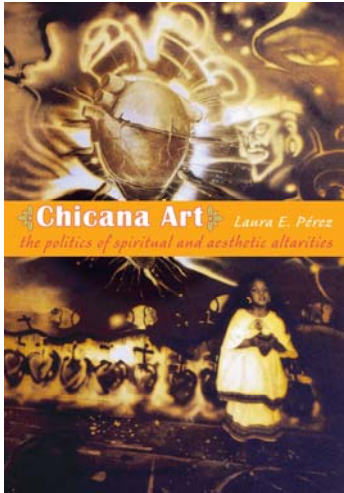


Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities / Laura E. Pérez.—(Objects / histories)
 Durham, NC: Duke University Press, September 2007.--408p.:ill--ISBN-13:978-0-8223-3868-0 (pa.,
 alk.,paper): \$24.95.



In her introduction, Laura Pérez notes that the importance of the spiritual in Chicana art, is often overlooked and consigned to the 'intellectual borderlands'. An associate professor of ethnic studies at University of California, Berkeley, she found her self initially reluctant to explore this interest, perceiving the topic as dangerous intellectual ground. However, Pérez's interest has resulted in one of the first scholarly works focused on exploring contemporary Chicana artists. A quick search of *Worldcat* retrieves only 144 items for the keyword "Chicana" and "art," and when searching for the subject of "Mexican American women artists," two books and one video are retrieved. Pérez finds this kind of lack of recognition and patronage of Chicana art related not just to the marginalization of Chicana/o culture, but also to the marginalization of the themes of spiritualism and politicism, twined together.

Chicana art makes statements, evokes responses, and is unabashed about its message. Pérez profiles the work of more than forty artists, provides historical antecedents, and incorporates scholarly studies on Chicana/o art and culture, to provide background and context for the reader. Her bibliography of works cited is invaluable as a starting point for teaching and research in this relatively untouched area of contemporary women's art. She also lists a series of interviews and performance pieces, which have allowed her to incorporate the artists' intentions along with her interpretations, providing valuable primary source information for future researchers.

The book is organized into six chapters, with an introduction, conclusion, list of illustrations, works cited, chapter notes, and index. The chapters are organized by the dominant themes found in the work of the artists' profiled: "Spirits, Glyphs", "Body, Dress," "Altar, Alter," "Tierra, Land," "Book, Art," and "Face, Heart, Self, Other." This organization works well, as each theme builds upon the previous one.

Pérez finds that Chicana art politicizes the spiritual in a very public forum. It often aims to help those within the Chicana/o culture transcend disenfranchisement or marginalization, while having a transformational effect on all viewers. This is an elegant, thoughtful book that is a foundation for more scholarship on Chicana art. Highly recommended.

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