fulfil and question roles that other figures perform inadequately or even inhumanely. It is significant that these artists have learnt community altruism from Toledo's example. To couple Subirats's proposition with the revolutionary theory of Graeber and Holloway, the university could regain its role as society's consciousness by making marked efforts towards engaging with and then helping its own Other; reinforcing community altruism.

A 'start at the top' revolutionary theory is a potentially highly successful strategy, however, as the starting point for the Occupy movement, subverting capitalism from within the U.S. is to play a new genre of pedagogy to a very tough audience. The cautious procedure of teaching altruism by example is a strategy that it would be possible to initiate and sustain using the tools of global culture. It is neither a perfect strategy nor such a direct one in its implementation, but the potential high net yield of receptive minds could result in it being an efficient method of evolution towards universal positive ends.

The present research affords itself two stages of 'doing'. The first stage is to 'see the interconnectedness of the world not as some trendy issue of globalization but as a much older story that goes back several hundreds of years.'486

Promoting altruism as a viable method of coordinating this approach to interconnectedness is the ultimate goal.


485 Eduardo Subirats, Restoring Society's Consciousness.

## Commonly Used Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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| UNAM    | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México  
National Autonomous University of Mexico |
| UAM     | Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana  
Autonomous Metropolitan University |
| APPO    | Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca  
Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca |
| COCEI   | Coordinadora Obrera Campesina Estudiantil del Istmo  
Worker, Peasant and Student Coalition of The Isthmus |
| PRD     | Partido de la Revolución Democrática  
Democratic Revolution Party |
| PAN     | Partido Acción Nacional  
National Action Party |
| PRI     | Partido Revolucionario Institucional  
Institutional Revolutionary Party |
| AMLO    | Andrés Manuel López Obrador  
Mayor of Mexico City (2000-2005) and presidential candidate in 2006 and 2012 |
| URO     | Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, governor of Oaxaca (2004-2010) |
| COMPA   | Coordinación Oaxaca Magonista Popular Antineoliberal  
Anti-neoliberal Popular Magonist Organisation |
| CODEP   | Consejo de Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo  
Advisory Board in the Defence of the Rights of the People |
| PUNCN   | Promotora por la Unidad Nacional contra el Neoliberalismo  
Promoter of National Unity against Neoliberalism |
| CROC    | Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos  
Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants |
| UABJO   | Universidad Autónoma 'Benito Juárez' de Oaxaca  
'Benito Juárez' Autonomous University of Oaxaca |
| NAFTA   | North American Free Trade Agreement |
| ALCA    | Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas  
Free Trade Agreement of the Americas |
| Mercosur | Mercado Común del Cono del Sur (de las Américas)  
Common Market of the Southern Cone (of the Americas) |
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Appendix I

Complete Survey: Two sections

Section 1. In direct relation to the study: 'Postmodernism in Oaxacan Contemporary Art'.

a) How would you categorise, to the level that you wish, the style of your work and the influences or movements that it reviews or includes?

b) Do you believe that Oaxacan art has changed in the last 10 years, opening doors to a curiosity with different media, formats, concepts or proposals? Is it possible to talk of a range of styles that no longer share many of the characteristics of Oaxacan art detailed by Robert Valerio in 1998: 'formats and conventional materials, intense colour, figurative imagery, Eden-like iconography .. and timelessness? Has Oaxacan art gone 'towards an immediate and actual reality' to an extent that could be measured?

c) Is it possible, that as an art of Utopias, Oaxacan art exists as the most accessible window to the Paradise Lost and even directed European and North American markets?

d) How do you see the effect of the Oaxaca Conflict on the relevant art market, your work or life as an artist and, importantly, the future investment in community altruism projects that has become a unique, admirable and concrete feature of the Oaxacan artistic community?

Section 2. Original questions from the investigation undertaken by Robert Valerio for the book, 'Atardecer en la maquiladora de utopías: Ensayos críticos sobre las artes plásticas en Oaxaca'.

1. How do you conceive the relationship between art and the spectator?
2. Where do your ideas come from?
3. Why haven't I seen a painting that represents the inside of an urban bus?
4. Does the difference between art and handicraft exist? What does it consist of?
5. Do you care that your work is recognisable as yours?
6. Do the galleries accurately reflect the art that is produced in Oaxaca?
7. Do you think it is useful to write about the development of Oaxacan art?
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180 x 200 cm

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Stencil/various 2013
ARIOUS SIZES
Figure 1

The location of the state of Oaxaca within Mexico.

Figure 2

The state of Oaxaca and relevant settlements.
The proliferation of contemporary art-related premises in Oaxaca de Juárez, 2004-2011.
Plate 1

_Sandias 'Watermelons'_
Rufino Tamayo
Oils on canvas
1968
130.3 x 196.5 cm

Plate 2

_Muros de los recuerdos_
'Walls of memories'
Rodolfo Morales
Etching, aquatint and dry-point
1997
110 x 116 cm

Plate 3

_Muerte saltando con murciélago I_
'Death skipping rope with a bat'
Francisco Toledo
Goache on paper
2004
28.5 x 38.5 cm
Ofrenda Propiciatoria 'Whipping Boy Offering'
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil and tempera on canvas
2001
180 x 280 cm
Plate 5

*Tributos* 'Taxes'
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil on canvas
2001
180 x 200 cm
Plate 6

Lulú
Demian Flores Cortes
Oil on canvas
2004
180 x 200 cm
Plate 7

Lulú
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil on canvas
2004
120 x 200 cm
Plate 8

_Lulú_
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil on canvas
2004
100 x 120 cm
Morir Por la Patria 'To Die For One's Country'
Demíán Flores Cortés
Oil on canvas
2004
180 x 200 cm
Plate 10

¿Mi nombre es? 'My name is?'
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil on linen
2003
180 x 200 cm

Plate 11

Novena 'Ninth [Innings]'  
Demián Flores Cortés  
Oil on linen  
2003  
200 x 180 cm
Plate 12

Novena vi/x
Demián Flores Cortés
Silk screen printing on paper
2002
Paper 31 x 26 cm Image 25 x 19.5 cm
Plate 13

Match 17/100
Demián Flores Cortés
Silk screen printing on paper
2005
Image 16.5 x 19.5 cm
Plate 14

*Lucha libre*
Demián Flores Cortés
Drawing
1999

Plate 15

*Lucha libre*
Demián Flores Cortés
Drawing
1999

Plate 16

*Lucha libre*
Demián Flores Cortés
Drawing
1999
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*Arena México*
Demián Flores Cortés
Dry-point, copper, woodcut and collage.
2000
Image 56 x 76 cm

Plate 18

*Arena México*
Demián Flores Cortés
Lithography
2000
Image 56 x 76 cm
Plate 19

*Pedro Infante*
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil on canvas
2007
200 x 180 cm

Plate 20

Pedro Infante with Russian red star adorning sombrero.
Arte Jaguar
Spray paint and stencil. Graffiti.
2006
120 x 120 cm (approx.)
Plate 21

_Ñino héroe 'Child hero'_
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil on canvas
2007
200 x 180 cm

Plate 22

_Insurgo 'Insurgent'_
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil on canvas
2007
200 x 180 cm

Plate 23

_Juárez llora 'Juárez is crying'_
Demián Flores Cortés
Oil on canvas
2006
120 x 100 cm
Plate 24

*La difícil lección 'Hard lesson'*  
Demián Flores Cortés  
Worked cedar  
2004  
28.5 x 6.5 cm

Plate 25

*PFP 'Federal Preventive Police'*  
Demián Flores Cortés  
Worked wood  
2007  
18 x 15 x 6 cm

Plate 26

*Molotovs 'Molotov cocktails'*  
Demián Flores Cortés  
Worked cedar  
2007  
28.5 x 6.5 cm
Cochabamba
Demian Flores Cortes
Oil on canvas
2004
180 x 200 cm
Filming of Demián Flores documentary for series
Otro modo de ver: la plástica contemporánea en Oaxaca
‘Another way of seeing: contemporary art in Oaxaca’
(L-R) Jorge Malpica, Germaine Gómez Haro, N/A, Demián Flores, Fernando Gálvez de Aguinaga

Surfboard fins installation
Demián Flores
Plastic
2005
20 x 15 cm (approx.)
Plates 30, 31 and 32

Stadium mural from series *Novena*
Demián Flores Cortés
2003
Various sizes
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*La Patria* 'Motherland'
BMW Isetta 1958
Intervention with automotive paint
2008

Plate 34

*La Patria* 'Motherland'
BMW Isetta 1958
Intervention with automotive paint
2008
Oaxacan furniture shop using HSBC logo with graphic and own slogan
Mexico City advertising hoardings.
VISA credit card advertising on hillside between Mexico City and Cuernavca, Morelos.

Misprinted sheets of metal packaging used as construction material.
Plate 39

Dr. Simi original advertising.

Plate 40

Dr. Simi inflatable in street.

Plate 41

Víctor González Torres/
Dr. Simi political marketing.
Telcel doll and cellular telephone print advertising.
Juárez
Soid Pastrana
Oil on canvas
2005
160 x 120 cm
Mapa de Juchitán 'Map of Juchitán'
Soid Pastrana
Oil on canvas
2006
100 x 100 cm
Mapa de Juchitán 'Map of Juchitán'
Soid Pastrana
Oil on canvas
2001
200 x 200 cm
Juchitán
Soid Pastrana
Oil on canvas
2008
160 x 160 cm
Instrucciones para un vuelo 'Flight instructions'
Soid Pastrana
Oil on canvas
2008
160 x 160 cm
En el ojo del voyeur 'In the eye of the voyeur'
Soid Pastrana
Oil on canvas
2009
120 x 120 cm
Plate 50

_Bukowski_
Soid Pastrana
Lithography
2010
40 x 30 cm
**Buk 2**
Soid Pastrana
Watercolour and silk-screen
2010
40 x 40 cm
Selected artist's proofs of etchings commissioned by private collectors to be used as original series of artworks to celebrate important family occasions as invitations.

Soid Pastrana various dates of creation
Plate 53

*Tarde en la septima 'Afternoon in La Septima'*
Soid Pastrana
Oil on canvas
2009
100 x 180 cm

Plate 54

*Juguete juchiteco 'Toy from Jucdhitán'*
Soid Pastrana
Acrylics on wooden toy.
2009
Cabalgando en el espriritú, La madre diosa and La derrota de la mentira
Luis Valencia
Acrylics on canvas
2001

Plate 57

Untitled
Luis Valencia
Ceramic
80 x 30 cm (approx.)
Plate 58

Buses used as barricades
29 October 2006

Plate 59

Media scrum between protestors and Federal Police
29 October 2006
APPO poster for 25 November 2006 mega-marches.
Plate 61

Untitled
Sergio Hernández, Demián Flores, Dr. Lakra, Guillermo Olguín
2007
Oil on canvas
180 x 450 cm

Plate 62

¡Ya Cayó!
'He has fallen'
Ana Santos.
Painted image printed on T-shirt
Paseo dominical por el zócalo de Oaxaca
Gabriela León

Plate 63

Paseo dominical por el zócalo de Oaxaca
Gabriela León

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Barricades as resultant installation from workshop at La Curtiduría, 2008
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Francisco Toledo protests Oaxaca Zócalo renovation
Image from El Imparcial newspaper
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Francisco Toledo press conference, 21st October 2006
Images from La Jornada newspaper.
Oax. 7 9 06 Puntos de barricada 'Oaxaca 7 9 2006 Locations of known barricades'  
Café Central staff  
Digital manipulation of satellite image.
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*Listos para madrear*
'Ready to fight'
Smek
Spray paint and stencil graffiti
Oaxaca, Oaxaca, April 2006

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Graffiti of eight heads of Ulises Ruiz by ASARO
Oaxaca, Oaxaca, October 2006

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APPO-authored graffiti depicting Francisco Toledo
Oaxaca, Oaxaca, August 2006.
No a la Guerra 'No to War'
Unknown artist
Acryclics on wood
Date unknown
Photograph taken August 2006, Central Oaxaca.
March on and occupation of Oaxaca's Canal 9 TV station by protestors. Destruction of necessary equipment by government-backed saboteurs. Photographs distributed by protestor networks and *La Jornada* newspaper.
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Painted protest art
Photograph taken by the author, October 2006.

Plate 76

Painted protest art.
Photograph taken by the author, October 2006.

Plate 77

También soy guerrillero, paisanos
'I too, countrymen, am a guerrilla fighter'
APPO poster
September 2006.
Oaxacan actress Mayra Sérbulo, Tourism secretary Beatriz Rodríguez Casanovas, Mel Gibson 17 April 2007 La Jornada.
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*Foot Fetish* Francisco Toledo Etching 1985 10 x 19.5 cm

Plate 80

*Mujer y Toro* 'Woman and Bull' Francisco Toledo Goache on paper
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*Dos Muertes Rojas 'Two Red Deaths'* Francisco Toledo  
Gouache on Paper 1994  
28 x 38 cm

**Plate 82**

*MujerToro 'Womanbull'*  
Francisco Toledo  
Sculpture in painted wax  
1987  
64 x 43 x 32 cm
Cisne 'Swan'
Guillermo Olguín
Oil paint on canvas
2011
180 x 200 cm
La princesa encantada 'The Bewitched Princess'
Colectivo Bicu yuba
Stencil on various media
2013
Various sizes