



Visualizing Mexican Migration to the United States

by
Gil Cardenas
Notre Dame

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Introduction

This paper provides an analysis of artistic expression about Mexican immigration to the U.S. drawing on work primarily created in the U.S. by Mexican and Chicano artists and other artists who have participated in creating a visual record and contemporary picture of Mexican migration to the U.S.

This paper seeks to answer several questions. How does the visual record of Mexican immigration line up with the written account? What can we learn about Mexican migration from the visual history – paintings, prints, sketches, illustrations, photographs, sculpture, installations, murals, and performances? What is missing – what do we need to find in order to augment our understanding of Mexican migration through visual analysis? Where do we look in our efforts to fill the gaps? – libraries, archives, private collections, museum collections – U.S. and Mexico. Where does Mexican migration fit in the American imaginary? How do issues of documentation, representation, presentation, factor in analyzing and interpreting the visual record? How does consideration of self-representation and interpretation factor into the discussion - the immigrant narrative? What roles have galleries, museums, art centers, artistic movements played in presenting and representing the visual and artistic account of the Mexican immigrant experience?

This paper represents an abridged first effort of what I hope to develop as a full book length manuscript on “visualizing Mexican Migration to the United States.”¹

The Pre-Immigrant Origins of the Mexican Presence in the United States

The early period pertains to the pre-immigrant presence of Mexicans in the United States and its bearing on the determination of U.S. immigration policy and practice towards Mexico. The movement of Mexicans during this time was largely affected by three factors: the Texas Revolution, the U.S. – Mexico War; and the migration of “other than Mexicans” into the region, with subsequent racial conflicts, border scimmages and a displacement flight of Mexicans. These conflicts resulted in compositional changes in the structure of the Mexican population, including forced removal and displacement for some, voluntary flight by elites and immobility by the poor.

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Various police forces also factor into the discussions, including police forces created in part to control and manage non-whites – Mexicans, Indians and

This book will include several sections: Section I chapters on the (1) pre-1900 period the (2) First Waves – 1900 – 1921 the (3) Labor Migrations: 1922 – 1930 the (4) Return Migration; Labor Migrations II: 1941-1964 (5) Post-Bracero Migration Flows: 1965 – to the present. Section II would include (1) a chapter on the emergence of a Chicano Political Aesthetic: 1965 to the Present (2) a chapter on Mexican Migration: An Exhibition History (3) a chapter on “Understanding Mexican Migration through the Lens of Photography (4) Retablos: the Immigrant’s Narratives; (5) Archival Holdings and Collections.

I will categorize the visual record to five periods: prior to 1900; 1900-1930; 1931-1964; 1965-2001; 2002 –Present.

freed slaves: Texas Rangers (TX), Bisbee Rangers (AZ) and Federal military forces deployment all along the Southern border.

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Frontier justice administered by various vigilante groups also contributed to conflicts that affected the migration of the Mexican origin population in several ways: internal migration (in-state and interstate), external displacement, forced removal and flight to Mexico. The point was to reduce the propensity of Mexicans to settle in the United States.

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By the late 1870's the southwest region of the U.S. had been secured and repopulated, by European immigrants, gold rush settlers and homesteaders. The development and expansion of labor-intensive industries during this period, such as farming, ranching, mining and railroad truck work, triggered migration into the border states and later to other regions in the U.S., such as Kansas, Chicago, LA and Colorado.

Migration during this period (1900-1909) is described by observers as "drift migration" as it was entirely labor-based and small scale. During the 1910's migration subsequently developed into a flow given the demand, profitability and availability of a larger supply of Mexican workers who were freed from the rural sectors of Mexico, as well as those who fled the Mexican Revolution.

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Several important labor market institutions, regular and underground, emerged during this period that contributed to the establishment of a large scale migration: labor advertisers, smugglers, coyotes and employers' recruitment agents sent into the interior of Mexico for the expressed

purposes of enticing and recruiting Mexicans to work in the U.S. Concurrently, railroad lines were completed that connected the interior of Mexico with the U.S. railroad system.

The curtailment of European immigration during WWI accelerated the demand and use of Mexican labor in the sectors mentioned earlier: farms, railroads, ranches, mines and, increasingly, into the stockyards (Kansas City/Chicago) and heavy industry (Chicago/Detroit/Bethlehem, PA).

The visual record for this period is weak in this presentation, but certainly not absent from archival and museum holdings, such as the National Archives and Record Service, Library of Congress, The Archives of American Art and in various other regional collections,² including libraries and university collections. The visual record for this period is stronger in photographic images and, to a far lesser extent, in illustrations and portraiture (paintings).

² An important consideration in examining the visual record of Mexican immigration is an assessment of the archival and preservation efforts to identify retrieve and utilize artist records and related materials. The archival record is an indispensable component to enable critical and scholar attention to the study of Mexican immigration.

There are many very useful archives including the Archivo General de la Nacion – (Hermanos Mayo collection for example); the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Fototeca, Pachuca, Hidalgo; various Mexican state archives.

In the United States, we can mention the Smithsonian archives of American Art; the Library of Congress – Print and Photographic division; National Archives, and record Center; the Humanities Research Center – Smithers and Goldbeck’s collections, Photographic collection; the LA Public Library – Aultman collection, El Paso Public Library; Wayne and Arto University Labor Archives; the Center for Photography – University of Arizona; and the Center for the Study of Political Graphics (LA). These are starting points for research on Mexican and Chicano visual art and photography as well as the broader visual history of Mexican migration.

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The visual record in particular is relatively weak concerning the social relations of Mexican migration. There are vivid, and sometimes colorful, lithos and illustrations appearing in magazines and books depicting Mexican life in the U.S., yet it is often very hard to distinguish non-immigrant residents from immigrant settlers. This is an area that needs to be explored further.

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The visual record provides artistic coverage of ranch, farm and community life, focusing on a more romanticized picture of a static, and yet culturally rich, reminder that a viable, pre-immigrant Mexican society prevailed despite territorial incorporation into the U.S. and a subsequent, rapid transfer of land from Mexican ownership to non-Mexican owners (Camarillo). Illustrations and photographs for this period provide a visual narrative of Mexican cultural life, housing and work in various sectors: farms, ranches, mines, shepherders and railroads. Church life is often represented in this record. Portraiture is also common. Images of law enforcement personnel are plentiful, and occasionally we see depictions of conflict: border bandits, refugees, apprehensions of Mexican bandits, smugglers, rogues, etc., by military and other law enforcement agencies, commonly the Texas Rangers and the Bisbee Rangers.

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The visual record of non-Mexican, European-origin immigrant settlers is more complete. The Irish Emigration Project and German Emigration Project in Central Texas provide good examples, as do images of prospectors and settlers who flooded the Southwest and border region in large numbers during and after the Gold Rush. Displaced Mexicans were

often forced to flee these settlements, or migrated elsewhere after having lost their land through unscrupulous dealings by land thieves and railroad barons.

Migration flows from Mexico included temporary and circulating workers along the U.S.-Mexican border, as well as longer term migrants: seasonal, interstate migrants, and an increasingly larger component of long-term migrants who began to settle in the U.S. permanently. What becomes difficult to see in the visual record are images of Mexicans who did not settle because of intense, anti-Mexican policies and practice throughout the area (Deterred Non Migration).

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The 1917 importation program, a unilateral decision by the U.S. government to invoke administrative discretion, greatly accelerated the number of workers admitted to work temporarily in the U.S. during WWI. In effect, this transformed migration flows from drift to massive scale migration into labor markets that quickly became heavily dependent on Mexican labor. At the same time, this transformation created a mutual dependency. Mexican workers began to migrate across the border in pursuit of employment in the U.S. as their primary means for earning a living. By this time, the establishment of Institutionalized underground labor market mechanisms had evolved that facilitated the process and utilization of temporary Mexican labor in U.S. labor markets as a regular, if not dominant, feature of this newly emerged international system.

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It is important to note that the utilization of long term migrants who opted to settle permanently in the U.S. was a by product of temporary migration and of migrants, including the 200,000 or more who entered legally during the

1917 importation program, and subsequent others who entered legally, yet the majority of whom re-entered illegally after the wartime program ceased (1921). Due to the shortage of European immigrants, employers were successful in having Mexico and the rest of the Western Hemisphere exempt from the quota laws passed in 1921 and 1924.

Legal immigration from Mexico increased following the cessation of the importation program, and, by 1926, Mexico became the leading country of immigration into the U.S. This legal migration was largely regulated by the State Department through administrative discretion in the issuance of visas, a mechanism that was also later used to virtually curtail legal immigration from Mexico after the fall of the stock market and continued throughout the Great Depression and into the U.S. entrance into WWII.

Images by photographers of Mexican life, migration, border crossings, as well as of dispersion and settlement throughout the U.S., remain one of the earliest and most complete bodies of work on the subject. The photographic narrative of the migration experience goes back, at best, to the beginning of the twentieth century.

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As far as I am able to ascertain, very powerful images depicting Mexican life in the U.S. in the latter part of the 19th century did not differentiate foreign born from native born Mexicans. Mexicans are shown, for example, in front of their homes, as individuals or families, as well as in public places or participating in social activities such as fiestas or church processions.

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The refugee migration from the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s captured the attention of photographers, particularly in El Paso, TX. Vivid images were taken showing Mexicans crossing the border, living in tent camps, some being received appreciably, others either apprehended at the border or enduring a hostile reception once in the U.S. The emerging Mexican presence required public responses, many of which may have been undertaken with good intentions, but, at the same time, resulted in differential treatment such as segregated schools.

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I only very recently came upon a book, entitled, “Pots of Promise: Mexicans and Pottery at Hull House, 1920-40”. Thanks to Tomas Ybarra Fausto, this book was produced to accompany an exhibition of some 150 pottery pieces and photographs featuring Mexican artists who participated in making art at Hull House pottery studios. The book, edited by Cheryl R. Ganz and Margaret Strobel, includes examples of artwork produced in the 1920s and 1930s. These works represent an incredible body of art produced by Mexican immigrants who settled in Chicago. This could well be the first “taller” involving Mexican artists in the U.S. Please take note that the subject matter for the stain glass piece is about immigration.

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The photographic work during this early period, particularly those that have found their way into publications, offers a firm basis for the observer/students of migration to gain insights about Mexican migration in ways that cannot necessarily be gained from the printed accounts. While the majority of these works were not intentionally taken for exhibition or aesthetic purposes, they do contain tremendous artistic value and aesthetic import. This is true across the entire spectrum of photographers: from the

casual amateur (Paul S. Taylor), to highly acclaimed professionally recognized photographers (Dorothea Lange/ Ansel Adams, Russell Lee). Paul Shuster Taylor, for example, a labor economist from UC Berkeley, pioneered the study of Mexican migration to the U.S.

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Taylor

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Professor Taylor's field work in the latter half of the 1920's – early 1930's took him as far away as Bethlehem, PA; Chicago Calumet region; Dinnett County, CO; Imperial Valley of CA; and Nueces County, So. TX. This work resulted into a series of publications (1928 – 1934), including a monograph on a sending region: Arandas, Jalisco, MX. While Taylor was an amateur photographer, he had the wisdom to take some very deliberate photographs and the insight to make connections to the migration experience – return migration, remittance, networks and culture effects. His photographs of Arandas as a sending community are indeed very good and pioneering (Taylor, 1934).

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In contrast to Taylor, we can point to some early photographs taken by Ansel Adams and published in the Survey Graphic. Paul Kellogg, publisher of the Survey Graphic, produced a special topic issue, "Mexicans in our Midst-Newest and Oldest Settlers of the Southwest (May 1931)." This publication stands out as the finest ever assembled on Mexicans in the U.S. The contributors included noted writers such as Mary Austin, Paul S. Taylor, D.H. Lawrence, J. Frank Dobie, Manuel Gamio, Max Hundman and images from very distinguished artists: Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, Georgia O'Keefe and Ansel Adams. Adams work caught my attention many

years ago in conversation with Paul S. Taylor (ND guest speaker, 1973). Correspondence with Adams about his photography indicated that these works were taken in the San Joaquin Valley of California through his first commissioned work sponsored by Cora Fulton.

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The cover of this issue drawn by Diego Rivera shows two workers shaking hands across the border.

Despite omission from the quota laws, migration flows from Mexico during this period could best be characterized as overwhelmingly circular, temporary and, largely, illegal. Legal migration and immigration was a by-product of temporary migration and illegal migration, even during the period of large-scale legal immigration: 1922–1928. Nevertheless, the compositional changes in the structure of the Mexican origin population were dramatic. By 1930, the Mexican foreign-stock constituted the largest and most dominant component of the Mexican origin population, a mix of which is not seen again until the present.

In 1911, a selected commission of the U.S. government issued some 52 volumes of reports on immigration. This commission, popularly referred to as the Dillingham Commission, did not give much attention to Mexican migration, but issued a very significant conclusion that would become realized in law and policy. The Commission concluded that “in the case of Mexico, Mexicans were welcomed as laborers, but not as settlers.” Conflicts over territory, war, border skirmishes, blatant racism and the desire for cheap labor set the stage for devising and refining a migration policy toward Mexico that did not require changes in existing immigration law, nor

the enactment of new laws, to enable Mexican immigrants to enter permanently and legally into the U.S.

Discretionary authority and decisions were invoked in the administrative arena to: (1) establish the first government initiated temporary importation program permitting Mexican workers to enter and to work on farms in the U.S., thus unleashing the first massive wave of circulating, temporary and largely undocumented workers; and (2) to permissibly issue visas expediting administration of an unprecedented large numbers of Mexicans who sought legal entry and permanent settlement in the U.S.

While Mexico and the Western Hemisphere were exempt from the new immigration quota laws that were passed in the first part of the 1920s, they were not exempt from the laws establishing the Border Patrol and its deployment along the U.S.–Mexican border in 1926. A migration policy that relied mainly on utilizing temporary workers, and only secondarily on legal permanent admission, by definition would put extraordinary reliance on administering migration flows. This would include temporary importation programs, managing illegal migration and regularization schemes. This migration policy would also include a wide array of related administrative and bureaucratic strategies for managing entries.

These include regulating the issuance of visas through discretionary authority; permitting the entrance of commuter workers; invoking disincentive strategies that made it harder for undocumented immigrants to settle in the U.S. – particularly families – in contrast to the preference for

single males (1930s); invoking highly visible strategies for disentiing illegal, and often legally admitted, immigrants from eligibility from benefit programs available to others; and invoking a wide array of strategies to criminalize migration and to deploy intensified law enforcement responses such as border patrol, customs patrol, etc.

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Luis Cancel, former Director of the Bronx Museum, curated a spectacular exhibit entitled “The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970”. The show opened at the Bronx Museum of Art and toured the United States for several years. The exhibit provided very limited attention to contemporary Mexican immigration, yet offered very good material about the work created by Mexican artists temporarily in the U.S., Rivera, Orozco, Tamayo, for example. Noted art historian Jacinto Quirarte’s chapter on, “Mexican and Mexican American Artists in the United States: 1920-1970” does not focus on migration, but devotes almost the entire discussion to the artistic production of very noted Mexican artists who were residing temporarily in the United States to do commissioned art projects: Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, David Alfredo Siquieros, Roberto Montenegro and Rufino Tamayo. Their best-known artwork in the U.S. was created in the tradition of the Mexican School; it possessed a high social conscience in overtly political murals and paintings. These artists, by far, completely over shadowed the work of their Mexican counterparts that had migrated to the U.S. permanently: Emilio Amero, Antonio Garcia, and Martin Ramirez. Quirarte’s section on Mexican School Artists in the United States did include a couple of artists who resided in the U.S. for a significant part of their professional careers, such as Alfredo Ramos Martinez, but for

the most part, discussed artists who were temporarily in the U.S. for exhibitions, commissions and related activities.

Reverse Migration

The 1930s proved to be a trying time for Mexican immigrant workers and their families. The Depression created a broad and widespread reaction against illegal immigrants and immigrants in general, the most visible group of which were Mexican (Kaufman:). Intensified law enforcement efforts were employed to round up and remove Mexicans from the country and to discourage and disqualify Mexican immigrants and their children from local, state and federal benefit programs. Repatriation programs were invoked – both public and private – to affect return migration. The Mexican government also offered incentives for its nationals to return, including their U.S.-born/U.S. citizen offspring children. Leo Grebler (1968) estimated that more than 1/5 of the entire Mexican population in the U.S. were rounded up and expelled from the country during this time, while large numbers returned to Mexico under various repatriating initiatives. This remains the single most unprecedented return flow for any one country in the entire history of immigration to the U.S.

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The visual record is stronger during this period for two reasons: first the WPA launched a large scale, government sponsored photographic project targeting rural America – FSA and employed many nationally prominent photographers to photograph life and work in rural America – Dorothea Lange, Walter Evans, Russell Lee among them.

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Second, a body of work was created by Mexican immigrant artists, employed during the Depression by the WPA, that includes, for example, the Mexican artist, Emelio Amero.

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Emilio Amero arrived in New York during the early 1920s. He participated in producing some of the first murals in Mexico. He was a very accomplished photographer, illustrator and printmaker. In the early 1930s he started the first print workshop at the UNAM in the Academy of San Marcos, where he taught lithography to such prominent artists such as Carlos Merida, Alfredo Zalce, Jean Charlot and Dosamantes. There are documents showing work produced by Amero, under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (NY), in the National Archives, but none of which address migration specifically. He subsequently joined the faculty at the University of Oklahoma where he worked and taught until his death in the 1970s.

By 1930, the majority of Mexicans in the U.S. were residing in urban areas. There is a good photographic record of the Mexican presence in the Southwestern/border states and in the Midwest.³ Mexican artists joined other artists from the dominant society to design or illustrate graphic materials and publications covering Mexican events and publications pertaining to various aspects of Mexican community life.

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³ The photographic record on Mexican repatriation is relatively strong. These works have been reproduced in numerous books, Kaufman/Balderama, etc. The photographic archives at all levels – Federal, state, local - contain images that are both visually engaging. They are artistic treasures for the period.

Temporary Worker Schemes and the Rise of Labor Circulation.

By the mid 1940s, the compositional changes within the Mexican origin population residing in the U.S. again began to reflect a dominantly U.S.-born sector. Thus, much of the visual record of Mexican community life, in the 1940s through the early 1960s, all too often does not make distinctions between native-born and foreign-born.

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With the advent of WWII, a renewed interest to utilize Mexican workers resulted in the establishment of a bi-national agreement with Mexico to allow for the importation of contract workers. Extended several times, the bi-lateral agreement was formally supplemented by informal and discretionary administrative decisions where literally millions of workers entered and worked in the U.S. from 1942 until its termination in 1964.

There is much literature on the Bracero Program. What is important to note, however, is that this initiative was begun and maintained by employer interests and their representatives because temporary workers were available in large numbers, they were highly desirable and highly profitable when employed in the U.S. Literally hundreds of thousands of Mexican workers were introduced to labor markets in the U.S. and became dependent and/or supported their families on income generated by working in American agriculture and railroads in the U.S. In time, Mexican workers admitted temporarily under the auspices of the Bracero Program found it much more expedient to return the U.S. on their own. Thus, illegal entries again became the primary mode of entry into the U.S. for Mexicans.

In Los Mojados (1971), it was reported that the rise of illegal migration during this period corresponded directly to the entry of temporary contract workers, admitted under the provisions of the contract labor program not long after the program was established in 1942, and continued throughout its duration and into the present. During this period, legal, permanent migration was held to a very low level by administrative devices, making it harder for Mexicans to enter legally and permanently.

As it was in the mid-1920s, legal immigration from Mexico continued to be largely a by-product of illegal migration.⁴ During the later part of the temporary worker program (1955-1964), legal immigration from Mexico reached relatively high proportions, exactly as it did during the period from 1925-1929 (15%+). While held to a minimum from 1940-1954, the number of legal immigrants admitted began to increase dramatically after 1955, due to the increasing pressure mounted by the labor movement and others opposed to the use of Bracero workers. Nevertheless, the number of Bracero legal workers and legally admitted immigrants from Mexico became outpaced by the flow of Mexicans entering the U.S. illegally during the same period (measured by apprehensions for undocumented workers, multiple entries,, contract workers (migration events) and legal immigrants admitted – single events).

During the period 1956-1965, the number of undocumented workers

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⁴ The underground institutions that evolved during the 1910's, became firmly established in the 1920's were fully operative during the Bracero Program.

reportedly apprehended dropped and the number of workers admitted under contract increased dramatically.⁵

It is worthwhile to note that the visual record for this period is plentiful for Bracero and undocumented workers compared to legally admitted immigrants. It is also important to note also that no major changes to immigration law were enacted throughout this entire period and before 1924-1964.

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Migration caught the attention of artists and photographers, but on the whole did not have the same impact as in the 1930s. Dorothea Lange continued to focus some attention on the rural sector, as did Russell Lee, working with UT Professor George Sanchez along the Texas-Mexican border. The Bracero Program was well documented photographically, but less so graphically or through drawings and paintings. Photographers, by far, contributed the bulk of the visual record in the United States during this time. A visual record that is intentionally constructed to critique or to oppose the politics of administered migration begins to emerge, but is primarily viewed in magazines, books and occasionally displayed in union halls, and at times in exhibition spaces of community centers and faith-based organizations. Writers and scholars such as Carey McWilliams, Ernesto

⁵ Overall, the volume of Mexican migration since 1930 thru 1964 has been largely temporary and illegal. Nevertheless, the total volume of legal immigration pales during this time compared to the total flow of circulating temporary workers – Bracero undocumented. More importantly, as in the past, legal immigration from Mexico remained a by-product of temporary, circulating and illegal migration. The volume of return migration of Mexicans entering legally and permanently is not insignificant.

Galarza, Charles Loomis, Paul S. Taylor and others began to shed light on Mexican migration, sometimes from a very critical and revisionist stance.

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Post-Bracero Migration

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The migration of Mexicans into the U.S. from 1965 to 2001 can best be understood as “Post Bracero Migration” in that all the major flows corresponded very closely to events set in motion by the Bracero Program, including the growth of municipalities along the U.S.-Mexican border, commuter migration, circulating temporary labor migrations from the interior of Mexico (and its southern region), the rise of legal immigration, and its continuity as a by-product of prior entrance for temporary workers or undocumented workers.

During this time, the organizational efforts in the agricultural sector had been consistently strong, and often militant, but largely unsuccessful in unionizing farm workers. A new movement was initiated in 1964. Led by Cesar Chavez, the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) began to agitate in the grape fields and soon after launched what became the most successful secondary boycott in U.S. history. The UFWOC maintained the traditional stance that the labor movement in general had adhered to for decades, but with a significant difference: immigrant workers played a significant role in the UFWOC’s leadership and rank and file. While the UFWOC maintained a restrictionist stance, this was largely centered against the practices of employers to utilize immigrant workers as strikebreakers.

The farm workers movement converged with several other movements in the mid-1960s. These movements included the transition of the Civil Rights Movement into a highly salient Black Power Movement, the anti-war movement (Vietnam), student power movements in college and university campuses throughout the country (and beyond), an array of free-speech, counter-culture movements and the Chicano Movement, both as university and community-based.

Therein emerged a large-scale, spontaneous and highly politicized sector within the Mexican origin population that articulated ideological stances based on notions of de-colonization, militant ethnic consciousness, class struggles, cultural affirmation and working class unity across racial and national boundaries.

Artists and cultural workers invoked principles of racial, ethnic and class solidarity to challenge and oppose dominant power structures in all arenas: political, educational, religious, economic, public and private. In contradistinction to the “Mexican American generation” (1940-1964), the Chicano movement embraced Mexican immigrants, both legal and undocumented, in their definition of Chicano as an inclusionary term. The term “Mexican American,” by definition and intent, represented an exclusionary stance: it did not include Mexicans.

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These meanings soon found their way into a politic of critical ideological revisionism and positive cultural affirmation that was linked to an oppositional politic of dominant society. A highly politicized aesthetic emerged that defended the Mexican working class and, simultaneously,

attacked the dominantly “Anglo” power class, a class that, at that time, was synonymous with the “ruling class,” whether they were a majority-nation-state-local, or an Anglo minority who controlled their respective majority Mexican populations, as in Los Angeles; South Texas; New Mexico, etc.

Chicano artists began to produce and distribute artwork filled with images and graphic statements defending the rights of immigrants and protesting the mistreatment of their immigrant sojourners among other areas of concern: education, civil rights, worker rights, political access, etc. Much of the early work in these areas served as tools for organizational efforts. Artists played a vital role as cultural workers aligning themselves with the organizational strategies set forth by the Chicano movement.

During the early years of the Chicano movement, depictions of the Mexican worker were not isolated from the artists’ descriptions of their subject – whether individual portraiture, murals, drawings or paintings. The idea of a single Mexican community, however incipient at that point, was embedded in the artistic production of the Chicano artists, and often specifically immigrant focused.

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The anti-alien, anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican campaign that emerged in the 1970s gave rise to a heightened sense of consciousness that required attention to the immigrant population in the years that followed. In 1971, Congressman Peter Rodino, head of the House Sub-Committee and Immigration Committee of the Judiciary, introduced legislation that would penalize employers for knowingly hiring undocumented immigrants (employer sanctions). This legislative strategy unleashed a long and

protracted debate about immigration and targeted the U.S.-Mexican border as the prime area of concern. (Slide 36)

The Immigration and Naturalization Service lobbied and prevailed in receiving big increases in Congressional funding for enforcement efforts, and the Border Patrol effectively succeeded in gaining increases in funding. The staffing of the Border Patrol increased from 2,580 in 1978 to 4,948 in 1992, supported by a funding increase from \$78.1 million (1978) to \$325.8 million in 1992.

During this time, 1971-1986, immigration and in particular illegal migration became a highly salient issue in the political arena. A large number of disincentive strategies were launched, all aimed at making life/settlement harder for undocumented workers and their families and to effect return migration. (Disincentive Strategy... Carter Administration). A wide array of legislative and administrative strategies were invoked to disentitle undocumented immigrants and some classes of legally admitted immigrants from receiving government benefits programs and restricting eligibility for participating in educational, health and service programs aimed at helping needy populations.

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The anti-alien/anti-immigrant (undocumented) campaign was intentionally spearheaded by the INS in 1971, as it did during earlier periods, such as 1954, as an integral strategy to bring public attention to the issue on the one hand, and to ready the public for extra-ordinary, if not, draconian types of round-ups and related enforcement efforts that the INS and Border Patrol intended to launch. Congressmen again utilized a media strategy to bolster

attention to the alien threat by releasing exaggerated estimates about the size and growth of the undocumented populations residing in the U.S. and asserting unfounded claims about adverse effects and costs.

Efforts to disentitle and to create disincentives against settlement, along with concerted efforts to criminalize migration, prompted Chicano and Mexican artists living in the U.S., among others, to respond.

A number of state and local initiatives merged to address immigration issues and impacts in a very partial manner. These included legislation passed in Texas, in 1980, to exclude undocumented children from receiving “tuition free” public education, specifically elementary and secondary school children. The Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF) fought this, and, in time, succeeded in having the Supreme Court overturn this law (*Plyler vs. Doe*, 1982). MALDEF and other organizations defending immigrant rights were also successful in challenging passage of 187 in California, but were not successful in stopping the English only and anti-affirmative action initiatives in California, Arizona, Colorado and several other states outside the Southwest. Artists and Chicano cultural workers have worked hand-in-hand with the Chicano civil rights organizations in each of these areas.

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Chicano and Mexican artists have produced and exhibited very creative and moving art work affirming the importance of Mexican immigrants to society as well as denouncing the anti-immigrant initiatives described above.

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The artwork about the immigrant experience also appeared in ofrendas, other installations and home altars. With notable exceptions, these works have been generally a more personal, devotional and family-based form of artwork.

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We are familiar with these s more traditional approaches prior to the 1980s, but since then artists have made a concerted effort to display these installations in more public spaces, including museums, yet, not without controversy (issues about private vs. public display).

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Exhibiting Migration

I want to point out the importance of addressing the exhibition history pertaining to Mexican immigration, exclusively and exhibitions that have included renderings concerning the immigrant experience. In addition to the strength of the work presented, curatorial practices and the type of exhibition spaces, national, regional, local and audiences are relevant considerations. Issues of self-representation and interpretation, such as first person voice/narrative vs. other representations, are also on interest. Can we identify the “first” exhibition mounted to show the Mexican immigrant experience in public and in private spaces in the U.S. or Mexico? How many migration/border focused exhibitions have been presented with additional interest and where, why, whom?

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The Fisher Gallery at U.S.C. in 1984 mounted an interesting exhibit about Latin American artists working and living in the United States. The exhibit entitled, “Aqui: 27 Latin American Artists Living and Working in the United

States”, was co-curated by Denise Lugo-Saavedra and John Spray and included several Mexican artists, some of whom subsequently became identified with the Chicano art movement, ie. Carlos Almaraz (LA) and Alejandro Romero (Chicago). Yet the only artist to treat the issue of migration directly was the Cuban born artist, Luis Cruz Azaceta. Alejandro Romero’s work, “Sol Danzante” also deals, in part, with the topic of migration, but only in a mix of imagery that depicted the social realities of Pilsen, one of the oldest residential areas where Mexicans reside in Chicago.

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Similarly, Eva Cockcroft’s chapter, “The United States and Socially Concerned Latin American Art”, did not address immigration or the work of Mexican born artists in the U.S. The Mexican presence in the U.S., measured by exhibitions during this period, were generally represented in the manner described above, and devoted almost no attention to immigration or to the experience of Mexicans living permanently in the country.

The “Miracles of the Border” exhibition and accompanying book effectively presented a strong visual account of the immigrant experience. The book, “Milagros on the Border”, by Professors Durant and Massey (1995), offers insight about the meaning and utility of retablos created by Mexican immigrants. Retablos can be considered a first person narrative of the immigrant experience, the immigrants voice in this complex arena of migration phenomena. I will not elaborate on retablo art because we have more than enough expertise in this room.

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The commercial gallery, Galeria Sin Fronteras, Inc. (GSF), was established in 1986 with the expressed intention of including attention to immigration as a central feature of its vision, based in part, with what proved to be, a naïve expectation that the art viewing audience would include immigrants and their families. Many exhibitions were mounted focusing on border and migration issues during the nineteen years that the gallery was operating in Austin, Texas. The gallery also spearheaded many immigration related art projects: traveling exhibitions, publication of limited edition fine art prints, and other related projects that sought to illuminate migration issues among diverse audiences.

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- The Immigration Portfolio –

Shortly after the establishment of Galeria Sin Fronteras, Inc., in the mid-1980s, SHG and GSF teamed up to produce a suite of etchings that focused on immigration. Privately funded, the portfolio contained 10 etchings and four text sheets produced in handset letterpress by Lada Black. The portfolio featured five artists: Jose Antonio Aguirre, Guillermo Bert, Alejandro Romero, all born abroad, and two U.S. born artists: Malaquias Montoya and Leo Limon. The printmaker, Esquivel Romero, printed the entire edition 100+ 10 APs in Mexico City, using BAT proofs executed by each artist with the assistance of printmakers in each of their areas of residence. The etchings have been viewed widely, and the portfolios have been incorporated in various collections in the U.S., including El Museo de la Estampa, D.F., Mexico.

(Slide 47 and 48)

A series of exhibitions organized by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte were held at the Centro Cultural de Tijuana (1984-1996). These exhibitions were sponsored under the auspices of El Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y Las Artes, El Programa Cultural de las Fronteras and toured at various border localities and other parts of Mexico. The exhibitions featured contemporary artwork, most of which presented work produced by artists from the greater border region.

In 1992, Self Help Graphics, Inc. (SHG), a Los Angeles based arts organization and the Galeria sin Fronteras, Inc., teamed up with other print centers in the U.S. and Mexico and worked in partnership with artists from both countries to produce monoprints about the border and immigration. This artwork was exhibited in the U.S. and in various venues in Mexico, including Tijuana, Juarez, Matamoros and other places, as well as in the United States, specifically Los Angeles, Austin, Chicago, and Mesa, Arizona. A selection of these works has been incorporated into both public and private collections: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte COLEF, Cardenas Collection, Keller Collection, and the Mexican Fine Arts Center and Museum (MFACM). This print and exhibition project spanned several years with new art work, monoprints, and exhibitions each of several years.

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A series of exhibitions, “In-Site”, held in San Diego have sought to address border-specific and broader transnational/global issues, including immigration since 1998. Collaborations across the U.S.–Mexico border held in conjunction with artists from both countries, have enabled the creation of new work and exhibitions pertaining to the border experience.

The Mexican Museum (San Francisco) and the Mexican Fine Arts Center and Museum (Chicago) have consistently presented an extraordinarily impressive cadre of artists, including artwork addressing the immigrant experience in the U.S. and both have developed very significant art collections.

Guillermo Gomez Pena, a Mexican artist born and raised in Mexico City, moved to Tijuana in the 1980s and began to work with artists on both sides of the border to draw attention to a wide range of issues pertaining to border life, U.S.- Mexico relations, identity and cultural integrity.

Pena y Coco Fusco

(Slide 52)

Pena and Fusco utilized performance to present themselves politically. They addressed border and cultural realities in a dramatic and sensational manner. They have been very successful in getting strong messages across to large audiences and diverse publics, in particular, the established art world. Guillermo Gomez Pena was awarded a McArthur Genius Fellowship and continues being very active with issues of the day.

Immigrant Sensibilities

By 1980,, artwork identified with the Chicano Movement was for the most part secondary to artwork created by artists/photographers whose work was not motivated by a “movement orientation” or by an overtly Chicano movement intentionality. Nevertheless, much of this work stemmed from a

Chicano/Mexicano sensibility that was identified by the artists as not political by intention, nor, in their opinion, could necessarily be considered “Chicano”. Despite their disclaimers, much of this work was intimately connected to their social cultural origins and experience.

(Slide 53 and 54)

Marcos Raya, a Mexican born artist, has resided in the U.S. most of his life. Living and working in Pilsen, an inner city area near downtown Chicago, Raya’s work reflects the daily struggles and aspirations, positive and negative, that many inner residents experience: gangs, drugs, alcohol, etc. Raya bases much of his work to express his own experience as an inner city Mexican immigrant as well as the socio-cultural milieu of the community. Raya works in paintings, found objects and installations and, occasionally, murals.

(Slide 55)

Similarly several Chicago-based artists, Rene Arceo and Hector Duarte, Mexican born artists from Michoacan, have created a body of work, including paintings, drawings, prints and murals, some of which address the immigrant experience directly.

David Avalos, a Chicano artist from the San Diego/border area, created a national sensation in the art world when he distributed money from a NEA grant to undocumented workers during their journey to the U.S. He also worked with Deborah Small to create an installation that was sharply critical of the U.S. Bi-Centennial at the San Diego Museum of Art.

(Slide 56 and 57)

While these artists, Guillermo Gomez Peña, Coco Fusco, David Avalos, and Deborah Small, may not have been the first artists to utilize non-traditional artistic approaches to address borders and immigration issues, they were very effective in creating socially engaging art work about the immigrant experience, and in the case of Avalos, very provocative work challenging notions of “discovery”, illegality and legality, and citizenship.

(Slide 58 – 60)

The exhibition history in Mexico pertaining to Mexican immigration in contemporary time has been somewhat limited, but not insignificant.

Jorge Durand and Patricia Arias produced a very useful book, “La Experiencia Migrants – Iconografía de la Migración México – Estados Unidos” (2000). The book offers an interesting visual history of Mexican migration, drawing primarily on photographs, some retablos and selected paintings, and graphic posters. Durand and Arias included coverage of Martín Ramirez, a Mexican immigrant who was hospitalized for mental illness in the U.S. for a good part of his adult life. Ramirez, we are told, was very productive and created a body of artwork from 1930 until his death in 1963. Ramirez was included in the very prestigious Hispanic Art in the United States, an exhibit featuring 30 Latino artists, all of whom were alive, except Martin Ramirez. Victor Espinoza (Northwestern University) is conducting research on the life and work of Martin Ramirez. Ramirez stands out as one of the most prolific, of the relatively few, Mexican artists living in the U.S. (along with Emilio Amero) who were actively engaged in producing art in the 1920s (Amero through the 1960s – Amero and Ramirez).

The Taller de Grafica Popular (TPG) (Mexico City) is the longest standing and more overtly political art collectives in Mexico. The TPG produced a large body of prints – grabados – woodcuts, linocuts, and lithographs – aimed at making a social statement about various aspects of the situation of the Mexican working class, the role of the Mexican government in serving special interests, and the oppressive nature of the Mexican class structure. To my knowledge, however, artwork created by the TPG failed to address the Mexican immigrant experience, the inattention to which was for the most part absent throughout Mexican society.

As far as I am able to ascertain, Mexican artists were preoccupied with other matters, thus the Mexican immigrant experience did not capture their attention until the late 1980s, with the exception of some Mexican artists who settled in the U.S. or in Mexican border communities.

Naturally, one would not expect all Mexican immigrant artists living in the U.S. to be pre-occupied with the immigrant experience as subject matter in their artwork. Nevertheless the immigrant imaginary – memory/affirmation – of their homeland experiences it often present in their work. Seattle-based artist, Alfredo Arreguin provides a very good example of this point. A very senior, prolific, and accomplished artist-painter and printmaker, Arreguin blends his Mexican origin experience with his long time residence in the Northwest.

(Slide 61)

We can point to several other Mexican artists in the same vain: Ramos, Noriega, Ruben Ortiz, Cristina Cardenas, Solomon Huerta, Roberto Gil del

Montes, Marcos Raya, Alejandro Romero and Esperanza Gama, to name a few such Mexican artists who have settled in the U.S. and whose work reflects their immigrant experience in very significant ways.

(Slide 62 – 66)

Mexican-born artists, Artemio Rodriguez and Sylvia Capistran, have established a very productive art center: La Mano Press. Located in the downtown L.A. vicinity, La Mano Press provides a studio for Rodriguez and Capistran and enables them to work with an array of other artists, many of whom are also Mexican-born, to execute linoleum, woodcut, litho and silkscreen prints. La Mano Press sponsors classes, exhibitions, print soles and offer a mix of special events in and off-site.

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Rodriguez and Capistran are very active in working collectively with other artists to produce artistically rendered posters and banners used in the large scale demonstrations advocating immigrant concerns regarding pending legislative initiatives in Washington D.C., reminiscent of the poster making produced by Chicano art collectives in the late 1960s and 1970s. La Mano Press has produced several limited edition art books, including one recent book featuring a ten-year retrospective of Artemio Rodriguez's artwork-prints.

(Slide 69)

Notre Dame's "Caras Vemos" exhibit will feature a large-scale (mural-size) woodcut produced in limited edition by Artemio Rodriguez and collaborators and several smaller works created by Rodriguez.

(Slide 70 and 71)

Caras Vemos, Corazones No Sabemos: The Human Landscape of Mexican Migration to the United States

The Snite Museum of Art and the Institute for Latino Studies (ILS) at the University of Notre Dame are preparing an exhibition entitled *CARAS VEMOS, CORAZONES NO SABEMOS: THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE OF MEXICAN MIGRATION OF THE UNITED STATES*. The exhibition will be on display at the university the fall of 2006- September 3- November 12th. Plans are being made to tour in the United States and Mexico through 2007-2009.

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The exhibition will feature approximately 125 objects representing the early 1970s up to the present. According to guest curator, Amelia Malagamba, art historian, University of Texas at Austin, “Supporting visual materials will be integrated into the narrative of the exhibition, including vintage photographs, first editions of early-published works on Mexican migration, and a series of *ex-votos* addressing migration. Additionally, the exhibition will utilize a unique soundtrack of a variety of musical forms inspired by the phenomenon of migration throughout the galleries. More than a sound ambiance, this component becomes the audio narrative of the visual imagery. Much of the music selected reflects both the traditions and musical *mestizaje* resulting from the process of negotiating the realities produced by migration”. Malagamba reports that the *CARAS VEMOS, CORAZONES NO SABEMOS*, has a two-fold purpose: to investigate the articulation of the phenomenon of Mexican migration to the United States in Chicano / Mexican visual arts; and to engage non-traditional audiences with the artwork in order to stimulate serious discussion and educate the public about migration from Mexico, resulting in a better understanding of the human

consequences associated with the phenomenon. The exhibition will incorporate the work of Caribbean Latino artists living in the United States as well, establishing a cohesive perspective indicative of the scope of migratory experience and consciousness.

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The Snite Museum reports that exhibit is both an artistic display and an educational journey. The main themes of the exhibition are: 1) journeys, boundaries & barriers; 2) urban landscapes and human geographies; and 3) negotiating identities, and 4) constructing imaginaries. The curator has focused on selecting contemporary artwork that effectively incorporates traditions and symbols as well as reflecting the social realities of *mestizaje* origins and life experiences.

(Slide 74 and 75)

The exhibit will draw on artistic narratives expressed not only in context, but also in aesthetic propositions that shape, and are shaped by, the phenomenon of migration that are not commonly found in contemporary society. This narrative space provides a forum for public discourse.

Dr. Malagamba-Ansótegui has intimate knowledge of this genre as an artist, as a *fronteriza* and as former director of the Department of Cultural Studies at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF). Her work with *Taller de Monotipia, Imágenes de la Frontera* is an example of her efforts with artists along the border. Her scholarly work focuses on contemporary Chicano, Mexican and Border visual culture and art.

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Dr. Malagamba-Ansótegui's curatorial concept for this project is based upon her studies, her work and her life experiences living along the border. In

order to create an exhibition based upon her concept of migration, borders and boundaries, Dr. Malagamba-Ansótegui has used a variety of work from both artists and collectors for the exhibition.

(Slide 79)

The “Caras Vemos” exhibition will feature a combination of paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, multi-media, retablos and objects.

By way of preview, I will share a sampling of works that will appear in this exhibition.

(Slide 80 – 89)

Other Exhibitions

My intention here is not to present an entire inventory of exhibitions pertaining to Mexican migration, but rather to offer a mix of exhibits to illustrate a range of work offered more recently or in the making.

(Slide 90)

During the past several years numerous/one person and group shows have been presented focusing on Mexican migration and border life, including for example, Margarita Cabrera’s art, “Maquila” at Women and Their Work, Austin, TX (2004); Diana Molina, “Seven string Barbed-Wire Fence,” La Pena, Austin, TX (2005); Dulce Pizon, “Mirrors: Contemporary Mexican Artists in the United States”, Cultural Institute of Mexico, Washington D.C. (2004); and the “Day Laborers and Entrepreneurship Exhibit at Gallery 927”, Los Angeles, CA (2005).

There are currently several exhibitions that are currently on display, not including “Angels on the Border” here at Princeton University. These are: “

Gustavo Ramos Rivera Paintings: Eternidades Del Instante” at the San Jose museum of Art and “ Open Routines: Recent Projects by Pedro Lasch at the Queens Museum of Art in New York.

There are many more currently out there, and undoubtedly, many, many more to come.

(Slide 91 and 92)

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