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00:00:01,496 --> 00:00:05,936

[GIUSEPPE MARCOCCI]: Good afternoon, thank you. Welcome everyone.

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00:00:05,936 --> 00:00:15,686

I am Giuseppe Marcocci, and I teach early modern Iberian history here at the University of Oxford, and I am truly, truly pleased

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00:00:15,686 --> 00:00:25,646

and honoured to have been asked to chair the second lecture of the 2022 Terra lectures in American art,

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00:00:25,646 --> 00:00:36,476

whose general title is 'Decolonising Art History: Exist & Resist & Indigenize & Decolonize'. This year's

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00:00:36,476 --> 00:00:41,816

Terra Professor of American Art Dr. Charlene Villaseñor Black,

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00:00:41,816 --> 00:00:54,326

is a world leading scholar in the field of the art history of the early modern Iber-American world, as well as contemporary ChicanX visual art.

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00:00:54,326 --> 00:01:01,526

Charlene is professor of art history, and Chicano/Chicana studies at the University of California,

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00:01:01,526 --> 00:01:09,656

Los Angeles, where she is also associate director of the Chicano Studies Research Centre.

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00:01:09,656 --> 00:01:18,866

Charlene's presence here in Oxford as Terra professor of American art has been extraordinarily important for us this year because

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00:01:18,866 --> 00:01:29,636

it has been generative of conversations across research groups and disciplines that not always talk to each other as they should.

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00:01:29,636 --> 00:01:35,726

Such cross-disciplinary effort is at the centre of Charlene's scholarship.

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00:01:35,726 --> 00:01:45,326

It is therefore no surprise that her many books and publications are a constant source of inspiration for people working in different areas,

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00:01:45,326 --> 00:01:53,546

including early modern historians like myself. As perfectly demonstrated by her first acclaimed monograph,

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00:01:53,546 --> 00:02:03,056

*Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art in Gender in the Spanish Empire*, published by Princeton University Press in 2006.

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00:02:03,056 --> 00:02:09,026

The study of the transatlantic journey of art and images back and forth between the Americas and the

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00:02:09,026 --> 00:02:16,796

Iberian Peninsula during the 16th and 17th centuries occupies a prominent place in Charlene's research,

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00:02:16,796 --> 00:02:26,636

with special reference to Mexico and Spain. Charlene's work provides a powerful demonstration of the necessity to work across

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00:02:26,636 --> 00:02:33,116

the imaginary line between the new world and the old in the early modern period,

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00:02:33,116 --> 00:02:41,276

investigating depictions of sacraments, artistic censorship, the representation of the Virgin Mary and St Anne,

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00:02:41,276 --> 00:02:48,686

the way in which Charlene has approached visual culture in relation to colonial saints,

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00:02:48,686 --> 00:02:56,306

gender and race over the past two decades or so has been crucial to the emergence of the new field of research,

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00:02:56,306 --> 00:03:03,716

to which more and more historians of the 16th to 18th centuries refer to as the Iberian word.

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00:03:03,716 --> 00:03:09,176

Charlene's recent articles on art pieces crafted with a technique called 'enconchado',

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00:03:09,176 --> 00:03:18,536

which involved inlaying iridescent shell into paintings produced in Mexico through the appropriation of ornamentation from East Asian works,

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00:03:18,536 --> 00:03:25,166

are fundamental contributions to thriving scholarship that focuses on the global circulation of objects,

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00:03:25,166 --> 00:03:31,166

materialities, styles and iconographies across the pre-modern world.

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00:03:31,166 --> 00:03:39,176

But where I see Charlene's scholarship has been particularly inspirational for historians is in her ability to work and think

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00:03:39,176 --> 00:03:48,866

diachronically. Her engagement with the rescue of early modern models and icons by contemporary Mexican American artists,

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00:03:48,866 --> 00:03:59,666

thus forcing us to consider the deeper implications of that relationship between the present and the past, which historians often invoke,

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00:03:59,666 --> 00:04:06,656

but unlike art historians, rarely analyse in detail. Charlene's approach to Sor Juana

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00:04:06,656 --> 00:04:14,546

Ines de la Cruz, a Hieronymite nun who lived in Mexico City during the second half of the 17th century and

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00:04:14,546 --> 00:04:20,336

is unanimously regarded as one of the most important writers and poets in the Hispanic

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00:04:20,336 --> 00:04:28,676

Baroque, is a superb example of the way in which she understands the relationship between the present and the past.

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00:04:28,676 --> 00:04:37,256

As we are going to see in today's lecture, which is titled "Collapsing Time, with Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz"

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00:04:37,256 --> 00:04:45,896

Without further ado, I now hand over to Charlene, but not without first asking you to join me in giving her a warm welcome.

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00:04:45,896 --> 00:05:07,526

Thank you! [CHARLENE VILLASEÑOR BLACK]: Thank you so much, Giuseppe, for that incredibly generous introduction, and I've enjoyed so much being in the Iberian History seminar,

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00:05:07,526 --> 00:05:11,746

I want to thank the other convenors professors Glyn Redworth, and Cecilia Tarruell,

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00:05:11,746 --> 00:05:16,346

it's been just one of my favourite things to do this year in Oxford.

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00:05:16,346 --> 00:05:21,226

And also like to thank the History of Art department and chair Geoffrey Batchen, of course,

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00:05:21,226 --> 00:05:27,256

the Terra Foundation, Worcester College and the artists who've entrusted me to speak about their work today.

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00:05:27,256 --> 00:05:31,906

The artist Alma López, who I understand, is on the livestream today.

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00:05:31,906 --> 00:05:48,766

So let me get started. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is the most famous nun in the Spanish speaking world: the subject of a telenovela in the 1980s,

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00:05:48,766 --> 00:05:54,736

A racy movie by María Luisa Bemberg, in 1990. A novel by Alicia Gaspar de Alba,

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00:05:54,736 --> 00:06:04,576

published in 1999. A new movie in the works, starring [INAUDIBLE] the Mexican movie star that I hear is coming up this year.

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00:06:04,576 --> 00:06:09,886

An opera that premiered in 2019 at UCLA by Carla Lucero.

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00:06:09,886 --> 00:06:19,606

A 2019 series of photographs by Chicano artist Alma Lopez. A Netflix series filmed in 2015-16,

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00:06:19,606 --> 00:06:31,396

and the face of the Mexico 200 peso note since 1994 and the new 100 peso note since 2020.

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00:06:31,396 --> 00:06:37,306

Her most famous poem, known by everyone in the Spanish speaking world, *Hombres necios*,

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00:06:37,306 --> 00:06:40,846

and I'm guessing there are people in the audience who probably had to memorise this

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00:06:40,846 --> 00:06:46,366

at one point : "Hombres necios que acusáis, a la mujer sin razón, sin ver que sois la ocasión, de lo mismo que culpáis"

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00:06:46,366 --> 00:06:53,746

and then my translation there.

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00:06:53,746 --> 00:06:57,376

These various images of Sor Juana who lived from 1648,

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00:06:57,376 --> 00:07:03,166

to 1695, Mexican nun and literary genius, are all based on a posthumous

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00:07:03,166 --> 00:07:10,516

portrait of her painted in 1750 by renowned Mexican colonial master Miguel Cabrera.

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00:07:10,516 --> 00:07:17,026

Today I examine this particular portrait of Mexico's 10th muse in trans-historical perspective.

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00:07:17,026 --> 00:07:22,096

In doing so, I depart today from narrow definitions of American art,

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00:07:22,096 --> 00:07:31,846

expanding our lens hemispherically to demonstrate the deep connexions between art created in colonial Mexico and that in the United States.

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00:07:31,846 --> 00:07:43,366

I also depart chronologically from my last talk on contemporary art to dwell in the 17th and 18th centuries before then moving into the 20th and 21st.

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00:07:43,366 --> 00:07:48,496



The portrait in question was painted fifty years after Sor Juana's death in an

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00:07:48,496 --> 00:07:55,366

epidemic in Mexico City and 55 years after she abdicated her life as a scholar,

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00:07:55,366 --> 00:08:02,566

seemingly forced to do so by the Catholic Church, according to most interpreters of her life,

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00:08:02,566 --> 00:08:07,156

My close reading of the portrait in dialogue with other portrayals of her

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00:08:07,156 --> 00:08:12,286

analogous depictions of scholars and nuns and in concert with her own writings,

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00:08:12,286 --> 00:08:19,296

demonstrates that Cabrera's image is unique amongst portrayals of the sitter.

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00:08:19,296 --> 00:08:24,966

Further, I suggest that it was intended as a painted vindication of Sor Juana,

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00:08:24,966 --> 00:08:32,566

one that visualises the dangers of intellectual desire for women of the time.

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00:08:32,566 --> 00:08:44,386

Then I place this colonial image in conversation with contemporary portrayals by Chicana or Mexican-American women artists.

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00:08:44,386 --> 00:08:50,896

What can depictions of Sor Juana, from the 18th century until today, reveal about the risks,

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00:08:50,896 --> 00:08:58,576

dangers and benefits of bringing together art history and Chicano/Chicana or ChicanX studies?

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00:08:58,576 --> 00:09:03,436

Can the tools of what is now being called ChicanX studies with an 'X' to upset the

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00:09:03,436 --> 00:09:10,786

gender binary and reference, indigenise and decolonise art history? And by ChicanX studies,

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00:09:10,786 --> 00:09:16,606

I'm referring here to the study of people of Mexican descent in the U.S. and elsewhere outside of Mexico,

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00:09:16,606 --> 00:09:22,306

people whose narratives and histories have been left out of the study of U.S. history, culture, in the arts.

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00:09:22,306 --> 00:09:26,956

So ChicanX studies are about 50 years old, born in the wake of the civil rights movement,

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00:09:26,956 --> 00:09:31,486

along with African-American studies, Native American studies, Asian American studies, etc...

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00:09:31,486 --> 00:09:40,016

And I think it's comparable here in the UK to critical race studies or theory.

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00:09:40,016 --> 00:09:43,226

So let us now turn to Cabrera's portrait.

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00:09:43,226 --> 00:09:53,606

It is large, approximately life-size signed and dated 1750 in the bottom left corner and currently in the Museo Nacional de Historia, in Mexico City.

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00:09:53,606 --> 00:10:00,296

In it Sor Juana sits regally at her writing table, surrounded by books, ink wells and plume pens.

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00:10:00,296 --> 00:10:07,826

60 books from her personal library said to have numbered 4000 volumes up here in the background.

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00:10:07,826 --> 00:10:14,066

She wears the habit of the Hieronymites, one of the wealthiest and most elite orders in the Spanish empire.

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00:10:14,066 --> 00:10:23,426

Her gaze is direct and assertive. Her arm confidently laid over an open book, her fingers about to turn the page.

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00:10:23,426 --> 00:10:29,396

We, the viewers, have interrupted her reading. Everything here -

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00:10:29,396 --> 00:10:39,336

Library setting, desk open book, writing accoutrement - attests to Sor Juana's status as an intellectual.

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00:10:39,336 --> 00:10:46,056

She was also a famous writer, a literary celebrity, the premier poet of the Hispanic late Baroque.

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00:10:46,056 --> 00:10:52,086

Her work considered the pinnacle of what literature specialists still refer to as the Spanish Golden Age.

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00:10:52,086 --> 00:11:00,006

That is the early modern period. Her most significant literary work is her *Primero Sueño*, 'The Dream',

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00:11:00,006 --> 00:11:07,836

a philosophical poem of nine hundred and seventy five verses written in 1692 about the human intellect.

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00:11:07,836 --> 00:11:12,666

In addition to verse, she also authored prose, plays and music.

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00:11:12,666 --> 00:11:18,996

Today, she is legendary due to the circumstances surrounding the final years of her life.

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00:11:18,996 --> 00:11:26,376

Her involvement in a conflict between the Bishop of Puebla and the new Archbishop of Mexico City.

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00:11:26,376 --> 00:11:36,846

The conflict culminated in 1690, when Sor Juana penned an attack upon the Portuguese Jesuit theologian Antonio Vieira.

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00:11:36,846 --> 00:11:45,546

And this is the *Carta atenagórica*, which I'm showing you on the left.

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00:11:45,546 --> 00:11:55,296

The letter, disguised as a brilliant theological critique, was a thinly veiled denunciation of the Archbishop of Mexico City.

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00:11:55,296 --> 00:12:02,406

This audacious letter, penned by a brazen nun, infuriated the archbishop,

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00:12:02,406 --> 00:12:09,606

and knowledge of it became public when the Bishop of Puebla published it without her permission.

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00:12:09,606 --> 00:12:14,706

Controversy over the letter swirled throughout Mexico City in the ensuing months.

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00:12:14,706 --> 00:12:20,556

Then the archbishops of Mexico City, Puebla and Sor Juana's own confessor,

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00:12:20,556 --> 00:12:27,066

took action against her, attempting to curtail her freedom to write and study.

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00:12:27,066 --> 00:12:34,266

It wasn't bad enough that Sor Juana had spent her life composing poetry, and participating in secular life,

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00:12:34,266 --> 00:12:44,166

but in the letter, she had dared to take up the topic of theology, the study of which had been traditionally denied to women in the church.

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00:12:44,166 --> 00:12:54,456

In response to their attempts to rein her in, Sor Juana dared to pen another letter, an extraordinary retort to her male critics.

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00:12:54,456 --> 00:13:01,486

So this was three months later in March 1691. Entitled *La Respuesta*, 'The Answer',

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00:13:01,486 --> 00:13:08,376

or 'The Response of the Poet', Sor Juana's retort defended a woman's right to be a scholar and a writer,

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00:13:08,376 --> 00:13:12,016

and you see that on the other side, it's available in English translation. It's short.

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00:13:12,016 --> 00:13:16,526

It's one of the most amazing things I've ever read.

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00:13:16,526 --> 00:13:23,336

Unfortunately, the story did not end here with 'The Response of the Poet'. Criticism of Sor Juana intensified,

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00:13:23,336 --> 00:13:33,236

and in 1694, she signed a document in her own blood with the words "I, the worst of all" or "I, the worst woman of all",

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00:13:33,236 --> 00:13:42,866

agreeing to renounce her studies and turning over her library to the Archbishop of Mexico City.

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00:13:42,866 --> 00:13:50,296

She died within months during an epidemic caring for her fellow nuns.

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00:13:50,296 --> 00:13:58,106

And I'm showing you her tomb, there, in her former convent.

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00:13:58,106 --> 00:14:06,566

Feminist scholars who believe that Sor Juana was censored and silenced by the male ecclesiastical hierarchy in New Spain. More recently, though,

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00:14:06,566 --> 00:14:15,746

sceptics have suggested a more nuanced view that Sor Juana willingly gave up her life as a writer, albeit under great pressure from the church.

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00:14:15,746 --> 00:14:26,266

I tend to support the first interpretation, but in any case, these differing explanations do not affect my view of her portraiture.

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00:14:26,266 --> 00:14:32,806

I do want to point out, though, that nothing is known as of yet of the circumstances of the paintings commission.

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00:14:32,806 --> 00:14:40,666

It entered the History Museum collection as part of a group of portraits of viceroys and high ranking churchmen in the 19th century.

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00:14:40,666 --> 00:14:47,176

Which leads me to believe it had a distinguished provenance and perhaps a high ranking patron.

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00:14:47,176 --> 00:14:55,036

According to its enigmatic, lengthy inscription seen at the bottom, which has not yet been fully deciphered,

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00:14:55,036 --> 00:15:04,456

the portrait is a copy of a 17th century original that formerly hung in Sor Juana's Convent of San Jerónimo in Mexico City.

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00:15:04,456 --> 00:15:08,926

Some have speculated that this may be a replica of a lost original self-portrait

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00:15:08,926 --> 00:15:16,446

supposedly by Sor Juana's own hand that she seems to refer to in one of her poems.

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00:15:16,446 --> 00:15:22,326

Most art historians, though, concur that Cabrera's painting was based on the earlier,

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00:15:22,326 --> 00:15:29,916

also famous portrayal by Juan de Miranda, executed in the late 17th or early 18th century [SEE LIST OF WORKS]

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00:15:29,916 --> 00:15:40,796

While there are some obvious similarities, if this was the model, Cabrera introduced notable changes.

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00:15:40,796 --> 00:15:50,576

So let's begin with the pictorial evidence. How did viewers at the time in the 18th century understand this portrait?

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00:15:50,576 --> 00:15:57,536

Those familiar with the history of Mexican art immediately recognised that when compared to other Mexican nun portraits,

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00:15:57,536 --> 00:16:04,186

Cabrera's painting stands out as unusual. Most images of nuns look like this [SEE LIST OF WORKS]

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00:16:04,186 --> 00:16:12,236

They're *Monjas Coronada* or 'Crowned Nuns' that represent the sitter richly costumed and wearing an elaborate floral crown.

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00:16:12,236 --> 00:16:17,766

Her last act of worldly vanity, before celebrating profession. Less frequently,

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00:16:17,766 --> 00:16:28,286

some portraits employ a simple and austere style to render the sitter with eyes closed, pictorialising the renunciation of the world.

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00:16:28,286 --> 00:16:34,826

In contrast, Cabrera's portrait of Juana is striking for its assertiveness and directness,

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00:16:34,826 --> 00:16:43,056

as well as its insistence upon her status as an intellectual.

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00:16:43,056 --> 00:16:47,566

Cabrera's portrait of Sor Juana is unique, but not without precedent.

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00:16:47,566 --> 00:16:55,426

Art historian and curator Marcus Burke of the Hispanic Society in New York has noted its general similarity to Prelate portraits.

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00:16:55,426 --> 00:17:06,606

And we see similarities, for example, to these 16th century frescoes in Actopan in Mexico that the artist probably could have seen. [SEE IMAGE LIST]

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00:17:06,606 --> 00:17:12,096

Were women ever depicted using this scholar, cleric compositional type?

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00:17:12,096 --> 00:17:20,166

In fact, two notable women: St Teresa of Ávila, the great 16th century Spanish mystic writer and reformer of the Discalced

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00:17:20,166 --> 00:17:25,856

Carmelite Order; as well as the Spanish religious writer visionary nun, Sor María de Agreda,

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00:17:25,856 --> 00:17:30,456

were also portrayed in a similar manner.

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00:17:30,456 --> 00:17:36,246

St Teresa, in fact, seems to have been the first female sitter depicted in this portrait type,

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00:17:36,246 --> 00:17:43,676

and thus images of her may have been a source for Cabrera's unusual image.

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00:17:43,676 --> 00:17:49,736

The correspondences between Cabrera's portrayal of Sor Juana and depictions of Saint Teresa are striking,

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00:17:49,736 --> 00:17:58,586

as we see in this comparison with a painting by Spanish artist, Francisco de Zurbarán, circa 1640.

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00:17:58,586 --> 00:18:05,606

Furthermore, Cabrera's intentionally archaic style closely mimics the baroque realism of the 17th century,

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00:18:05,606 --> 00:18:12,446

which makes sense since this was supposedly a copy of an earlier work.

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00:18:12,446 --> 00:18:16,406

These persuasive parallels, find confirmation in Sor Juana's writings,

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00:18:16,406 --> 00:18:24,956

and especially in her 'Response of the Poet' in which St. Theresa plays a central role as the author's spiritual and intellectual mother

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00:18:24,956 --> 00:18:33,896

- and that's the word she uses. In fact, today I argue that Sor Juana's response, which has been understood as a literary self-portrait,

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00:18:33,896 --> 00:18:38,726

is the key to understanding Miguel Cabrera's portrayal.

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00:18:38,726 --> 00:18:46,916

Sor Juana, who had briefly been a member of the reformed Discalced order, clearly look to St. Teresa for inspiration.

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00:18:46,916 --> 00:18:57,926

This isn't that surprising. Like Sor Juana, Teresa had been similarly criticised by the church for her writing and intellectual abilities, and indeed,

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00:18:57,926 --> 00:19:02,336

Sor Juana marshalled the example of Saint Teresa to defend herself from church

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00:19:02,336 --> 00:19:08,426

critics who said she should not write. One of her major defensive strategies.

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00:19:08,426 --> 00:19:16,616

in her response was to demonstrate that the church had a history of tolerating prominent women writers and scholars.

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00:19:16,616 --> 00:19:23,066

Furthermore, the example of Teresa, whom Sor Juana references four times in the answer, was made

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00:19:23,066 --> 00:19:28,316

more powerful because she had achieved renown as a writer during her lifetime.

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00:19:28,316 --> 00:19:36,756

That is, before her canonisation. By intentionally reusing a portrait type associated with Saint Teresa,

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00:19:36,756 --> 00:19:44,546

Cabrera's image demonstrates the artist's understanding of their analogous relationship.

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00:19:44,546 --> 00:19:52,436

There are some subtle differences, though, introduced by Cabrera. And these changes, I believe, were strategic.

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00:19:52,436 --> 00:20:00,986

Most notably, in contrast to Teresa, Sor Juana's fame as an author is downplayed.

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00:20:00,986 --> 00:20:09,266

In contrast, Zurbarán presents Saint Teresa in the act of writing. As she looks up to the dove of the Holy Spirit,

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00:20:09,266 --> 00:20:20,706

she prominently holds up her pen, making clear the divine inspiration of her writings.

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00:20:20,706 --> 00:20:31,236

Although Cabrera's portrait includes her inkwell and pens, it does not depict amongst the 60 books a single work by Sor Juana herself.

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00:20:31,236 --> 00:20:36,726

Nor is she shown in the act of writing. Why not?

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00:20:36,726 --> 00:20:44,616

After all, she was a renowned late baroque poet, famed throughout the Spanish empire. And other portraits,

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00:20:44,616 --> 00:20:49,456

most notably those by Juan de Miranda or this one by Mexican Andres de Islas [SEE IMAGE LIST]

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00:20:49,456 --> 00:20:57,816

from 1722, showcase the muse in the act of writing, as do other portraits of the sitter,

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00:20:57,816 --> 00:21:05,266

such as these two, so Nicolás Enríquez or this unknown artist. [SEE IMAGE LIST]

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00:21:05,266 --> 00:21:14,206

Does Cabrera's omission indicate his understanding of Sor Juana's conflict with the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy?

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00:21:14,206 --> 00:21:26,806

Has Cabrera represented the church's silencing of Sor Juana's pen? Seemingly so. Writing was, after all, the source of her conflict with the church,

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00:21:26,806 --> 00:21:34,036

and in the response, Sor Juana repeatedly asserts that she has neither the desire nor the talent to write,

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00:21:34,036 --> 00:21:42,346

which are standard claims in nuns writings, as you may know. For example, she insists at one point, "and truth to tell,"

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00:21:42,346 --> 00:21:48,046

"I have never written, save when pressed and forced and solely to give pleasure to others,"

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00:21:48,046 --> 00:21:52,276

"not only without taking satisfaction, but with downright aversion,"

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00:21:52,276 --> 00:22:02,296

"because I have never judged myself to possess the rich trove of learning and wit that is performe the obligation of one who writes."

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00:22:02,296 --> 00:22:10,636

Instead of drawing attention to her writing, Cabrera follows the response in presenting Sor Juana as a scholar.

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00:22:10,636 --> 00:22:17,026

She is depicted in the act of reading and is surrounded by books on theology, science, philosophy,



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00:22:17,026 --> 00:22:24,736

rhetoric and the arts, which have all been identified by a Mexican art historian, Francisco de la Raza (?).

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00:22:24,736 --> 00:22:29,446

This shift in emphasis mirrors the strategy of the response to downplay her

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00:22:29,446 --> 00:22:39,616

fame as a poet in order to focus on her right as a woman to a life of study.

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00:22:39,616 --> 00:22:42,886

A comparison with the depiction of Sor María de Agreda,

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00:22:42,886 --> 00:22:52,456

confirms the unique nature of Cabrera's portrait. Sor Juana marshals her example in 'The Response' as another female scholar tolerated by the church,

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00:22:52,456 --> 00:22:58,306

and this has been noted by scholars [INAUDIBLE] in 2009.

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00:22:58,306 --> 00:23:04,666

Images of her similarly employ the scholar cleric compositional format, but once again, Sor María de Agreda

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00:23:04,666 --> 00:23:09,946

is depicted as a famed writer pen held aloft,

186

00:23:09,946 --> 00:23:17,476

the author of 'A Controversial Life of the Virgin Mary' entitled *The Mystical City of God*, this was inspired by a series of visions.

187

00:23:17,476 --> 00:23:22,076

So, *La Mística Ciudad de Dios*

188

00:23:22,076 --> 00:23:30,206

While images of St. Theresa and Sor María, are clearly major inspirations for Cabrera's posthumous portrait of Sor Juana,

189

00:23:30,206 --> 00:23:36,386

the ultimate source of both of these, as well as all portraits of religious scholars and writers,

190

00:23:36,386 --> 00:23:43,286

is the image of St. Jerome in his study. The most learnt of the Latin doctors,

191

00:23:43,286 --> 00:23:50,936

the translator of the Bible and the patron of humanist learning, Saint Jerome, played a central role in Sor Juana's writings.

192

00:23:50,936 --> 00:23:56,966

Images of him in his study, which began to appear in the late Middle Ages, enjoyed a heyday in the Renaissance.

193

00:23:56,966 --> 00:24:00,986

So I'm showing you this, it is just one of my favourite ones by Jean van Eyck, it's in Detroit. [SEE IMAGE LIST]

194

00:24:00,986 --> 00:24:13,046

It's actually quite small. In fact, Sor Juana repeatedly refers to Jerome as her great father or describes herself as his daughter in her writings.

195

00:24:13,046 --> 00:24:19,856

And don't forget that she was a member of the Hieronymite order. Jerome too, had come under attack by the Catholic

196

00:24:19,856 --> 00:24:28,016

Church for his intellectual endeavours. In a vision inspired by his guilty love of classical literature,

197

00:24:28,016 --> 00:24:39,116

an angel accused Jerome of preferring Cicero to the Bible. In 'The Response', Sor Juana compared her difficulties with the church to those of St. Jerome.

198

00:24:39,116 --> 00:24:42,836

She wrote "For me, it has not been knowledge,"

199

00:24:42,836 --> 00:24:49,886

"but the desire to know that has cost me so dear that I might truly say, like my good father, Saint Jerome"

200

00:24:49,886 --> 00:24:54,476

"what efforts I spent on that task, what difficulties I had to face"

201

00:24:54,476 --> 00:25:02,306

"how often I despaired, how often I gave up. And then, in my eagerness to learn, began again"

202

00:25:02,306 --> 00:25:13,286

The analogy to Jerome is strengthened by the visual evidence of Cabrera's portrait, which, like its prototype,

203

00:25:13,286 --> 00:25:21,266

depicts its sitter in a study, intently reading, surrounded by books and the objects of scholarly life.

204

00:25:21,266 --> 00:25:30,506

In other words, Cabrera's portrait does not construct Sor Juana's identity as that of a famed poet, but as a learned scholar.

205

00:25:30,506 --> 00:25:40,226

Of the 60 books depicted, patristic texts by the church fathers are given a position of prominence in the centre of the painting.

206

00:25:40,226 --> 00:25:46,256

One volume, however, is missing: the writings of St. Jerome.

207

00:25:46,256 --> 00:25:56,736

And in fact, that is the volume that Sor Juana is reading, which I discovered when I used a ladder to climb up and get close up onto the painting.

208

00:25:56,736 --> 00:26:01,376

I was actually able to read the title of the fictive text.

209

00:26:01,376 --> 00:26:05,036

There, it's opened up on her desk.

210

00:26:05,036 --> 00:26:17,066

She's reading St. Jerome's commentary on Psalm, 50, on the great penitential Psalm, now numbered 51 in the Western Church: "Miserere

211

00:26:17,066 --> 00:26:21,866

"mei, Deus, Secundam magnam misericordiam tuam" - "have mercy on me,"

212

00:26:21,866 --> 00:26:26,186

"oh God, according to thy great mercy." So this is read every Ash Wednesday,

213

00:26:26,186 --> 00:26:39,436

the service that begins lent. Jerome's commentaries on the Psalms can be found in his *Breviarium in Psalmos*, written around 390-92. In them,

214

00:26:39,436 --> 00:26:45,286

Jerome singles out specific lines from each Psalm and elaborates on their meaning.

215

00:26:45,286 --> 00:26:52,186

The text begins with the penitential declaration and ends with a plea for forgiveness.

216

00:26:52,186 --> 00:27:02,446

It takes, as its topic, the acceptable sacrifice - a critique of hypocrites who practise religion without true morality.

217

00:27:02,446 --> 00:27:07,006

Is this a commentary on Sor Juana's persecutors?

218

00:27:07,006 --> 00:27:15,856

Has Sor Juana chosen Jerome's commentary on these verses of the Psalms, in order to defend her own verses? In 'The Response'

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00:27:15,856 --> 00:27:20,746

she does insist that Saint Jerome prays the verses of the Psalms and that similarly,

220

00:27:20,746 --> 00:27:27,076

many sacred books, including those by Ambrose, Thomas, Isidore and others were written in metre.

221

00:27:27,076 --> 00:27:35,396

Thus, the church should find no fault with her verses.

222

00:27:35,396 --> 00:27:43,016

That Sor Juana's reading Saint Jerome confirms the centrality of the Latin doctor for the construction of her scholarly identity,

223

00:27:43,016 --> 00:27:50,306

she also singles him out as a promoter of women's education. In the juridical style typical of her defence,

224

00:27:50,306 --> 00:27:54,836

she cites Jerome's various letters to female followers, several of them,

225

00:27:54,836 --> 00:28:02,396

and especially his letters to later Paula and Eustochium, address the importance of the education of women.

226

00:28:02,396 --> 00:28:10,796

Sor Juana argues that if Jerome were alive today, he would be an ardent supporter of the education of women, girls and especially nuns.

227

00:28:10,796 --> 00:28:21,376

I'm showing you this Dürer print here, just so you get a sense of the iconography that is very stable for these depictions. [SEE IMAGE LIST]

228

00:28:21,376 --> 00:28:21,856

Clearly,

229

00:28:21,856 --> 00:28:30,286

the figure of Saint Jerome was central to the construction of Sor Juana's intellectual identity and the image of the saint at work in his studies,

230

00:28:30,286 --> 00:28:37,246

surrounded by books, pens and ink well, must be acknowledged as the ultimate source of Sor Juana's portrait.

231

00:28:37,246 --> 00:28:44,086

Cabrera's image, however, is remarkable for its incredible amplification of the number of books.

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00:28:44,086 --> 00:28:50,026

Neither images of Jerome in his study nor other portraits of scholars or writers contains such an immense

233

00:28:50,026 --> 00:28:58,376

array. Books occupied a similar position of importance in Sor Juana's life and in her 'Response'.

234

00:28:58,376 --> 00:29:07,106

She reported that as a child, "read and read, studied and studied with only my books as teachers"

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00:29:07,106 --> 00:29:11,906

In another similar passage, she noted that "My only teacher was a mute book,"

236

00:29:11,906 --> 00:29:17,386



"my only school fellow, an unfeeling inkwell"

237

00:29:17,386 --> 00:29:27,226

She even found her female role models in books, including such eminent and scholarly women as St. Theresa St., Catherine, Deborah, Judith and others.

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00:29:27,226 --> 00:29:36,196

Finally, the insistent display of books attests to her claims that she is first and foremost a scholar and not a worldly poet,

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00:29:36,196 --> 00:29:51,036

an assertion central to her self-defence. She wrote "All that I have desired has been to study so as to become less ignorant."

240

00:29:51,036 --> 00:29:55,806

Because sort of one that came under attack primarily for daring to write about theology,

241

00:29:55,806 --> 00:30:05,676

comparisons with other images of eminent theologians are also revealing. Cabrera's portrait similar in many respects to depictions of these men,

242

00:30:05,676 --> 00:30:11,836

clearly situate Sor Juana within their lineage, as we can see in these representations of Saint Augustine.

243

00:30:11,836 --> 00:30:20,346

So this is an anonymous, late 15th century, woodcut. Her portrait claims that she is part of this genealogy,

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00:30:20,346 --> 00:30:24,576

a descendant of the most famous church fathers and theologians.

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00:30:24,576 --> 00:30:32,856

Her 'Response' with its numerous citations of their works, demonstrates that she did indeed envision herself heir to this tradition.

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00:30:32,856 --> 00:30:42,566

This was an audacious and dangerous claim on her part and one that ultimately may have led to her downfall.

247

00:30:42,566 --> 00:30:52,566

And so here's an example by Botticelli, and I'm just showing you so that you can see how stable the iconography is [SEE IMAGE LIST].

248

00:30:52,566 --> 00:31:00,906

Finally, Sor Juana's identity is further inflected by the prominent image of the Annunciation to the Virgin, worn at her throat,

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00:31:00,906 --> 00:31:11,676

this oval shaped painting is an *escudo*, part of the attire worn by the Hieronymite order, which usually depicts a nun's favourite devotional image.

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00:31:11,676 --> 00:31:20,016

The importance of Sor Juana's *escudo* in the painting is signalled by its size, so large as to compete with her face.

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00:31:20,016 --> 00:31:30,606

Her choice of the Annunciation is also quite unusual. My survey of nuns' portraits of the 17th and 18th centuries, indicates that the vast majority

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00:31:30,606 --> 00:31:38,346

of nuns were images of the Immaculate Conception - such as this [NO IMAGE] - or the Virgin of Guadalupe.

253

00:31:38,346 --> 00:31:46,896

In fact, I've only found two other *escudos* with the Annunciation. So what role did this theme play in Sor Juana's life?

254

00:31:46,896 --> 00:31:53,696

Does it provide additional commentary on her scholarly identity?

255

00:31:53,696 --> 00:32:00,326

Let me show you - because we know where her tomb is, her actual *escudo* has been recovered.

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00:32:00,326 --> 00:32:03,216

And this is what's left of it. It's tortoiseshell.

257

00:32:03,216 --> 00:32:15,446

It was painted on tortoiseshell. So I'm showing it to you because you'll see that Cabrera kind of exaggerated the size, somewhat made it more oval.

258

00:32:15,446 --> 00:32:23,486

The scene of the Annunciation depicts the Angel Gabriel's appearance to the Virgin Mary to announce that she will be the mother of God.

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00:32:23,486 --> 00:32:29,156

At this moment, the incarnation or the miraculous impregnation occurs. In the *escudo*,

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00:32:29,156 --> 00:32:35,366

Mary, like Sor Juana, appears at a desk reading. According to tradition,

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00:32:35,366 --> 00:32:41,066

she's reading the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah in the Book of Isaiah.

262

00:32:41,066 --> 00:32:48,146

The scene encodes important allusions to the significance of text, for at the moment of the incarnation,

263

00:32:48,146 --> 00:32:53,546

the word that is Christ became flesh and Mary's womb.

264

00:32:53,546 --> 00:33:01,286

The Annunciation scene can also be understood as referring to Mary not only as reader, but as author.

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00:33:01,286 --> 00:33:10,226

After this momentous event, Mary visited her cousin, Elizabeth, who was the first to recognise Mary's miraculous condition.

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00:33:10,226 --> 00:33:17,516

Mary's response to her cousin's recognition is recounted in the gospel of Luke, where Mary proclaims,

267

00:33:17,516 --> 00:33:23,186

"My soul doth magnify the lord in my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my saviour,"

268

00:33:23,186 --> 00:33:28,286

"because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid for behold from henceforth,"

269

00:33:28,286 --> 00:33:40,096

"all generations shall call me blessed." These are the celebrated words of the Magnificat, one of the oldest hymns in Christianity.

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00:33:40,096 --> 00:33:46,786

And in 'The Response of the Poet', Sor Juana defends her right to pen poetry by reporting that "Our Lady,"

271

00:33:46,786 --> 00:33:54,346

"the queen of knowledge with her blessed lips, intoned the canticle of the Magnificat"

272

00:33:54,346 --> 00:34:06,966

In other words, Mary wrote verse, just like Sor Juana - what more efficacious defence of a woman's right to poetry could be found.

273

00:34:06,966 --> 00:34:15,726

The *escudo*, encodes, I believe yet another layer of meaning. In her guise as the word bearer, Mary is an image of the Holy Mother Church,

274

00:34:15,726 --> 00:34:21,216

'La Santa Madre Iglesia', as Sor Juana repeatedly refers to it in her writings.

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00:34:21,216 --> 00:34:31,476

How could the Holy Mother church, embodied literally by the pregnant Virgin Mary, refuse her daughter, Sor Juana the right to a scholarly life?

276

00:34:31,476 --> 00:34:41,196

Sor Juana asks this very question of her detractors "for if she, with her most holy authority, does not forbid my writing"

277

00:34:41,196 --> 00:34:48,546

"why must others forbid it?" Her devotion to, and connection with Mary, is further emphasised by the

278

00:34:48,546 --> 00:34:58,836

fact that with one hand Sor Juana clutches her rosary as the other turns the pages of the text.

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00:34:58,836 --> 00:35:04,446

To conclude with this colonial image and move on to more contemporary ones, reading Cabrera's

280

00:35:04,446 --> 00:35:09,876

portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, in conjunction with the response of the poet,

281

00:35:09,876 --> 00:35:18,336

deepens our understanding of the image. Painted in 1750, 55 years after her death during an epidemic,

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00:35:18,336 --> 00:35:28,436

it is a pictorial vindication of Mexico's Phoenix: her tenth muse. That the image is intended to exonerate Sor Juana is indicated by

283

00:35:28,436 --> 00:35:35,166

Cabrera's prominent placement of the clock. In the allegorical language of her time,

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00:35:35,166 --> 00:35:44,126

the clock reminds the viewer that time unveils truth and reveals innocence.

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00:35:44,126 --> 00:35:51,286

I focussed today on Cabrera's portrait, but I've shown you nearly all the rest of the extistant early, modern and colonial portrayals of Sor Juana.

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00:35:51,286 --> 00:36:02,216

All were portraits, and they characterised her as Mexico's famed poet, with the exception of Cabrera, who emphasised her life as a scholar.

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00:36:02,216 --> 00:36:12,566

Her iconic image emerges again in Mexican art with the advent of the mural renaissance in the 1920s in public murals and sculptures.

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00:36:12,566 --> 00:36:17,336

And I present now rather quickly a handful of Mexican examples as a starting point for

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00:36:17,336 --> 00:36:24,446

my discussion of Chicano or Mexican-American women artists revitalisation of Sor Juana.

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00:36:24,446 --> 00:36:34,736

In this mural from 1947 by Diego Rivera, *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda Park*, Sor Juana can be seen on the left in the middle [SEE IMAGE LIST]

291

00:36:34,736 --> 00:36:41,426

ground between a grotesque caricature of the Spanish king and a chilling scene of the Inquisition.

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00:36:41,426 --> 00:36:49,466

A reference to Colonial Mexico's grisly history, but also to Sor Juana's final conflict with the Catholic Church.

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00:36:49,466 --> 00:37:01,086

So I'm going to show you she's right there. I detect a certain ambivalence about her here and in other artworks of the era.



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00:37:01,086 --> 00:37:02,856

A great writer, an intellectual,

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00:37:02,856 --> 00:37:12,426

she also brings to mind the Catholic Church and the abuses of colonial power that led to independence in 1821 and later the revolution of 1910.

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00:37:12,426 --> 00:37:15,546

Placed by Rivera on the side and in the middle ground,

297

00:37:15,546 --> 00:37:27,366

she is subordinated to the great political leaders depicted. A number of later 20th century artists in Mexico created easel paintings of the nun.

298

00:37:27,366 --> 00:37:32,826

These artists tend to focus on her final conflict with the Catholic Church and her internal

299

00:37:32,826 --> 00:37:39,546

conflict between societal expectations of her as a woman and her intellectual desires.

300

00:37:39,546 --> 00:37:48,396

Alfredo Castañeda's 1979 image, entitled *Sor Juana's Dream*, references her most important literary work, the *Primero Sueño*, [SEE IMAGE LIST]

301

00:37:48,396 --> 00:37:57,606

published in 1692 about the journey of the human soul during the course of the night. Employing a hyper realist style, Castañeda's

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00:37:57,606 --> 00:38:06,126

haunting painting also references dreams more generally a major concern amongst surrealist artists.

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00:38:06,126 --> 00:38:13,956

We see Sor Juana's head, lying on its side separated from her body, its horizontal placement intended to evoke sleep.

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00:38:13,956 --> 00:38:21,096

Perhaps. Her uncanny eyes, open, look upward.

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00:38:21,096 --> 00:38:27,216

A plume pen, held in Sor Juana's right hand is poised to write on a blank page.

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00:38:27,216 --> 00:38:37,146

Castañeda portrays her intellect separated from her body, her mind freed from rules imposed on it because of her biological sex.

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00:38:37,146 --> 00:38:45,006

The corners of the image on the verge of dissolving of coming undone, call attention to the constructedness of the image.

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00:38:45,006 --> 00:38:57,606

The painting is illogical like a dream. Surprisingly, though, Sor Juana's image is not very visible in 20th century Mexican fine arts.

309

00:38:57,606 --> 00:39:06,036

Many of the paintings depicting her are small in size, and most of them are in private collections not accessible to the public in museums.

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00:39:06,036 --> 00:39:09,996

An assessment I make based on the work of [INAUDIBLE],

311

00:39:09,996 --> 00:39:19,506

whose 1995 publication catalogued 300 of these available works up into the 20th century.

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00:39:19,506 --> 00:39:26,256

Her association with the Catholic Church and her status as an intellectual limits her popular appeal,

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00:39:26,256 --> 00:39:36,716

perhaps, although she is very visible on the Mexican 100 peso or 200 peso note, as I mentioned at the beginning.

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00:39:36,716 --> 00:39:43,946

By contrast, in the US sort, Sor Juana is becoming a major icon in Chicana art, an emblem of Chicana feminism,

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00:39:43,946 --> 00:39:49,256

a formother in the words of the Tey Diana Rebolledo and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, author of the

316

00:39:49,256 --> 00:39:54,776

novel on Sor Juana that I mentioned earlier and a major Chicana feminist scholar.

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00:39:54,776 --> 00:40:04,976

This interest seems to date to the 1980s and 90s. In 1990, María Luisa Bemberg directed an Argentine film dedicated to Sor Juana's life,

318

00:40:04,976 --> 00:40:08,756

“Yo, la peor de todas”, “I, the worst women of all”

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00:40:08,756 --> 00:40:21,596

It was based on the widely held biography of Sor Juana, by Octavio Paz, first published in Spanish in 1982 and translated into English in 1988.

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00:40:21,596 --> 00:40:29,846

In contrast to Paz, though, scholars increasingly began to elaborate and focus on Sor Juana's probable love affair

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00:40:29,846 --> 00:40:35,516

with the virreina, María Luisa Manrique de Lara, the Countess of Paredes,

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00:40:35,516 --> 00:40:40,346

whom Sor Juana nicknamed Lisi, and for whom she wrote a number of love poems.

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00:40:40,346 --> 00:40:54,296

So this the vice queen, I guess you would call it - the virreina - the wife of the Viceroy. Sor Juana became a lesbian icon.

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00:40:54,296 --> 00:41:00,266

Artists quickly responded to Sor Juana's increasing visibility.

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00:41:00,266 --> 00:41:04,916

One of the earliest and most moving artistic meditations on Sorana was that created by

326

00:41:04,916 --> 00:41:13,336

Amalia Mesa-Bains. In her 1994 installation *Venus Envy Chapter II : The Harem and Other Enclosures* [SEE IMAGE LIST]

327

00:41:13,336 --> 00:41:21,806

And this was at Williams College. The second zone of the installation, entitled *Sor Juana's Library*, recreated the writer's desk,

328

00:41:21,806 --> 00:41:30,026

complete with books and other scholarly accoutrements, as well as musical and scientific instruments and natural science specimens.

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00:41:30,026 --> 00:41:37,046

The installation also included a reading area where viewers could sit and peruse books and drawings.

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00:41:37,046 --> 00:41:42,116

The artist employed strategies familiar from her other alter installations, an art form that

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00:41:42,116 --> 00:41:47,426

combines contemporary installation practises with Chicana/Chicano vernacular practises,

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00:41:47,426 --> 00:41:55,496

drawn from home altars and *offrendas*, a definition provided by Jennifer A. González in her book *Subject to Display*. While

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00:41:55,496 --> 00:41:58,106

referencing Sor Juana as a historical figure,

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00:41:58,106 --> 00:42:07,466

Mesa-Bains made clear Sor Juana's relevance to contemporary Chicanas, by including newspaper articles about protests at Williams College,

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00:42:07,466 --> 00:42:14,066

organised by female students asking the college to hire a Latina professor.

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00:42:14,066 --> 00:42:21,056

Mesa-Bains juxtaposed video stills drawn from footage of these protests to a copy of a colonial portrait of the nun.

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00:42:21,056 --> 00:42:30,036

As Gonzalez has pointed out. The artist thus connected the struggles of Latina scholars to find acceptance in the academy

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00:42:30,036 --> 00:42:37,236

with Sor Juana's battle for acceptance as a female intellectual in the 17th century.

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00:42:37,236 --> 00:42:43,506

In attempting to recover and revalorise forgotten Mexican and Latina women from history, to give

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00:42:43,506 --> 00:42:50,436

them agency, to wrest them from Eurocentric hetero patriarchal models of scholarship and art making,

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00:42:50,436 --> 00:43:00,696

Mesa-Bains undertakes a decolonising project. And I understand this term decolonising is drawn from decolonial, as theorised in the Americas,

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00:43:00,696 --> 00:43:07,656

initially by [INAUDIBLE] in 1991 and later elaborated at Walter D. Mignolo and others.

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00:43:07,656 --> 00:43:12,966

It builds on important previous work by scholars of colour: Franz Fanon (?), Sylvia Winter,

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00:43:12,966 --> 00:43:20,346

Aimé Césaire (?). Decolonial approaches Contest coloniality or the coloniality of power.

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00:43:20,346 --> 00:43:28,926

The moment we are living in now, the legacy of the colonial era, that is modernity. Described by Mignolet as:

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00:43:28,926 --> 00:43:33,456

"The underlying logic of all western modern colonial imperialisms"

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00:43:33,456 --> 00:43:40,576

To quote Nelson Maldonado-Torres, another current important voice in the decolonising movement,

348

00:43:40,576 --> 00:43:51,516

"Decolonisation is more amply a project to undo the legacy of coloniality in every aspect of our existence, including in knowledge,"

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00:43:51,516 --> 00:44:00,546

"power and being" Decolonisation or the decolonial turn, is a response to Western colonialism,

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00:44:00,546 --> 00:44:10,706

coloniality "and its radical, long standing forms of systemic dehumanisation".

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00:44:10,706 --> 00:44:19,706

Such an approach challenges Eurocentrism and Eurocentric notions of Universality. It makes visible the history of power, as it performs,



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00:44:19,706 --> 00:44:29,936

what Mignolo has called, "Epistemic Disobedience". To commit Epistemic Disobedience, is to delink from the zero point epistemology,

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00:44:29,936 --> 00:44:38,336

defined by Colombian philosopher, Santiago Castro-Gómez in 2005, as the assumption of Europe as the model, and European knowledge,

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00:44:38,336 --> 00:44:46,586

as objective and true. Decolonial approaches also have a strong activist arm in indigenous rights movements.

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00:44:46,586 --> 00:44:53,256

In contrast to post colonialism, which primarily occurred in the academy.

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00:44:53,256 --> 00:44:55,446

Soon after this work by Amalia Mesa-Bains,

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00:44:55,446 --> 00:45:02,946

other Chicana artists produced more decolonising artworks, foregrounding the intersectionality of Chicana feminism,

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00:45:02,946 --> 00:45:10,296

an approach to feminism that recognises the overlapping oppressions facing Chicanas as both women and people of colour.

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00:45:10,296 --> 00:45:17,906

In fact, some artists and writers seem to portray Sor Juana as the perfect example of intersectionality.

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00:45:17,906 --> 00:45:23,726

So, for example, a decolonial intersectional approach can be seen and work by Alma Lopez,

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00:45:23,726 --> 00:45:36,456

the digital mural print *Las Four* from 1997, and a more recent print *La peor de todas*, 2013, from a series of the same name. [SEE IMAGE LIST]

362

00:45:36,456 --> 00:45:44,576

*Las Four* created for the community centre in Estrada Courts, in the Boyle Heights section

363

00:45:44,576 --> 00:45:49,946

of Los Angeles, features a casual scene of four young women seated on a step in the

364

00:45:49,946 --> 00:45:56,276

neighbourhood, one holding a young child, while their four mothers look on from above.

365

00:45:56,276 --> 00:46:05,606

Dolores Huerta (?), Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and Adelita, from the Mexican Revolution and indigenous rights activist, Rigoberta Menchú.

366

00:46:05,606 --> 00:46:11,816

You can see them. Dolores Huerta, Sor Juana - you can see them there.

367

00:46:11,816 --> 00:46:18,236

A ghostly image of the Aztec moon goddess, Coyolxauhqui, rises above.

368

00:46:18,236 --> 00:46:24,186

There it is. Coyolxauhqui was the sister of the Aztec War God,

369

00:46:24,186 --> 00:46:33,666

Huitzilopochtli, both the children of the Earth deity, Coatlicue, or 'Serpent Skirt'. When Coyolxauhqui discovered that their mother was pregnant,

370

00:46:33,666 --> 00:46:43,626

she led her brothers in an attack on her, for dishonouring them. At this moment, Huitzilopochtli was born from Coatlicue, fully grown and armed.

371

00:46:43,626 --> 00:46:52,266

He beheaded and dismembered his sister, Coyolxauhqui, throwing her body down Serpent Mountain, Coatepec.

372

00:46:52,266 --> 00:46:55,746

We see the aftermath rendered here in this Aztec sculpture,

373

00:46:55,746 --> 00:47:03,576

rediscovered in 1978 by electrical workers in Mexico City and originally created in the late 15th century,

374

00:47:03,576 --> 00:47:08,166

so you can see she's been decapitated and completely dismembered.

375

00:47:08,166 --> 00:47:14,466

This is an enormous, enormous sculpture like the size of the stage.

376

00:47:14,466 --> 00:47:18,696

This story has been interpreted by Chicana lesbian theorists, such as Alicia Gaspar de Alba,

377

00:47:18,696 --> 00:47:29,616

as Coyolxauhqui rising up against patriarchy, in which they refigure the goddess as an anti-war activist and feminist icon.

378

00:47:29,616 --> 00:47:35,706

And that is how we should understand it in the hands of Chicana lesbian artists such as Alma López.

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00:47:35,706 --> 00:47:44,046

Thus, the pairing of the four heroines above creates a revolutionary genealogy for Chicana women, descended from the Goddess Coyolxauhqui,

380

00:47:44,046 --> 00:47:58,566

feminist icon and war protester. Lopez gave her later print of 2013 a similar political reading.

381

00:47:58,566 --> 00:48:08,136

In it, we see two figures: Sor Juana, after Juan de Miranda's portrait, on the left, and a revolutionary Chicana or Mexicana, on the right,

382

00:48:08,136 --> 00:48:12,666

proudly wearing bandoliers, a reference to the Mexican Revolution,

383

00:48:12,666 --> 00:48:16,506

but now, with roses replacing bullets.

384

00:48:16,506 --> 00:48:28,146

The ghostly Coyolxāuhqui, floats above. The figures in the print are again posed to suggest a visual connexion between them.

385

00:48:28,146 --> 00:48:31,626

Both hold outsized plume pens in their hands.

386

00:48:31,626 --> 00:48:39,126

The revolutionary stripping ink to form the bloody words at the bottom: "La peor de todas" – "I, the worst woman of all"

387

00:48:39,126 --> 00:48:45,696

A reference to Sor Juana's signature in blood on the 1694 penitential letter,

388

00:48:45,696 --> 00:48:51,996

Lopez's image suggests a continuity between the work of Sor Juana and the revolutionary with her dripping pen.

389

00:48:51,996 --> 00:48:59,016

Indeed, a continuity with the ancient Mesoamerican goddess Coyolxāuhqui, figured in the background, theorised by

390

00:48:59,016 --> 00:49:09,166

Alicia Gaspar de Alba, as not only an anti-war goddess, but as a rebel with a cause which was part of the title of her 2014 book.

391

00:49:09,166 --> 00:49:19,036

Both works by López appear as palimpsests, in which López keeps past and present at play, bringing to visibility historical echoes.

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00:49:19,036 --> 00:49:25,816

Both embody what Argentine theorist Néstor García Canclini called "multi temporal heterogeneity",

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00:49:25,816 --> 00:49:34,696

a trait characteristic of postmodern Latin America, where ancient, colonial, modern and postmodern worlds and practises coexist.

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00:49:34,696 --> 00:49:44,296

In contrast to Western Europe, modernisation "did not replace the traditional or the ancient in the Americas". Multi temporality also

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00:49:44,296 --> 00:49:51,316

characterises the work of LatinX artists, such as López and others, who are clearly engaged in historicizing projects,

396

00:49:51,316 --> 00:50:01,006

yet also positioned on the forefront of the latest aesthetic and cultural debates. López's artistic production takes history seriously,

397

00:50:01,006 --> 00:50:11,986

questioning its discursive formation and arguing for the importance of the relationship between our past and our present.

398

00:50:11,986 --> 00:50:19,486

Similar strategies can be seen in a work dated 1999 by Yreina D. Cervántez, *Mujer de Mucha Enagua, PA' TI XICANA* [SEE IMAGE LIST]

399

00:50:19,486 --> 00:50:27,226

A serigraph created at self-help graphics in East Los Angeles.

400

00:50:27,226 --> 00:50:32,356

As the title reveals, the artist dedicated this print to other Chicanas or Mexican-American women,

401

00:50:32,356 --> 00:50:38,206

so that's the second half of the title *Pa-Ti, Xicana*, 'for you, Chicana'.

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00:50:38,206 --> 00:50:45,076

The artist has explained the first half of the title in an interview with Lara Medina of 2005.

403

00:50:45,076 --> 00:50:54,106

*Mujer de Mucha Enagua* means a 'woman with lots of petticoats'. A woman of strength, courage and integrity, according to Cervantez.

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00:50:54,106 --> 00:51:02,446

In her print, we see two major figures: Sor Juana, on the left, and a Zapatista, based on their female leader,

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00:51:02,446 --> 00:51:07,186

Comandanta Ramona, on the left, two children in tow.

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00:51:07,186 --> 00:51:10,996

The Zapatistas are the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional,

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00:51:10,996 --> 00:51:19,366

the EZLN - Zapatista army of national liberation - holds power throughout much of the southern Mexican state of Chiapas.

408

00:51:19,366 --> 00:51:24,226

They have been in conflict with the Mexican government since 1994.

409

00:51:24,226 --> 00:51:33,856



Named after Emiliano Zapata, one of the indigenous leaders of the Mexican Revolution, EZLN is made up of predominantly indigenous Maya peoples.

410

00:51:33,856 --> 00:51:40,036

It was formed in protest NAFTA of, the North American Free Trade Amendment Agreement of 1994.

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00:51:40,036 --> 00:51:49,696

It's also, I would say, more generally sort of anti liberal and pro indigenous rights. In the centre,

412

00:51:49,696 --> 00:51:58,996

a large hand, the hand of the goddess, according to Cervantez, is rises up decorated with a spiral form representing timelessness in a Mayan

413

00:51:58,996 --> 00:52:05,206

phrase: *mixic' balamil*, that reads 'the navel of the universe'.

414

00:52:05,206 --> 00:52:10,126

Below it, an Aztec toponym, represents the mountain of Cihuacōātl (?),

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00:52:10,126 --> 00:52:17,086

the Snake Woman. Speech scrolls - so here and there -

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00:52:17,086 --> 00:52:21,286

issue from the mouths of both the revolutionary and Sor Juana.

417

00:52:21,286 --> 00:52:31,366

Their parallel symmetric placement suggesting visual equivalence between the two. Sor Juana's struggle is that of the Zapatistas and vice versa.

418

00:52:31,366 --> 00:52:37,516

Sor Juana's nun's Badge, which normally portrays the Annunciation to the Virgin,

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00:52:37,516 --> 00:52:45,586

has been transformed here by Cervantez, into a portrait of Rosario Castellanos, a Mexican poet from Chiapas.

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00:52:45,586 --> 00:52:50,266

Text from a poem by her is inscribed on Sor Juana's figure.

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00:52:50,266 --> 00:53:02,846

Thus, Sor Juana's struggles as a female intellectual in colonial Mexico are explicitly linked to 20th century Mexican women's political struggles.

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00:53:02,846 --> 00:53:12,746

Allow me a few concluding thoughts. I believe that Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz is poised to become a major figure amongst Chicana Chicano artists,

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00:53:12,746 --> 00:53:20,096

much like depictions of the Adelita (?), the Virgin of Guadalupe or Frida Kahlo. Given a decolonial reading,

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00:53:20,096 --> 00:53:24,656

she has the potential to become a major activist emblem.

425

00:53:24,656 --> 00:53:32,066

Her figure argues for women's rights to be intellectuals and as conceptualised by Chicana artists and writers,

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00:53:32,066 --> 00:53:39,056

she is seen as a proto feminist, an early figure in a proud revolutionary lineage of women with *Mucha Enagua*,

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00:53:39,056 --> 00:53:47,276

'a lot of petticoats'. Although Sor Juana wrote in Nahuatl, she probably was not indigenous herself.

428

00:53:47,276 --> 00:53:53,426

She was born out of wedlock to a Creole mother, in San Miguel Nepantla, outside of Mexico City.

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00:53:53,426 --> 00:54:02,006

Nevertheless, Chicana artists have recast her as a defender of indigenous rights today.

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00:54:02,006 --> 00:54:06,536

I have much to learn from these contemporary artists and their images.

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00:54:06,536 --> 00:54:14,156

Initially trained in early modern and colonial art history, I am inspired by their decolonising intersectional approaches,

432

00:54:14,156 --> 00:54:19,436

which I consciously appropriate in my art historical scholarship.

433

00:54:19,436 --> 00:54:26,246

So to return to an earlier question: can ChicanX studies decolonise art history?

434

00:54:26,246 --> 00:54:35,636

My answer is yes, which I tried to demonstrate today. Inspired by Walter Dignolo's concept of epistemic disobedience,

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00:54:35,636 --> 00:54:46,566

today, I questioned authority. I questioned received wisdom and the very boundaries, temporal and geographic of the discipline of art history.

436

00:54:46,566 --> 00:54:55,006

Thinking about Sor Juana as a Chicana enabled me to reinterpret her colonial image in a new way.

437

00:54:55,006 --> 00:55:04,006

By doing so, I became attuned to the dangers of intellectual desire coded into Miguel Cabrera's 1750 portrait.

438

00:55:04,006 --> 00:55:24,669

Thank you. You very much for the.