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00:00:01,783 --> 00:00:07,713

[Professor Geoffrey Batchen] : Hello, everyone. Good evening.

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00:00:07,713 --> 00:00:13,563

My name is Geoff Batchen. I'm the Professor of History of Art here at the University of Oxford.

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00:00:13,563 --> 00:00:16,323

And it's my honour to introduce this year's Terra

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00:00:16,323 --> 00:00:25,743

Professor of American Art: Dr. Charlene Villaseñor Black, a renowned Professor at the University of California, in Los Angeles.

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00:00:25,743 --> 00:00:33,693

Charlene has been teaching for us at Oxford this past year. Funded by the Terra Foundation and generously hosted by Worcester College,

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00:00:33,693 --> 00:00:42,873

the site of this evening's lecture. Establishing her career as an expert in the complex history of 17th century Spanish colonial art,

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00:00:42,873 --> 00:00:48,303

Charlene has gone on to expand her interest to include a wide range of Latinx Art,

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00:00:48,303 --> 00:00:56,943

consistently linking the past with the present, the Americas with Europe and cultural production with political activism.

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00:00:56,943 --> 00:01:05,703

Her first book, in 2006, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire*, examines what happened when this humble stepfather of Jesus was, in

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00:01:05,703 --> 00:01:17,613

1545, made the patron saint of the Spanish colonies in the new world, and then in 1672 of Spain itself,

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00:01:17,613 --> 00:01:21,993

both focussing on the changing manifestations of Holy Family and St. Joseph

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00:01:21,993 --> 00:01:27,693

imagery in Spain and colonial Mexico from the 16th through the 18th centuries,

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00:01:27,693 --> 00:01:34,503

this book examines the genesis of a New Saints cult after centuries of relative obscurity.

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00:01:34,503 --> 00:01:44,883

In so doing, it elucidates the role of the visual arts in creating gendered discourses and deploying them in conquest, conversion and colonisation.

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00:01:44,883 --> 00:01:48,243

If you think gender fluidity is a new and radical phenomenon,

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00:01:48,243 --> 00:01:56,373

you should read Charlene's account of devout religious paintings, showing a lactating St. Joseph. In this same vein,

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00:01:56,373 --> 00:02:03,903

July sees the publication of Charlene's latest book, titled Transforming Saints: From Spain to New Spain.

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00:02:03,903 --> 00:02:09,873

This book explores the transformation and function of the images of holy women within wider religious,

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00:02:09,873 --> 00:02:18,543

social and political context of old Spain and New Spain, from the Spanish conquest to Mexican independence.

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00:02:18,543 --> 00:02:24,093

Apart from the various books, Charlene's produced a vast array of publications in recent years,

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00:02:24,093 --> 00:02:32,823

many of them looking at the history of Chicana and Chicano art in the United States and frequently involving co-authors or co-editors.

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00:02:32,823 --> 00:02:40,713

This last aspect of Charlene's work points to her important role as the encourager and facilitator of others. Through her

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00:02:40,713 --> 00:02:48,993

work as editor of the journal *Aztlan* and by founding and editing another title *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*.

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00:02:48,993 --> 00:02:53,073

She has helped to create a network of scholars concerned with Latinx culture and

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00:02:53,073 --> 00:02:59,103

thus to add authority and breadth to an increasingly important field of study.

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00:02:59,103 --> 00:03:03,543

Her recent work has taken a particular interest in questions of exchange in the

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00:03:03,543 --> 00:03:09,843

decolonisation of the discipline of art history and in ecological issues of various kinds.

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00:03:09,843 --> 00:03:20,493

She is currently working, for example, on a major exhibition and book project titled *Verdant Worlds: Art and Sustainability across the Cosmos*

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00:03:20,493 --> 00:03:30,123

A series of four Terra lectures in American art has been given the collective title of "Decolonising Art History through Latinx Art".

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00:03:30,123 --> 00:03:39,873

As this title suggests, they will centre on Latinx art with an emphasis on Mexican-American artists and the theme of migration, of people,

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00:03:39,873 --> 00:03:45,033

ideas and artworks from the 17th century to today.

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00:03:45,033 --> 00:03:51,363

This evening's lecture, the first in the series, is titled "Art and Radical Hospitality".

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00:03:51,363 --> 00:03:57,393

Please join me in welcoming this year's Terra Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black.

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00:03:57,393 --> 00:04:14,083

[Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black] : Thank you. Thank you so much for that beautiful and generous introduction.

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00:04:14,083 --> 00:04:20,263

I'd also like to thank the Department of History of Art here at the University of Oxford.

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00:04:20,263 --> 00:04:23,863

My wonderful colleagues and the wonderful staff there and the students with whom

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00:04:23,863 --> 00:04:28,843

I've been in dialogue this year thank the Terra Foundation for funding my position.

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00:04:28,843 --> 00:04:38,203

Worcester College UCLA for allowing me to come here for a year, my friends and colleagues here and abroad.

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00:04:38,203 --> 00:04:39,913

And the artist Sandy Rodriguez,

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00:04:39,913 --> 00:04:47,953

about whom I'll be speaking today and I believe she's participating via the livestream and the artist Melanie Cervantes,

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00:04:47,953 --> 00:04:56,858

who allowed me to use her image for the lecture series here.

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00:04:56,858 --> 00:05:03,248

Let's make visible our radical hospitality with the hashtag migrant caravan

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00:05:03,248 --> 00:05:13,958

That's the text in the middle there in Spanish, "Hagamos Visible". This call, issued in October 2018 by Movimiento Migrante Mesoamericano,

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00:05:13,958 --> 00:05:20,798

appealed to Mexicans to help in the arrival of Central American refugees to Mexico City.

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00:05:20,798 --> 00:05:30,758

The plea resonated with Jacques Derrida does the 1996 dialogue Of Hospitality, which proposed unconditional hospitality.

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00:05:30,758 --> 00:05:39,908

The complete and absolute acceptance of all immigrants, all foreigners in the face of growing xenophobia in France.

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00:05:39,908 --> 00:05:46,328

Written three years after the 1993 revocation of birth citizenship under then-Prime Minister,

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00:05:46,328 --> 00:05:54,068

Michel Rocard, Derrida's call is timely for us in the U.S. and indeed around the world,

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00:05:54,068 --> 00:06:00,248

particularly in the face of the war in Ukraine.

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00:06:00,248 --> 00:06:01,928

In July 2021,

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00:06:01,928 --> 00:06:11,378

current U.S. President Joe Biden began taking steps to reverse some of the damage done during the Trump administration by establishing the

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00:06:11,378 --> 00:06:21,878

Collaborative Migration Management Strategy designed to foster more humane conditions for Northern Triangle migrants - so migrants from Guatemala,

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00:06:21,878 --> 00:06:30,758

El Salvador and Nicaragua - but we're still emerging from the damage done during Trump's presidency.

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00:06:30,758 --> 00:06:40,598

Elected in November 2016 on waves of anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment, you may recall the midterm elections of 2018,

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00:06:40,598 --> 00:06:45,548

when Trump campaigned on behalf of fellow Republicans by sounding the alarm

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00:06:45,548 --> 00:06:51,458

about the so-called "migrant caravan" from Central America heading to the U.S.

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00:06:51,458 --> 00:06:54,398

He threatened to institute martial law.

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00:06:54,398 --> 00:07:03,308

Following up with the declaration that he would end birth right citizenship guaranteed by the 14th Amendment through executive order,

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00:07:03,308 --> 00:07:08,048

his claim, designed to rev up his base for the upcoming elections,

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00:07:08,048 --> 00:07:16,268

distracted voters from the previous week's tragic events: the murder of two innocent African-

Americans in a Kentucky

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00:07:16,268 --> 00:07:26,168

Kroger store by a white supremacist. Thirteen pipe bombs sent by a Trump supporter to prominent Democrats and newscasters,

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00:07:26,168 --> 00:07:33,858

including two former presidents and the synagogue shooting that killed 11 in Pittsburgh.

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00:07:33,858 --> 00:07:45,078

After four years, most of us sighed relief upon the election of Biden in November 2020. In anticipation of more favourable laws and attitudes,

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00:07:45,078 --> 00:07:51,078

migrants began gathering once more at the border in hopes of successful crossing.

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00:07:51,078 --> 00:08:04,018

We are called again to enact radical hospitality. And that ethical demand leads me to the questions I consider in my talk today.

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00:08:04,018 --> 00:08:10,258

How have Chicana and Latina artists responded to the migration crises in recent years?

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00:08:10,258 --> 00:08:13,288

And I'm referring here to artists of Mexican American,

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00:08:13,288 --> 00:08:23,148

Central American and Latin American descent using the gender neutral non-binary, which also recognises indigeneity.

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00:08:23,148 --> 00:08:31,308

What is the role of art and artists in this current context in the face of such human suffering? In this talk today,

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00:08:31,308 --> 00:08:38,058

I think through these questions, as I consider recent work by Los Angeles Chicana artist Sandy Rodriguez,

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00:08:38,058 --> 00:08:46,008

her installation *You Will Not Be Forgotten* - and the artist, I think is present with us via the live stream today.

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00:08:46,008 --> 00:08:52,668

I place her work in conversation with Derrida's *Of Hospitality* and other philosophical texts.

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00:08:52,668 --> 00:09:00,408

Considering the political potential of art in the current global migration crises and in politics more generally,

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00:09:00,408 --> 00:09:07,578

in the end, I suggest that visual artists play an important and specific role in this context.

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00:09:07,578 --> 00:09:15,898

And by Chicana, I mean, women identified artists of Mexican descent in the United States.

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00:09:15,898 --> 00:09:24,208

Rodriguez's work has recently risen to visibility, with important solo shows, publications and acquisitions by major institutions.

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00:09:24,208 --> 00:09:31,438

She was just featured a new podcast released by the BBC in October. This spring, 2022,

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00:09:31,438 --> 00:09:37,198

Rodriguez has five museum exhibitions on view at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art,

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00:09:37,198 --> 00:09:47,308

two at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, at the Denver Art Museum and at the Huntington Library Museum.

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00:09:47,308 --> 00:09:56,338

Today, we will focus on her Codex Rodriguez Mondragon, an ongoing series of installations entitled You Will Not Be Forgotten.

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00:09:56,338 --> 00:10:02,518

I saw it at the Charlie James Gallery in LA's Chinatown on February 28th, 2020,

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00:10:02,518 --> 00:10:07,948

18 days before California's governor, Gavin Newsom issued the stay at home order.

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00:10:07,948 --> 00:10:18,298

So 26 months ago. You Will Not Be Forgotten is the second iteration of the Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón,

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00:10:18,298 --> 00:10:27,028

and I'm showing you here part of the first from 2018, comprised of maps, botanical drawings and sculptures,

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00:10:27,028 --> 00:10:33,958

the installation was exhibited in two rooms of East 26 projects in Vernon, in the Fine Arts Solutions production complex.

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00:10:33,958 --> 00:10:39,148

So this is just a couple of miles southeast of the L.A. Arts District.

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00:10:39,148 --> 00:10:43,498

It focuses on actions taken against immigrants.

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00:10:43,498 --> 00:10:53,578

A 2019 article co-authored by Ella Diaz [?] and Ananda Cohen-Aponte [?], then at Cornell in English Language Notes, describes the process of its creation.

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00:10:53,578 --> 00:11:01,228

The artist's intensive research and fieldwork, in which she gathered botanical earth and mineral samples to create pigments,

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00:11:01,228 --> 00:11:09,558

as well as her study of surviving indigenous manuscripts.

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00:11:09,558 --> 00:11:15,828

As they suggest in their analysis of the large scale map on a amate paper that is central to the installation,

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00:11:15,828 --> 00:11:22,158

De las Señales y Pronosticós & I.C.E. Raids de Califas [SEE LIST OF IMAGES], Rodriguez visualises,

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00:11:22,158 --> 00:11:31,818

the connexions between recent deportations in California and the events of the 16th century European invasion or conquest of the Americas.

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00:11:31,818 --> 00:11:38,688

Today's deportations result from centuries of dehumanisation of indigenous peoples.

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00:11:38,688 --> 00:11:47,988

They also analyse the artist's deep engagement with the Florentine Codex, also known as The Universal History of the Things of New Spain [SEE LIST OF IMAGES]

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00:11:47,988 --> 00:11:50,538

A lengthy manuscript in Nahuatl in Spanish,

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00:11:50,538 --> 00:12:02,268

with more than 2000 images completed around 1577 by Franciscan Friar Bernardino de Sahagún and his central Mexican indigenous collaborators. Diaz

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00:12:02,268 --> 00:12:11,448

and Cohen-Aponte, suggest the ways in which Rodriguez takes inspiration from the Florentine Codex as a repository of indigenous culture,

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00:12:11,448 --> 00:12:22,578

history and tradition. Today, I focus on her 2019 iteration, You Will Not Be Forgotten,

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00:12:22,578 --> 00:12:29,778

an installation comprised of 20 works created on amate paper with natural inks and watercolours.

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00:12:29,778 --> 00:12:35,868

The works were arranged in two rooms of the Charlie James gallery in LA's Chinatown.

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00:12:35,868 --> 00:12:37,398

In the artist's own words,

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00:12:37,398 --> 00:12:50,478

the installation was quote "dedicated to the seven Central American child migrants who died in U.S. Customs and Border Protection during 2018 and 2019."

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00:12:50,478 --> 00:13:01,448

Portraits memorialised the seven deceased children featured on the main wall in the installation's first room.

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00:13:01,448 --> 00:13:06,998

Other works included two representations of indigenous Mesoamerican grandmother goddesses,

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00:13:06,998 --> 00:13:15,188

the Maya Ix Chel and Tenten in na Antonina landscapes of the US-Mexico border that

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00:13:15,188 --> 00:13:23,108

commemorate the children's final days and document the location of healing plants [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:13:23,108 --> 00:13:31,318

Three portraits of contemporaries as indigenous healers and including this beautiful self-portrait.

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00:13:31,318 --> 00:13:36,568

And small botanical illustrations of plants able to heal the children's ailments,

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00:13:36,568 --> 00:13:43,198

including susto or trauma, influenza, respiratory illnesses and diseases of the heart [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:13:43,198 --> 00:13:48,688

Based in the artist's careful study of the Florentine Codex and the Codex Cruz-Badiano,

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00:13:48,688 --> 00:13:54,418

both of which record indigenous Mesoamerican scientific knowledge.

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00:13:54,418 --> 00:13:58,468

Similar to the first incarnation of the Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón,

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00:13:58,468 --> 00:14:08,308

You Will Not Be Forgotten was created after intensive fieldwork along the border in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas in 2019.

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00:14:08,308 --> 00:14:14,308

Investigating medicinal plants and natural pigments and evading the Border Patrol herself.

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00:14:14,308 --> 00:14:20,728

And that's what she actually renders in this landscape. And this is very near to where my family lives, by the way.

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00:14:20,728 --> 00:14:36,068

It was a process dedicated to decolonising our past, offering hope for our present and a more just future for the Americans.

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00:14:36,068 --> 00:14:40,898

My interest today is in the seven commemorative portraits of the children.

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00:14:40,898 --> 00:14:46,778

They are unusual in her artistic production and unique in the history of Chicana art.

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00:14:46,778 --> 00:14:52,118

I begin by considering them as portraits, thinking about their creation.

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00:14:52,118 --> 00:15:01,448

I then place them in the context of practises of memorialisation, both contemporary and historical, secular and sacred.

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00:15:01,448 --> 00:15:05,708

How is Rodriguez's engagement with the past visible here?

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00:15:05,708 --> 00:15:16,568

What haunting ghosts rise to visibility? Then I consider the particular status of portraiture, in Chicana and Latina Art.

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00:15:16,568 --> 00:15:24,248

To conclude, I turn to the theoretical consideration of memory, hospitality, trauma and hope.

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00:15:24,248 --> 00:15:33,668

Why talk about art in the face of such heart wrenching injustice?

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00:15:33,668 --> 00:15:43,508

Grief and rage compelled Rodriguez to create these pieces. When the deaths of these children became known through the media and activist orgs,

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00:15:43,508 --> 00:15:50,498

she began working on portraits, each an amalgam created from photographs of the youngsters gathered from web sites,

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00:15:50,498 --> 00:15:56,048

complemented by research into each child's life, family and circumstances.

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00:15:56,048 --> 00:16:03,488

First, she did initial sketches in walnut ink, on amate paper each small in size about four by six inches,

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00:16:03,488 --> 00:16:13,688

attempting to capture the essence of each child when alive. So I'm showing you the seven sketches and the seven portraits here and two asides here [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:16:13,688 --> 00:16:21,998

I should add that she has been attempting to get in touch with the families in order to give them the portrait sketches that she created.

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00:16:21,998 --> 00:16:27,008

And secondly, I will not be describing the circumstances of the children's deaths,

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00:16:27,008 --> 00:16:32,108

except when necessary to understand an artwork out of respect for them.

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00:16:32,108 --> 00:16:45,088

The circumstances are easily located on the internet. There's actually an article by Anuradha Vikram about it if you're interested.

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00:16:45,088 --> 00:16:50,978

Let's look at the final portraits. The central feature of the installation.

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00:16:50,978 --> 00:16:56,198

Their process of creation and their materiality are of interest to me here.

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00:16:56,198 --> 00:17:02,858

I wish to emphasise their development from sketches that attempt to capture something of the children in life.

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00:17:02,858 --> 00:17:13,838

To her finished more formal portraits. Rodriguez's creative process points to her interpretation of the children and the intent behind her work.

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00:17:13,838 --> 00:17:15,638

So let's take a closer look.

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00:17:15,638 --> 00:17:28,708

We're going to begin with the materials employed, then the artists process and transformations, from initial ideas to finished works.

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00:17:28,708 --> 00:17:32,098

Both sketches and final portraits are rendered on amate paper,

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00:17:32,098 --> 00:17:40,048

handmade in Mexico from Fig Tree Bark, a process dating back to ancient times.

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00:17:40,048 --> 00:17:45,658

The paper comes in shades of browns and tans with swirling variations of tone.

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00:17:45,658 --> 00:17:50,428

It is relatively thick, with a palpable surface texture.

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00:17:50,428 --> 00:17:57,088

Both sketches and final portraits are drawn in walnut ink, rich, dark brown and colour.

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00:17:57,088 --> 00:18:04,558

Six of the seven final portraits have blue green backgrounds, perhaps an allusion to the famous Maya Blue Pigment,

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00:18:04,558 --> 00:18:11,788

a natural colouring created from indigo and clay, and one with significant symbolic meaning.

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00:18:11,788 --> 00:18:17,758

The background reminds viewers that the children came from Central America, a Maya area.

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00:18:17,758 --> 00:18:26,458

Rodriguez also included national birds in the portraits, either a Quetzal for Guatemala or a Torogoz for El Salvador.

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00:18:26,458 --> 00:18:34,018

Finally, the blue green colour employed here was associated in Maya culture with the death and with the priesthood.

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00:18:34,018 --> 00:18:44,428

One could read its use as intended to sacralize the children, or perhaps even suggest they were sacrificial victims.

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00:18:44,428 --> 00:18:52,018

So let's look at some of the seven portraits now in order from left to right, along with the preparatory sketches.

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00:18:52,018 --> 00:19:04,838

The first portrays Felipe, a Quetzal bird on the lower left, identifying his place of birth as Guatemala.

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00:19:04,838 --> 00:19:09,338

Rodriguez inscribed his name in birth and death dates in cursive.

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00:19:09,338 --> 00:19:23,918

So on the bottom, similar to the inscriptions found on colonial era portraits such as this one [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:19:23,918 --> 00:19:32,238

So I'm really interested in her transformation of the sketch. You'll notice how she has sharpened her line,

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00:19:32,238 --> 00:19:41,268

moving from light descriptive strokes in the sketch that bring the figure into being, the bolder more graphic contours.

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00:19:41,268 --> 00:19:48,618

She also enlarges his figure and shifts the angle of the body up for a more monumental presentation.

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00:19:48,618 --> 00:19:59,868



She draws attention to his eyes large and at the viewer's level, their gaze now almost confrontational. To suggest Felipe as he was in life,

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00:19:59,868 --> 00:20:06,798

she adds more torsion to the positioning of the body, also opening it up, opening up the pose.

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00:20:06,798 --> 00:20:13,218

The transformation seen here in the portrayal of Felipe will characterise the others as we shall see.

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00:20:13,218 --> 00:20:17,568

And they include, number one, the monumentalization of the pose.

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00:20:17,568 --> 00:20:30,418

Number two: an emphasis on the eyes. And number three, the use of a bolder, more graphic line in the finished portrait.

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00:20:30,418 --> 00:20:36,208

I'm also interested in the materiality of the portraits and how their meaning resides in their making,

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00:20:36,208 --> 00:20:42,748

to paraphrase Svetlana Alpers, the amate creates a warm skin tone for the figures.

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00:20:42,748 --> 00:20:52,258

The variations at times helping suggest a sense of three dimensionality or shading, as it racialises the figures as Brown.

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00:20:52,258 --> 00:20:57,958

Furthermore, her use of watercolour and natural ink on amate fosters transparency,

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00:20:57,958 --> 00:21:04,798

suggesting ephemerality or impermanence lending the final portraits a haunting quality.

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00:21:04,798 --> 00:21:08,698

See the sheerness of the blue green pigment laid over the background.

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00:21:08,698 --> 00:21:20,398

The amate colour and texture bleeding through. Combined with the materials, her visual strategies create ghostly spectral images.

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00:21:20,398 --> 00:21:29,458

We witness Felipe's haunting figure coming into being, into focus, as it at times recedes into the warm brown ground.

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00:21:29,458 --> 00:21:39,258

The portrait exists between time in both past and present.

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00:21:39,258 --> 00:21:49,758

Sixteen year old Juan follows. We notice again how Rodriguez emphasised the figures large eyes which make direct contact with us framed by defined,

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00:21:49,758 --> 00:21:54,558

almost architectonic eyebrows. In moving from sketch to portrait,

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00:21:54,558 --> 00:22:01,548

she downplays a hint of a smile in favour of a more serious formal tone.

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00:22:01,548 --> 00:22:10,098

Juan seems more adult, like in the finished product, the nearly frontal position of body and face confronting the viewer directly.

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00:22:10,098 --> 00:22:22,218

She also monumentalises the pose employing a more pronounced line in the final product.

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00:22:22,218 --> 00:22:27,858

Ten year old Darlyn, the first girl portrait is placed in the centre of the series,

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00:22:27,858 --> 00:22:32,628

The darkest in tonality and the only portrait without a blue green background.

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00:22:32,628 --> 00:22:35,568

It serves as a visual anchor.

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00:22:35,568 --> 00:22:45,708

We see Darlyn's face in the final work through the vertical, wavy striations of the amate paper, as if a ghostly apparition underwater.

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00:22:45,708 --> 00:22:56,178

The appealing tilt of her head friendly smile and large eyes draws in.

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00:22:56,178 --> 00:22:59,958

I present one of the most poignant and evocative of the series next.

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00:22:59,958 --> 00:23:06,738

Seven year old Jakelin's portrait created from a composite of six to seven different photographs.

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00:23:06,738 --> 00:23:12,528

She looks down slightly on the viewer with large, dark and dreamy eyes.

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00:23:12,528 --> 00:23:25,878

Our inability to connect with her through the gaze makes this portrait evocative, melancholy, poignant Jakelin seems somewhat removed, even aloof.

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00:23:25,878 --> 00:23:34,998

At the same time, the nearly frontal pose suggests a self possessed girl. Examining the development from sketch to final painting.

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00:23:34,998 --> 00:23:39,468

We notice that Rodriguez softened the worry and Jakelin's eyes.

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00:23:39,468 --> 00:23:47,048

They're now wistful and dreamy.

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00:23:47,048 --> 00:23:57,908

The final in the series of seven portrays two year old Wilmer Josué Ramírez Vásquez. Rodriguez employs here a freer pose suggestive of a snapshot taken in an instant,

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00:23:57,908 --> 00:23:59,708

his head tilted to the right,

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00:23:59,708 --> 00:24:08,828

Rodriguez enhances the torsion of his body, suggesting the energy of a two year old boy. Wearing a cap to keep his head warm,

193

00:24:08,828 --> 00:24:12,638

Wilmer looks up at us with large, dark brown eyes.

194

00:24:12,638 --> 00:24:23,108

His eyebrows emphasise their sadness, his downturned mouth, echoing their plaintiveness. In comparing Rodriguez's sketch to the final portrait,

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00:24:23,108 --> 00:24:29,978

we notice her graphic line and how she reduced the angle of his body to make him more monumental.

196

00:24:29,978 --> 00:24:44,788

His pose more commanding, even confrontational. And this is heightened by our Close-Up view.

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00:24:44,788 --> 00:24:53,968

By reviewing the transformation from sketches to final portraits, we notice in all seven portrayals that Rodriguez intentionally monumentalised eyes,

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00:24:53,968 --> 00:25:03,928

the pose, focussed her attention on the children's eyes and used a bolder, more graphic line in the final versions.

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00:25:03,928 --> 00:25:09,298

I now consider the portraits in two different contexts. Visual practises of

200

00:25:09,298 --> 00:25:15,268

memorialisation and Mexican-American culture, and visual rhetorics of sacred art.

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00:25:15,268 --> 00:25:23,248

Then we will interpret the portraits in juxtaposition to theories of radical hospitality, trauma and memory.

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00:25:23,248 --> 00:25:34,258

In the end, I return to the questions raised in the beginning of this talk as we think about migration through Latinx art.

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00:25:34,258 --> 00:25:40,348

Mexican-Americans are heirs to a rich tradition of memorialising the deceased. Practises,

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00:25:40,348 --> 00:25:47,098

both passed down from indigenous, African and European ancestors and newly transformed today.

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00:25:47,098 --> 00:25:52,648

The observation of Día de Muertos, the day of the Dead, is the most obvious example.

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00:25:52,648 --> 00:25:57,898

But home altars, ofrenda, and roadside shrines also come to mind.

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00:25:57,898 --> 00:26:02,578

It is helpful to think of Sandy's installation in this context.

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00:26:02,578 --> 00:26:11,098

She is the third generation of artists in her family, the daughter of a painter mother and herself, the creator of vibrant Altares for Día de los Muertos.

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00:26:11,098 --> 00:26:21,898

In fact, in November 2020, Rodriguez was the guest curator of Self Help Graphics Virtual Altar exhibition,

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00:26:21,898 --> 00:26:27,478

so she is deeply familiar with visual traditions memorialising the dead.

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00:26:27,478 --> 00:26:34,258

She did not choose a traditional altar format, though, to commemorate the children,

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00:26:34,258 --> 00:26:42,988

Instead opting for something more enigmatic and I think, participatory, perhaps even universalising.

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00:26:42,988 --> 00:26:50,638

So, allow me to show you a more traditional altar honouring the Central American children.

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00:26:50,638 --> 00:27:01,618

This also dates from November 2020, created by the highly respected East Los Angeles altar artist Ofelia and Rossana Esparza in East L.A. [SEE IMAGE LIST]

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00:27:01,618 --> 00:27:06,338

So you recognise the photographs, I'm sure.

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00:27:06,338 --> 00:27:15,398

I'm not suggesting direct lines of influence here, but I'm more interested in how Rodriguez's portrayals are haunted by past images and practises.

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00:27:15,398 --> 00:27:25,568

And I use the term hauntology in the manner suggested by Jacques Derrida in Specters of Marx from 1993 and as elaborated by other scholars.

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00:27:25,568 --> 00:27:35,058

These past practises haunt, return, to persist in contemporary art.

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00:27:35,058 --> 00:27:42,378

One of these practises is traditional funerary portraits of children called on Angelitos or Little Angel Portraits [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:27:42,378 --> 00:27:49,428

The name given to deceased babies and youth. The tradition was particularly vibrant in Mexico.

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00:27:49,428 --> 00:27:58,428

These Angelitos are commemorated in Mexico and in Mexican-American communities on November 1st and 2nd, or Dia de los Muertos.

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00:27:58,428 --> 00:28:03,048

These photographic portraits, popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries,

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00:28:03,048 --> 00:28:10,938

are based on earlier colonial renditions done in oils, as discussed by art historian Elisa Mendel.

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00:28:10,938 --> 00:28:15,888

Whereas the colonial examples were commissioned by and reserved for members of the elite [SEE IMAGE LIST],

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00:28:15,888 --> 00:28:20,658

the democratic medium of photography brought this commemorative portrait type into

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00:28:20,658 --> 00:28:29,948

the reach of even modest families who wished to record the passing of a loved one.

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00:28:29,948 --> 00:28:40,928

Chicana artist Judith Hernandez created a stunning work in pastel inspired by this tradition in 2015, Death Of The Innocents [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:28:40,928 --> 00:28:48,278

It was one of the standouts of the artist's 2018-19 solo show at the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach, California.

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00:28:48,278 --> 00:28:57,338

And I think of it as an important precedent for Sandy Rodriguez's work, Hernandez created the piece under similar circumstances.

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00:28:57,338 --> 00:29:07,808

In response to the deaths of child migrants crossing the border into the U.S., as well as the generalised violence provoked by the cartels in Mexico.

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00:29:07,808 --> 00:29:14,198

I've interpreted it as an echo of, or as haunted by, Mexican post-mortem photographs [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:29:14,198 --> 00:29:24,458

As we see here in this comparison. We see similarities in their horizontal compositional arrangement, in the peaceful pose of the body,

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00:29:24,458 --> 00:29:31,838

both clad in white, an allusion to innocence and purity.

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00:29:31,838 --> 00:29:36,428

Red and green draperies wind around the figure in Hernandez's pastel,

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00:29:36,428 --> 00:29:43,748

referencing the colours of the Mexican flag and also recalling the winding burial cloth of Christ.

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00:29:43,748 --> 00:29:50,108

The deceased inocente is thus held aloft, floating against a black background.

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00:29:50,108 --> 00:29:57,908

Through these visual strategies, Hernandez suggests transcendence of earthly suffering, perhaps even apotheosis,

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00:29:57,908 --> 00:30:05,138

an impression supported by the white light emanating from the figure's head and the up



stretched wing.

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00:30:05,138 --> 00:30:11,498

The title Death of the Innocents brings to mind a biblical reference: The Massacre of the Innocents,

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00:30:11,498 --> 00:30:19,718

an event recounted in Matthew: 2, of King Herod's slaughter of all male children, two years of age and younger, in Judea.

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00:30:19,718 --> 00:30:25,518

Hernandez thereby suggests the sacredness of this lost life.

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00:30:25,518 --> 00:30:35,258

Upon closer view, the beholder observes the names of deceased children and the year of their passing inscribed into the background.

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00:30:35,258 --> 00:30:46,978

Sophia. Carlos. Juanita. Lui. Ester. Miguel. Raul.

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00:30:46,978 --> 00:31:00,468

The names and dates pull us back to Earth to confront the humanity of suffering migrant children.

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00:31:00,468 --> 00:31:07,848

I bring into play now other explicitly sacred images, which seem to haunt Rodriguez's portraits.

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00:31:07,848 --> 00:31:16,938

So let's consider this holy face of Christ, this example by Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbaran from 1631 [IMAGE LIST].

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00:31:16,938 --> 00:31:25,458

The painting fixedly renders the relic of the Sudarium, or the veil of Veronica housed at St. Peter's Basilica. During The Passion of Christ,

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00:31:25,458 --> 00:31:31,458

as he carried the cross to Calvary, a woman offered to wipe Christ's face with her handkerchief.

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00:31:31,458 --> 00:31:35,418

His visage was left miraculously imprinted on the cloth.

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00:31:35,418 --> 00:31:42,438

A true image, vera icona, in Latin on it, now venerated by the faithful.

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00:31:42,438 --> 00:31:49,698

An image type first created in 15th century European art and especially popular in the 17th century Hispanic world.

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00:31:49,698 --> 00:31:55,428

It offered artists the challenge of recreating the three dimensional Sudarium on a flat surface.

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00:31:55,428 --> 00:32:06,628

An exercise in Trompe l'oeuil, or fool the eye painting. The image brings to mind various of Sandy Rodriguez's portrayals of the children,

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00:32:06,628 --> 00:32:14,428

in You Will Not Be Forgotten, particularly the portrait of Darlyn positioned in the centre. In both images,

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00:32:14,428 --> 00:32:19,168

the nearly monochromatic rendering of the face on cloth, or amate, respectively,

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00:32:19,168 --> 00:32:25,468

suggests a shadowy apparition coming into being a visitation from another world.

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00:32:25,468 --> 00:32:33,818

Such blurriness was deployed by early modern artists to figure the visionary.

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00:32:33,818 --> 00:32:43,448

Other related, miraculous images also come to mind, like the Sudarium on textiles such as the Virgin of Guadalupe [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:32:43,448 --> 00:32:51,608

According to believers, this image appeared miraculously, divinely crafted on the tilma or cloak, of native Saint Juan Diego,

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00:32:51,608 --> 00:32:56,618

In the year 1531 in New Spain. Rodriguez's portraits,

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00:32:56,618 --> 00:33:07,118

the Sudarium and the widely venerated tilma of the Virgin of Guadalupe share material realities all appeared or purportedly appeared on textiles.

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00:33:07,118 --> 00:33:18,478

So Veronica's Veil, Juan Diego's cloak fabric, or the portraits on amate paper.

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00:33:18,478 --> 00:33:28,318

At the same time, Byzantine icons also suggest themselves. They are reminiscent of Rodriguez's emphasis on the children's large, dark imploring eyes,

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00:33:28,318 --> 00:33:33,568

especially in the examples that are more frontal. Like miraculous textile images,

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00:33:33,568 --> 00:33:51,048

Byzantine icons possess extraordinary potential or latency blurring or inter penetrating between sacred and quotidian.

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00:33:51,048 --> 00:33:58,098

Well I'm not positing these sacred works as sources for Rodriguez's portraits in the traditional sense,

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00:33:58,098 --> 00:34:03,678

I believe that her works produce meaning through their resonances with past sacred imagery.

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00:34:03,678 --> 00:34:08,748

These visual echoes or representational hauntings operate like palimpsests,

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00:34:08,748 --> 00:34:19,008

with prior meanings still evident as ghostly echoes, a spectral presence in Rodriguez's portraits available to viewers to help them assign meaning.

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00:34:19,008 --> 00:34:28,038

Connotations from past sacred art still linger, analogous to how a word's etymology inflects its current meaning.

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00:34:28,038 --> 00:34:36,918

The latter idea proposed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. For me Heidegger's theorising of etymology helps explicate how images produce,

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00:34:36,918 --> 00:34:43,878

meaning their origins and past evolution resonating into the present.

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00:34:43,878 --> 00:34:45,618

As these comparisons suggest,

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00:34:45,618 --> 00:34:54,738

Rodriguez's portraits thus resonate with strategies of commemoration or even veneration drawn from Hispanic and other sacred art.

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00:34:54,738 --> 00:35:01,278

They draw on a long tradition of memorialising the dead in Mexican and Mexican-American culture.

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00:35:01,278 --> 00:35:12,258

Her portraits differ, though, from these precedents in that they portray the children as alive. An intentional choice, according to the artist.

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00:35:12,258 --> 00:35:16,698

Instead of positing these past examples as direct sources, though,

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00:35:16,698 --> 00:35:22,878

I suggest them as analogous images that form part of the context of the production of meaning.

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00:35:22,878 --> 00:35:31,968

And this is part of my larger interest in decolonising how we discuss artistic influence and my commitment to interrogating the past,

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00:35:31,968 --> 00:35:40,658

to understand the present and propose new, more just futures.

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00:35:40,658 --> 00:35:49,538

Others have focussed on how Rodriguez draws on ancestral indigenous knowledge, referencing Mayan Aztec goddesses, invoking healing plants,

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00:35:49,538 --> 00:35:59,438

even recreating ancient painting materials and techniques. Building on the interpretation of her artistic technique as indigenous.

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00:35:59,438 --> 00:36:04,688

I understand her practise as a manifestation of what has been called Postmemory.

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00:36:04,688 --> 00:36:14,678

As theorised by Marianne Hirsch, Columbia, Postmemory describes the after effects of trauma as experienced by later generations.

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00:36:14,678 --> 00:36:21,838

In our case, how the traumatic experiences of conquest and colonisation are passed down.

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00:36:21,838 --> 00:36:29,758

As Hirsch suggests, quote "post memories connexion to the past is not actually mediated by recall,

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00:36:29,758 --> 00:36:37,568

but by imaginative investment, projection and creation" end quote.

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00:36:37,568 --> 00:36:41,828

Rodriguez's depictions of healing plants or specimens, such as we see here,

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00:36:41,828 --> 00:36:48,728

the cure for shock, which killed one of the migrant children or the insect to cure heart pain.

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00:36:48,728 --> 00:36:59,618

Act as spells, as cures, as Bruja's incantations to heal.

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00:36:59,618 --> 00:37:10,148

I've left till the end two important matters. The history of depicting migration, in Chicanx art, as well as the consideration of portraiture.

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00:37:10,148 --> 00:37:17,468

Immigration was not a frequent topic in early Chicana Chicano art, only fully emerging in the 1990s.

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00:37:17,468 --> 00:37:23,828

Although there are a handful of early works addressing the subject, as María Herrera-Sobek [?] has demonstrated,

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00:37:23,828 --> 00:37:32,648

such as Rupert Garcia ¡Cesen Deportación! of 1972 [SEE IMAGE LIST]. Herrera-Sobek identifies a few more from the early 1980s.

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00:37:32,648 --> 00:37:43,958

Amongst them, this silkscreen print by Malaquias Montoya Undocumented [SEE IMAGE LIST], two important prints by Chicana printmakers Ester Hernandez [SEE IMAGE LIST] and Yolanda Lopez [SEE IMAGE LIST],

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00:37:43,958 --> 00:37:53,228

dated from 1976 and 1981, exemplify Chicano Chicano activists attitudes at the time toward immigration.

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00:37:53,228 --> 00:37:57,908

In Who's the Illegal Alien, Pilgrim?, from 1981,

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00:37:57,908 --> 00:38:09,278

a young Chicano man wearing an Aztec headdress holds a document referencing immigration and the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

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00:38:09,278 --> 00:38:14,678

The image visually references Chicanos historical claim that we didn't cross the border.

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00:38:14,678 --> 00:38:17,558

The border crossed us.

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00:38:17,558 --> 00:38:26,978

This was an important assertion Chicana Chicanos were indigenous to the Americas from the Americas, not immigrants or foreigners.

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00:38:26,978 --> 00:38:34,868

Hernandez's work reinforces this idea as we see a Chicana artist carving the Statue of Liberty into a Mayan sculpture,

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00:38:34,868 --> 00:38:46,738

a text below reading "Aztlán the Chicano homeland". In fact, immigration did not emerge as a frequent topic amongst Chicana artists until the 1990s,

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00:38:46,738 --> 00:38:57,148

in direct response to political events. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan declared amnesty for undocumented folks in the U.S.,

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00:38:57,148 --> 00:39:07,498

leading to the legalisation of 2.9 million people. This caused a wave of anti-immigrant fever across the nation.

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00:39:07,498 --> 00:39:14,398

UC Irvine anthropologist, Leo R. Chavez, documented increasing anxiety about Latin

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00:39:14,398 --> 00:39:22,028

immigration at the time and the emergence of what he called the "Latino threat narrative".

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00:39:22,028 --> 00:39:33,338

In California, Pete Wilson was twice elected governor, explicitly anti-immigrant platforms running the state from 1990 until 1998.

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00:39:33,338 --> 00:39:45,158

In 1994, California Prop 187, the so-called "Save Our State" proposition was passed, designed to prevent undocumented people from using public services.

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00:39:45,158 --> 00:39:52,658

By the way, this never went into effect because it was declared unconstitutional, but it was a very scary moment.

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00:39:52,658 --> 00:39:59,498

In 2004, Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington claimed in his book *Who Are We?*

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00:39:59,498 --> 00:40:09,598

*The Challenges to America's National Identity*, declared that Hispanics, his word, were unassimilable.

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00:40:09,598 --> 00:40:13,648

The theme of immigration would become increasingly more common in the work of

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00:40:13,648 --> 00:40:21,388

Chicanx and Latinx artists in the 90s and has today emerged as a major theme, so I'll show you some quick examples.

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00:40:21,388 --> 00:40:34,258

Something like Laura Aguilar, this early example from 1990 *Three Eagles Flying* [SEE IMAGE LIST], Central American installation artist and sculptor Beatriz Cortez.

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00:40:34,258 --> 00:40:49,368

This is Rafa Esparza, the Whitney Biennial in March 2017, his installation Figure/Ground: Beyond the White Field [SEE IMAGE LIST]; Queer undocumented artist Julio Salgado [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:40:49,368 --> 00:40:54,348

Salvadoran born performance artist, video artist and sculptor Guadalupe Maravilla.

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00:40:54,348 --> 00:41:00,708

His Illegal Alien Performance: Rio Grande Border Crossing in Ruidoso, Texas, in 2011.

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00:41:00,708 --> 00:41:08,348

In 2017 his more recent performance piece Volver! Volver! at the Bronx Museum.

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00:41:08,348 --> 00:41:18,548

Or Chicano artist Patrick Martinez, who was featured in this recent exhibition of Chicano art in Mexico City and

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00:41:18,548 --> 00:41:26,258

10 of these neon pieces were just acquired by the Whitney Museum of American Art [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:41:26,258 --> 00:41:28,838

So Sandy Rodriguez's installation,

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00:41:28,838 --> 00:41:37,838

You Will Not Be Forgotten is very much in tune with these other artists in general developments, in Chicana Art.

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00:41:37,838 --> 00:41:42,918

How do Rodriguez's portraits function within the context of Chicano portraiture?

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00:41:42,918 --> 00:41:49,748

So that's a second question, right? What can be gained by thinking about them in this lineage?

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00:41:49,748 --> 00:41:55,148

Well, Chicax and Latinx portraiture is not a well-studied topic.

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00:41:55,148 --> 00:41:59,378

As an art born from the civil rights struggles of the 60s and 70s,

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00:41:59,378 --> 00:42:06,398

portraiture was not a central concern of Chicano movement artists in the way that journalism or posters were.

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00:42:06,398 --> 00:42:11,258

Additionally, class issues complicated the status of portraiture.

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00:42:11,258 --> 00:42:15,458

There were fewer Mexican-American patrons to commission portraits.

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00:42:15,458 --> 00:42:22,748

Furthermore, many artists were engaged in the creation of types attempting to make Mexican-American people visible.

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00:42:22,748 --> 00:42:30,908

Not surprising, given the minorities position and underrepresentation of Mexican-Americans in the fine arts, the media and the public eye.

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00:42:30,908 --> 00:42:38,108

So I'm showing you examples of those. This Cesar Martinez La Fulana, the other woman; the Ignacio Gomez Zoot Suit -

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00:42:38,108 --> 00:42:45,158

really famous - and then Judith F. Baca, Las Tres Marías, which has a mirror in the centre [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:42:45,158 --> 00:42:52,828

So you actually stand in front of the piece and you see yourself reflected there.

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00:42:52,828 --> 00:42:57,388

The just published exhibition catalogue for the Smithsonian Show,

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00:42:57,388 --> 00:43:06,598

¡Printing the Revolution! presents new scholarship on the topic and what the show's curator, E. Carmen Ramos, described as "ideological portraiture".

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00:43:06,598 --> 00:43:09,598

So this is a term taken from [INAUDIBLE].

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00:43:09,598 --> 00:43:18,178

Ramos analyses the unusual trajectory of portraiture in Chicana Chicano art. A genre normally commissioned by wealthy elites,

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00:43:18,178 --> 00:43:24,328

Chicanx artists revamped portraiture to recognise important historical figures and activists.

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00:43:24,328 --> 00:43:28,048

As we see on the catalogues cover.

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00:43:28,048 --> 00:43:36,538

They move portraiture from the palace or mansion to the streets in the form of posters carried

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00:43:36,538 --> 00:43:42,838

in protests. By portraying civil rights icons or other important historical personages,

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00:43:42,838 --> 00:43:51,238

Chicanx artists, corrected the biased telling of history from which BIPOC were often excluded, as Ramos points out. By BIPOC,

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00:43:51,238 --> 00:44:03,958

I mean black, indigenous and people of colour. These include print portraits of people killed by the police. In 1975, Chicano artist, Amado M. Peña.

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00:44:03,958 --> 00:44:14,728

Peña created this work, *Aquellos que han muerto*, to commemorate a 12 year old boy killed by Dallas Texas police in 1973 [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:44:14,728 --> 00:44:18,898

This is an example that Ramos discusses. More recently,

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00:44:18,898 --> 00:44:24,448

the Artist Oree Originol, working in Oakland, California,

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00:44:24,448 --> 00:44:34,198

began the portrait series *Justice for Our Lives in Support of Black Lives Matter to Memorialise Lives Lost to police brutality* [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:44:34,198 --> 00:44:43,258

Created from photographs he receives from victims families, Oree creates digital prints made freely available online.

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00:44:43,258 --> 00:44:48,058

Similarly, the artist Jesus Barraza, also working in the Bay Area,

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00:44:48,058 --> 00:44:55,648

creates limited edition screen prints and digital prints that can be downloaded, printed and used at protests [SEE IMAGE LIST].

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00:44:55,648 --> 00:45:01,138

As Claudia E. Zapata points out in their essay *Chicanx Graphics in the Digital Age*,

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00:45:01,138 --> 00:45:03,958

Barraza's portraits reclaim and correct quote

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00:45:03,958 --> 00:45:15,328

"Negative media stories that often unsympathetically portray the victim as either threat or promote a justification for their killing" end quote.

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00:45:15,328 --> 00:45:21,538

Such portraits carried in the streets become part of the public ritual of commemoration and mourning,

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00:45:21,538 --> 00:45:25,708

but also serve as correctives to the biased mainstream news,

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00:45:25,708 --> 00:45:31,658

as Zapata reminds us.

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00:45:31,658 --> 00:45:41,258

Rodriguez's portraits, in *You Will Not Be Forgotten*, remind me of these portraits designed like hers to memorialise innocent victims.

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00:45:41,258 --> 00:45:47,678

Indeed, although their medium is different - natural ink and pigments on handcrafted amate paper -

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00:45:47,678 --> 00:45:54,098

Rodriguez's portraits and these poster portraits share similarities in their visual language.

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00:45:54,098 --> 00:46:00,008

Notice the graphic use of line to delineate facial features, the emphasis on face and eyes,

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00:46:00,008 --> 00:46:11,928

and the monumentality of the sitter all articulating the desire to not forget.

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00:46:11,928 --> 00:46:19,128

I would like to end today's paper by returning to the concept of radical hospitality with which I began today.

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00:46:19,128 --> 00:46:29,478

The concept comes from Derrida, based on a seminar convened in Paris in 1996 and publishes a dialogue between Derrida and Dufournelle.

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00:46:29,478 --> 00:46:39,168

The dialogue opposes the notion that hospitality should be conditional, but instead unconditional, even hyperbolic.

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00:46:39,168 --> 00:46:46,908

Derrida and his interlocutor tease out the tensions inherent to this utopian concept of unconditional hospitality.

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00:46:46,908 --> 00:46:56,568

They acknowledge that it exceeds civic discourse and political space as they currently exist. In the face of calls for unconditional hospitality,

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00:46:56,568 --> 00:47:02,868

citizens respond. What about the need to protect home, property and community?

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00:47:02,868 --> 00:47:09,708

The response, in 1993, of France's former prime minister Michel Brocard that quote "France could not receive

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00:47:09,708 --> 00:47:15,918

all the misery of the world" end quote, parallels responses in the U.S. As a result,

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00:47:15,918 --> 00:47:24,588

governments struggle to establish limits on hospitality in order to make it effective or to put it realistically into practise.

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00:47:24,588 --> 00:47:32,898

Such compromises lead to restrictions and conditions that transform hospitality into a contract,

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00:47:32,898 --> 00:47:45,738

"a policed pact" in Derrida's words, one involving rights, duties, borders, passports, doors and immigration laws all designed to limit and control.

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00:47:45,738 --> 00:47:56,388

In response to these real world concerns, Derrida calls for a pure and hyperbolic hospitality to create the best possible conditions,

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00:47:56,388 --> 00:48:01,308

the most just legislation, the least bad circumstances.

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00:48:01,308 --> 00:48:06,528

Quote "this is the double law of hospitality to calculate the risks, yes,

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00:48:06,528 --> 00:48:14,808

but without closing the door on the incalculable that is on the future and the foreigner" end quote, he offers.

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00:48:14,808 --> 00:48:21,768

This approach constitutes the unstable site of strategy and decision, a site quote "being searched for today,

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00:48:21,768 --> 00:48:28,968

for example, in debates on immigration" end quote the quest for the best conditions of hospitality,

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00:48:28,968 --> 00:48:35,538

the process of perfecting this, constitutes progress.

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00:48:35,538 --> 00:48:42,138

But why? Why Derrida into Chicanx studies?

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00:48:42,138 --> 00:48:48,258

Why not use Chicanx or indigenous, or Latinx theory, to answer my questions?

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00:48:48,258 --> 00:48:58,308

Derrida's use of the term foreigner in particular gives pause for folks trained in Chicanx studies because it obfuscates claims of indigeneity,

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00:48:58,308 --> 00:49:06,108

a topic I mentioned briefly in my truncated discussion of the history of representing migration and the Chicana. By using Derrida,

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00:49:06,108 --> 00:49:19,668

do I risk reinforcing a settler colonial framework? Perhaps. But I also accomplish two other goals that are really important to me.

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00:49:19,668 --> 00:49:26,208

First, I attempt to universalise the current crisis and place it in an international context,

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00:49:26,208 --> 00:49:31,248

as I suggest the centrality of Latinx art to real world issues.

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00:49:31,248 --> 00:49:34,188

Latinx art is not a regional subspecialty,

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00:49:34,188 --> 00:49:43,578

the latest trend or flash in the pan, but something of importance, at the centre of real political and artistic debates.

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00:49:43,578 --> 00:49:52,128

My second reason for using Derrida's theory of hospitality as a device here is to understand the importance of art.

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00:49:52,128 --> 00:50:03,428

What is the role of art and artists in this current context in the face of such human suffering?

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00:50:03,428 --> 00:50:07,478

As we've seen today, artists play a special role in this process,

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00:50:07,478 --> 00:50:16,958

particularly in mediating the tensions inherent to pure hospitality or hospitality as hyperbole. To welcome the other,

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00:50:16,958 --> 00:50:23,198



to paraphrase Derrida, we must know the other's name and the other's identity.

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00:50:23,198 --> 00:50:29,318

At the same time, though, we have to prevent this knowing from becoming an interrogation, a blacklist,

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00:50:29,318 --> 00:50:35,138

the Border Patrol. This is particularly poignant because the immigrant, the refugee,

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00:50:35,138 --> 00:50:40,958

the foreigner must ask for hospitality in a foreign language, in a language that is not their own,

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00:50:40,958 --> 00:50:47,958

described by Derrida as the first violence that an immigrant experience.

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00:50:47,958 --> 00:50:54,618

We've seen today in the work of Sandy Rodriguez and others, that artists can humanise this process of knowing, by

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00:50:54,618 --> 00:51:02,298

making the immigrant refugee or perceived foreigner known at the unstable site of strategy and decision. Portraiture,

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00:51:02,298 --> 00:51:10,998

in fact, by its very definition, has particular power in this context due to its ability to humanise the other.

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00:51:10,998 --> 00:51:16,398

We are predisposed, in fact, when beholding portraiture to do just this.

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00:51:16,398 --> 00:51:26,748

We are conditioned to approach portraiture with certain viewing practises at the ready, practises that centre our agency as viewers.

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00:51:26,748 --> 00:51:36,558

Rodriguez's seven portraits while depicting individual children also point to the structural and historical conditions that caused these tragedies.

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00:51:36,558 --> 00:51:41,358

Her references to the past in her materials, her technique,

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00:51:41,358 --> 00:51:46,248

the inclusion of ancient Mesoamerican indigenous imagery, reveal the particular power of

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00:51:46,248 --> 00:51:52,428

art to bring past and present together, to illuminate how the past conditions the present,

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00:51:52,428 --> 00:52:00,738

how the history of invasion, conquest and colonisation dating back to 1492, haunts us today.

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00:52:00,738 --> 00:52:05,448

Thus, her work is both retrospective and prospective,

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00:52:05,448 --> 00:52:11,148

to borrow terminology from Amir Eshel (?) and his discussion of Holocaust memorials.

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00:52:11,148 --> 00:52:18,768

She offers viewers the ability or choice to make these connexions on their own.

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00:52:18,768 --> 00:52:23,118

So, it's a strategy that's built into the arrangement of the installation over two rooms,

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00:52:23,118 --> 00:52:31,938

I would argue. This element of choice and considering the past has the potential to create for Eshel what he calls futurity,

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00:52:31,938 --> 00:52:37,458

what future will we choose?

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00:52:37,458 --> 00:52:48,688

Rodriguez's artwork is clear, though, in encoding hope for the future, as it is informed by the past. Hope in indigenous decolonising practises, be they

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00:52:48,688 --> 00:52:54,498

botanical, artistic or cultural. Hope in sacralising migrant children.

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00:52:54,498 --> 00:53:03,458

And hope that by making detention and deportation visible, we will be moved to offer radical hospitality.

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00:53:03,458 --> 00:53:14,078

It is, in other words, art's potential for hyperbole that offers hope, its ability to portray children as saints,

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00:53:14,078 --> 00:53:22,508

as gods, as cured by natural remedies and healers, as embodiments of centuries of indigenous wisdom.

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00:53:22,508 --> 00:53:40,152

Thank you.