

Resituating the Cultural Meanings of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*:

A Practice-Based Exploration of Diasporic Mexicanness

Marcela Montoya Ortega

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1930s *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, Mexican wrestling, has evolved as a manifestation of popular culture combining spectacle, sport, theatre and ritual. *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, an event based performance using the mask, connects and reconnects to myth, stories, and ritual that societies, in this case the Mexican, need in order to find meaning within daily events and the contradictions and questions that confront every individual. This research analyses the cultural meanings of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* from the point of view of a diasporic artist and contextualizes knowledge to determine artistic practice. Identity and the construction of identity are explored throughout this thesis.

The various aspects of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* such as the masks, the holds, the wrestlers themselves, and the performative nature of the spectacle, serve as referents to make connections to the artist's own culture and the idea of constructed Mexicanness. This study includes a number of practice-based inquiries that are the result of the analysis and reflection on *Lucha Libre* and diasporic Mexicanness. The study reveals the manner by which creative processes including thinking in materials enable the artist scholar to acquire knowledge and thematic understanding.

This thesis demonstrates how the traditional icons of the Mexican *luchador* and his mask acquire an even stronger iconic and symbolic value, emblematic of justice, outside the *Lucha Libre* ring. The study contributes to the field of cultural studies by adding to the understanding of the historical timeline of the development of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. A large body of original work developed from the investigations and analyses of the subjects and issues discussed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 1

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	v
List of Illustrations	viii

Introduction	1
Shattered Identity	14

Chapter 1

Part 1. Syncretism and Hybridity	26
1.1.1 Syncretism during the Acculturation Period	26
1.1.2 Lucha Libre as a Hybrid Form	29
1.1.3 The Mask as the Metaphoric Link between Past and Present	32
1.1.4 Aztec Tropes: Xipe Totec and Tzompantli	37
Part 2. Practice-Based Inquiries Through the Mask	39
1.2.1 Xipe Totec and Tzompantli	42
1.2.2 Blue Demon Jr.	47
1.2.3 Wall of Masks	50
1.2.4 Flower and Song	55
1.2.5 Black Mask, White Thoughts	65

Chapter 2

Part 1. Construction of Mexicanness	77
2.1.1 Construction of Mexicanness, Lucha Libre Mexicana and the Circus.	80

2.1.2 Maria Izquierdo and the Circus	98
Part 2a. Practice-Based Inquiries Echoes of La Maroma	101
2.2a.1 Angel of Liberty I and Angel of Liberty II	102
2.2a.2 Circo, Maroma y Teatro	104
2.2a.3 The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box	106
2.2a.4 Holds and Aerial Moves	109
Part 2b. Practice-Based Inquiries Contained Inside a Box	112
2.2b.1 Mythical Acrobatics	113
2.2b.2 Lucha Libre Seeds	114
2.2b.3 Buried	115
2.2b.4 Diaspora: Earth, Seeds and Blood	116
2.2b.5 Frankincense and Copal	116
Chapter 3	
Part 1. Lucha Libre Mexicana	129
3.1.1 The Act of Wrestling in Lucha Libre Mexicana	131
3.1.2 From the Ring to the Street—Emergence of Activist Groups in Lucha Libre Mexicana	140
3.1.3 Categories of Luchadores	144
3.1.4 Media, Fans and Collections	148
Part 2. Practice-Based Inquiries Hues of the Passions	157
3.2.1 Time for Justice	157
3.2.2 Strategy of Fear	161
3.2.3 Cassandro	163
3.2.4 Mythologies	166
3.2.5 Tortured	168

Conclusion	181
Ius Soli (Montoya-Turnill: 2011) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning	195
Appendix 1:	201
Biographies of Wrestlers and Other Lucha Libre Personalities	201
Interview with Blue Demon Jr.	205
Glossary	206
Bibliography	210
Volume 2	
Catalogue of work	1
DVD Photographs of work (2007-2014)	39
Appendix 2:	40
Documentation of Through the Mask Exhibition	41
DVD Through the Mask Exhibition 2011	47
Documentation of In Memory Of Exhibition	48
DVD In Memory Of Exhibition and Performance 2014	55

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Arts-Based Research Cycle	4
Fig. 2. Data sources and further methodology	5
Fig. 3. Trying to take off his mask!	7
Fig. 4. The action spills to the public	7
Fig. 5. Sangre Azteca and the public	8
Fig. 6. Detail of sherds of Shattered Identity	17
Fig. 7. Mascara Tecuani	28
Fig. 8. Xipe Totec clay sculpture	34
Fig. 9. The Blue Demon Mask	40
Fig. 10. The Mask of Xipe Totec	41
Fig. 11. Drawings of the Xipe Totec Mask	44
Fig. 12. Prototypes for Xipe Totec	45-46
Fig. 13. Prototypes for Tzompantli	46
Fig. 14. Inside the Wimbledon, U.K. studio	47
Fig. 15. Prototypes for Blue Demon Jr.	48
Fig. 16. Interview with Blue Demon Jr.	49
Fig. 17. Blue Demon Jr. Enters the Arena	49
Fig. 18. Wall of Masks in the London studio	52
Fig. 19. Solar and El Hijo de Solar in front of his wall of masks	54
Fig. 20. Drawings of Wall of Masks	55
Fig. 21. Sketches for Flower and Song	57
Fig. 22. Process of making the lambskin masks	58
Fig. 23. Sra. Luisa Gallardo	58
Fig. 24. Nine masks for Flower and Song being assembled	59
Fig. 25. Detail of Black Mask, White Thoughts	69
Fig. 26. The Olmec Wrestler	81
Fig. 27. Acrobat	82
Fig. 28. La Maroma spectacle in a “vecindad”, Nueva España 1805	83
Fig. 29. Drawings for Angel of Liberty I & II	102
Fig. 30. Prototype for Angel of Liberty I & II	103
Fig. 31. Drawings for The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box	108
Fig. 32. Sketches for painting The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box	109
Fig. 33. Detail for the painting The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box	109
Fig. 34. Sketchbook with drawings of a hold	110
Fig. 35. Drawings of a hold: El Zarape	110
Fig. 36. Prototypes of a hold	111
Fig. 37. Contained inside a box	113
Fig. 38. Torn piece of paper: Mythical Acrobatics	113
Fig. 39. Grandpa’s Secret Jewels	117
Fig. 40. Marcella’s Elegantes 12	118
Fig. 41. Contained inside boxes	119
Fig. 42. Panathenaic prize amphora	131
Fig. 43. Lucha Libre Mexicana London 2008	133
Fig. 44. Taking Magno’s Mask off	133
Fig. 45. El Hijo del Santo during his performance 2008	135
Fig. 46. El 5anto	141
Fig. 47. Icon of el 5anto	141

Fig. 48. Luchadores in London 2008	145
Fig. 49. Copies of luchadores masks sold outside the Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City	146
Fig. 50. Interview with Christian Cymet	151
Fig. 51. Interview with Orlando Jiménez	154
Fig. 52. Online poster looking for el 5anto	159
Fig. 53. Detail of Time for Justice	160
Fig. 54. Detail of Strategies of Fear	161
Fig. 55. Cassandro Assessing the Situation	164
Fig. 56. Sketches for Cassandro	164
Fig. 57. Prototypes for Cassandro	165
Fig. 58. Cayetano photographs Cassandro	165
Fig. 59. Detail of Mythologies	167
Fig. 60. Poster of Lucha Libre London	170
Fig. 61. Burning the tortured poster	171
Fig. 62. Detail of Angel of Liberty I	191
Fig. 63. Congreso Popular poster	192
Fig. 64. Ius Soli explorations	196

INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this project came by way of a market-bought mask of Blue Demon, a Mexican wrestler, which Sra. Lourdes Zamudio Ramírez, an employee of my father, had sent to my children in 2007. For me this mask was representative of Mexican cultural identity and the hiding and revelation of identity. I had lived and produced work outside my culture and had been distant for some time and this also became an opportunity to reconnect. Therefore, I looked for symbols of Mexicanness and decided that the mask of the Mexican wrestler and *Lucha Libre Mexicana* represented, for me, popular Mexican culture.

Lucha Libre Mexicana is a Mexican spectacle that combines elements from different sports: wrestling, judo, jujitsu, grappling, kickboxing and boxing, as Dan Madigan¹ (2007) explains, as well as merging elements of soap opera and dramatic storytelling, physical comedy, incredible athletics, suspense, and intrigue. The *luchadores* (Mexican wrestlers) wear their distinctive signature masks tied back to their heads unless they lose them in combat.

The link to the mask of the *Xipe Totec*² god and its ritual came shortly after. While living in London, study visits to the anthropological and ethnographic collections and archives of the Americas of the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas (AOA) and the Anthropology Library and Research Centre at the British Museum helped make further connections to my culture. The masks and figurines of *Xipe Totec* that are part of the collections of the British Museum in London were studied in 2008-2009. It was like looking at some of the Mexican wrestlers wearing their masks; in fact the similarity of these representations was extraordinary. The way the skin of the sacrificed victim is tied back to the priest's head through a kind of lace is uncannily similar to the way that most traditional masks of the Mexican wrestlers are tied back. The double effect of double face and skin with holes for eyes, nose and mouth is strikingly similar.

The more I read about and analysed the *Xipe Totec* ritual, the more I was convinced that there might be some sort of connection between the masks used in this ritual, the ritual itself, and the contemporary spectacle of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. I wanted to know if there was a direct link or if it was just a coincidence. The extent and nature of the link between the use of the mask in Pre-Hispanic rituals and the use of the mask in the spectacle of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* became a central subject of inquiry.

These became the five main themes: *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, the mask and link to Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican rituals, construction of Mexicanness, art practice as research, and my work as an artist of a diasporic community. This study attempts to analyse the cultural meanings of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and how, in turn, the analysis and knowledge influence the work I am producing as a diasporic artist. A number of pieces have been selected to illustrate my interpretation of the selected icons of Mexicanness. The work produced is described, reflected upon and linked to contextual theory throughout the study.

Objectives of this study are:

- To develop a body of research-led artwork based upon the investigations of the themes and issues discussed, reflecting the processes and heuristic³ significance of art practice as a way of learning and developing knowledge.
- To examine art practice as a means of research and inquiry by investigating the ways in which the combination of conceptual framework, strategy and methodology regarding artistic creation contribute to the development of knowledge, meaning and understanding.
- To investigate the characteristics of diaspora⁴ and of diasporic community and how these reflect and translate in the production of meaning in artistic practice.
- To research, record, and observe the ways in which the world of the *Luchador* has evolved since the 1930s to recent times and its cultural significance in Mexico.

- To discuss the perceived links between the contemporary wrestler and the Pre-Hispanic rituals and ceremonies of the cult of the god *Xipe Totec*.
- To analyse how the contemporary popular cultural phenomena of the Mexican wrestler has been understood in other societies and its influence.

Heuristics of Arts-Based Research (ABR):

This interdisciplinary research project aims to establish a link between history, context, performance and practice through my role as a fine artist. My intention is to inform, support, and guide my practice by learning, reading, analysing, and organizing ideas and concepts from the point of view of an artist, drawing upon the fields of history, anthropology, ethnography, theatre studies, cultural studies, and the fine arts. Therefore it has been necessary to thoroughly investigate the existing body of knowledge, key authors and artists in the relevant fields, including my own work. In this procedure of inquiry, the methodology and strategy are systematically viewed and elaborated upon. Amongst them are: critical analysis, reflection, addressing questions, problem solving, creative skills, mapping and organizing data, developing connections and associations, discernment and choice, the creation of new ideas and perceptions leading to new work, and theory building. There is knowledge in action (the making), knowledge on reflection (the critical experience) (Schön, 1983),⁵ and there is intuitive knowledge, all of which may be accompanied by an emotional response affecting the creation of the artwork. When facing obstacles or dead ends resilience is paramount. It is imperative to possess the ability to change direction, bounce back, and adapt to the unexpected.

From the beginning I started producing drawings and prototypes as a way of thinking and putting into a visual form the interpretation of what I was learning, seeing, experiencing, and feeling. The research was informing my practice and my practice was also informing my research. It has continued in this way, a two- way interactive process. At times when written work is not appropriate I turn to the production of

visual work, as if thinking through materials. The language is not written or verbal but visual and tactile. At other times there is a need to reflect and critique knowledge in a written form as a way of understanding. Increasing my knowledge through reading about a diversity of themes for this research has been of prime importance in the dialogue between research and practice.

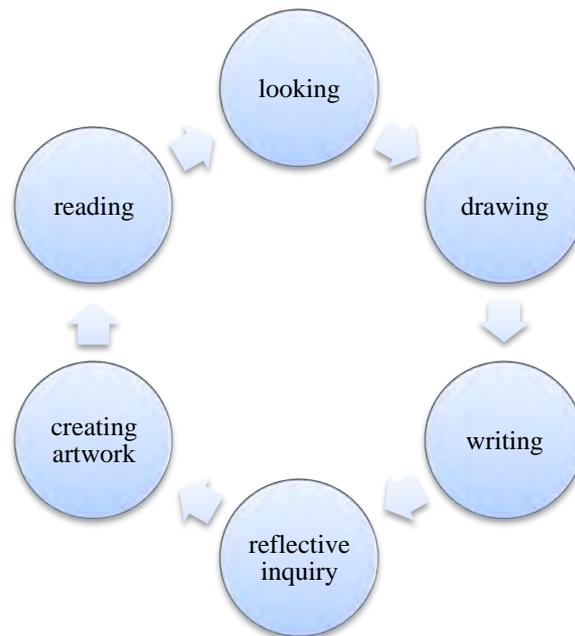


Fig. 1. Arts-Based Research Cycle: These six categories may interact in any way.⁶

Perhaps the most difficult task has been to combine in a coherent way what is most important and appropriate of the different disciplines, and apply this to my practice. Mind maps and diagrams have been important tools to organize considerable amounts of diverse information. By creating graphic and concise images of the various themes and knowledge, it has been easier to visualize, clarify, understand, select, summarize, and make connections between written work and practice.

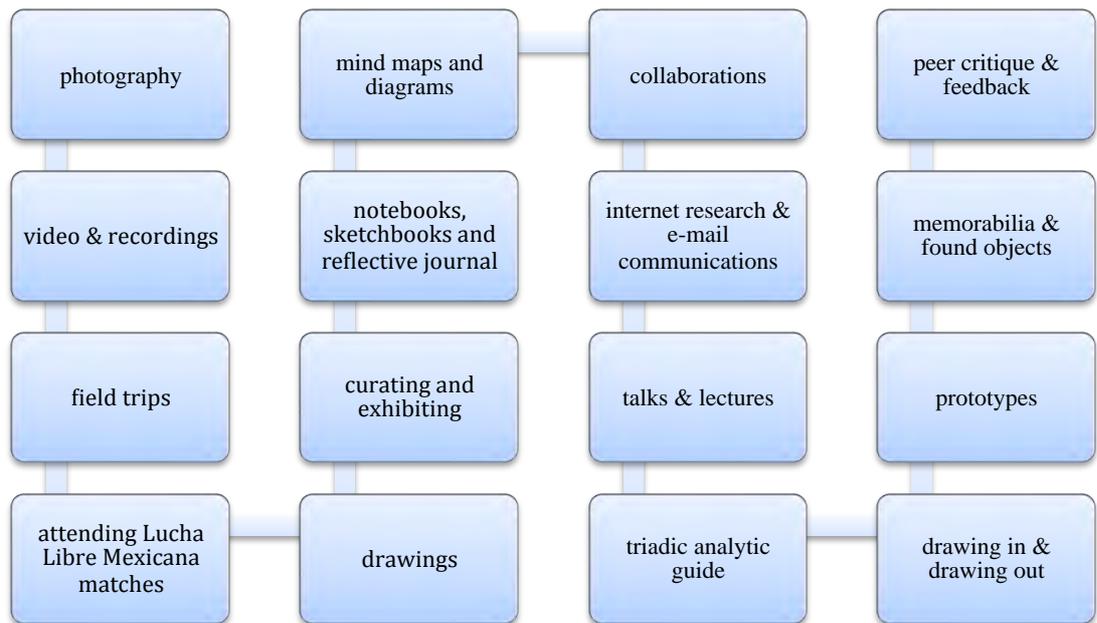


Fig. 2. Data sources and further methodology

The data sources and methods (Daichendt, 2012)⁷ chosen are fundamental in developing options and guiding the research. Drawing is unique in that it is fast and a sketch captures the idea or the concept of the theme quickly. More elaborate drawings and sketches help internalize the concepts and symbols start appearing. Other materials and supports are used in my practice as part of the visual language and the process of developing work. Prototypes help produce work quickly and visualize the final outcomes.

Photography and the recordings of interviews became useful tools early on because, when attending wrestling matches or doing interviews, there is interference and everything happens very quickly. These two methodologies help to capture these moments; one visually in the actions and the other orally in the conversations and language. Through them various aspects are revealed or are recalled to memory. Both the images and the transcripts can be scrutinized afterwards and can help find relationships between research and practice by aiding in the perception of the theme from another angle.

Lucha Libre Mexicana matches and wrestlers interviews:

As I attended *Lucha Libre* matches, and interviewed and came to know the wrestlers, I was always affected by the profound communion between the *luchadores* and their public. *Lucha Libre* defies many standards and no customary protocol of separation between performer and observer exists in this world of ritualized struggle and archetypal embodiment. In this world the avatar walks amongst the people and the people may lay their hands upon him.

This is especially noticeable in smaller arenas such as the provisional arena in the Naucalpan area in Mexico City, Mexico. The organisers constructed a small ring on an urban plot and had put metal coca-cola folding chairs around it and old paper programmes on the seats. The dressing area for the wrestlers was also a provisional area with a cloth curtain dividing the public from the wrestlers. Some people, known to the organisers, sold old *Lucha Libre* programmes at an improvised stall on the lawn and others were selling “tortas” and “refrescos” at a very reasonable price.

On one occasion I was travelling with the wrestler Sangre Azteca to this small arena in the Naucalpan area. He stopped his sports car two blocks away from the arena to put on his mask and as we approached the entrance there were two women waiting for him. They had come to greet him, wish him luck, and gave him a big bottle of water. In return he was very kind to them and accepted their good wishes and their gift. The audience consisted of working class families from the urban areas of Mexico, women, men, teenagers, children, and even some newly born babies with their mothers. In this arena people were nearer the wrestlers (both physically and emotionally) and they in turn responded actively to their shouts, abuse, and adulation. At one point one of the matches that had officially concluded continued in the grass and mud away from the ring with some members of the public taking part in the dispensing of punches. Another member of the public tried to remove one of the wrestlers mask while he was

prone on the ground.



Fig. 3. Trying to take off his mask! (2009). Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Lucha Libre is a popular spectacle belonging to the people and almost anything can happen. For Carlos Monsiváis,⁸

“It [*Lucha Libre*] is popular because form does not attempt to betray function (the style is the message); because the fans, in their metamorphosis, become Roman circus tribunal; because the pretence of the crowd ends up belonging to everyone and no one; because the clothes neither deceive nor persuade; because unexpected events trigger limitless joy; and because while some don’t like their idols hot, everyone likes them cool” (2006: 10).⁹



Fig. 4. The action spills over to the public. (2009) Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill.

In the Naucalpan match, despite the unforeseen punches and screams of abuse from the audience, there was a sense of almost worshipful respect for the wrestlers while, above all, a joyful sense of community prevailed. This paradoxical duality is at the heart of the spectacle of *Lucha Libre* and I wanted very much to explore the perceptions and powerful response of the audience to the wrestlers and the communion that exists

between them. For the public the wrestlers are much like mythical figures, archetypes from the collective unconscious that, through their actions, carry forward the culture and cohesion of the group (Bell, 2009).¹⁰ In *Lucha Libre* there is a spontaneous social impulse and response not corresponding to any government rule, authority, or dominant elite. The people become free to express deep feelings of frustration amidst a cathartic spectacle of verbal and physical violence. The wrestler who prevails in the battle against evil, like Joseph Campbell's¹¹ "hero with a thousand faces", enables the people to go forward with renewed spirit and a sense of community in the midst of life's suffering and mystery.



Fig. 5. Sangre Azteca and the public. (2009) Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Along these lines I began to think of the union that exists amongst groups of individuals, their communion through ritual and spectacle, and created the pieces *Flower and Song*, *Xipe Totec*, *Tzompantli*, *Blue Demon Jr.*, and *Wall of Masks*.

Diaspora:

Looking for better opportunities as an artist, I became an émigrée¹² twenty-eight years ago when I left my homeland, Mexico. The experience of becoming an immigrant¹³ had a great impact on me personally and as an artist. I became displaced and my sense of identity was fragmented as a consequence of this act. It has also led to a personal experience of change, transformation, and hybridity.¹⁴

A fundamental concern underlying this thesis is my attempt to reconnect with my

culture and understand its influence on my work from the perspective of an artist of a diaspora. It is in large part a search for authenticity reflecting on my experience of cultural translation¹⁵ and interaction that has resulted in my diasporic Mexican identity research. It is also a search for home in the deepest sense.

In this study it is indispensable to define diaspora. It is best considered as an interactive process in the way the experience of diaspora defines and influences individuals or groups of individuals. I give examples of writers, academics, musicians, and a Mexican performance artist whose work has been influenced by their analysis of the diaspora or by the experience of belonging to the diaspora. After defining this process and characteristics of a diaspora, I define and locate myself in relation to the group of immigrants or individuals belonging to a diaspora and continue describing my journey and link it to my work.

According to Steven Vertovec,¹⁶

“‘DIASPORA’ is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered ‘deterritorialised’ or ‘transnational’—that is, which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states, or indeed, span the globe” (1999).¹⁷

The word diaspora comes from the Greek ‘speiro’—to sow or to disperse. Robin Cohen (2008)¹⁸ noticed how scholars often use gardening terms like ‘uprooting’, ‘dispersion’, ‘scattering’, ‘transplanting’, and ‘hybridity’ when referring to diasporic groups or individuals.

Virinder S. Kalra, Raminder Kaur, and John Hutnyk (2005)¹⁹ argue that more is to be gained if diaspora can be considered not in terms of homogeneous groups of people, but rather as a process which has an impact on the way people live and upon the society in which they are living. Therefore, when we consider diaspora in this way, we do not focus on groups of people but rather on notions or concepts that may influence and

determine all the different groups or individuals. Living as part of a variety of cultures creates new cultural interactions, connections and identities and sometimes in the process of translation new forms emerge. There can be cross-fertilization (Vertovec, 2001) of ideas and culture resulting in cultural hybridity or transformations. Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk's study is concerned with those theoretical issues which deal with social theory and social change in the twenty-first century. They give us an example of cultural hybridity in music in the political-musical crossover of the group Asian Dub Foundation – ADFED. They argue that what the ADFED project has done, beyond blending musical influences, is most importantly the educational work that their music achieves (2005: 83). They have been able to create awareness of different social and political issues, in particular the condition of various Indian groups in Latin America and around the world.²⁰

In my analysis I consider that diaspora always entails a sense of loss and feelings of nostalgia for homeland and out-of-placeness (Hall, 2007).²¹ For Stuart Hall,²² “Diaspora is a loss. There is freedom in exile and at the same time loss” (ibid: 2007). In this displacement and deep sense of loss, the diasporic individual creates a mythical idea of homeland caused by a distortion of memory. Sometimes one creates cultural mirages from these memories or whispers from the past. For Hall, there is the notion of belonging to several histories and homes in other words, the individual has several interlocking homes at the same time or a multiplicity of homes (Hall, 1990).²³

Being an immigrant, living in another country can at times be extremely difficult because of these feelings of isolation and loneliness,²⁴ especially in life's most difficult and contradictory experiences such as birth and death. When my first daughter was born I was an immigrant in Barcelona, Spain, living away from my family and friends. My mother had died five months previously in Mexico. I was not there for her death. She was not with me when I gave birth. I felt joy and bereavement at the same time. These extreme experiences mark us and are reflected in one's work as an artist.²⁵

Some negative aspects of the experience of being an immigrant may include adverse feelings and attitudes that can be released in some individuals in relation to the immigrant. In some instances the diasporic individual becomes “the other” embodying fear of the other. Unconscious feelings are released in relation to the immigrant, often related to race and class²⁶ and portraying the other as exotic or savage. Paradoxically, desire for the other may also be aroused²⁷ and the other may become erotically objectified.

For the Mexican performance artist, Guillermo Gómez-Peña,²⁸ his performances always provoke audiences by alluding to their desires, fears and hopes. His 1994 collaborative art project with Roberto Sifuentes²⁹ was a performance/installation titled: *Temple of Confessions*.³⁰ People were invited to experience a “pagan temple” and they were asked to confess their innermost fears and desires about Mexico, Mexicans, immigrants and the Spanish language. Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes were part of a living “diorama” where they displayed themselves as two living santos (saints) (2001: 35). There were three ceremonial spaces: the chapel of desires, the chapel of fears and a mortuary chamber in the middle. The audience, after exploring the Temple, could confess into microphones and their voices were recorded, or they could write their confessions on a card and leave them in an urn, or call an 800 number when they left the gallery (ibid: 39). For Gómez-Peña the project was an elaborate set design for a theatre of myths and “cultural pathologies,” and a space for people to reflect on their racist attitudes toward the Mexican culture (ibid: 39). As a result of this performance they were able to record orally and in a written form many explicit intercultural desires and fears directed towards Sifuentes or Gómez-Peña and expressing their “inability to deal with cultural otherness” (ibid: 40).³¹

Once one is received in the guest country and has established new roots one starts belonging to a wider community. The homeland is never forgotten and links and social networks are often maintained through travelling back and forth from host country to

country of origin (Vertovec, 2002). Transnational networks³² are often kept through the use of technological channels of information between home and away by transnational migrant communities. Cyberspace has become a kind of placeless space allowing the development of cybercommunities that are computer mediated (Vertovec, 1999).³³ The diasporic artist can make use of these networks allowing for greater mobility, communication, knowledge and information from different sources.

This brief survey of different experiences and critical thinking on the concept of diaspora and its impact raise some specific questions: How many Mexican immigrants are there in the world? What does it mean to be a Mexican outside Mexico? Much statistical data is available describing the scale of Mexican migration. The biggest Mexican diaspora is located in the United States therefore I will focus on the statistics of Mexican migration to this country, as well as England where I lived for twenty years.

According to *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía*³⁴ of Mexico the 2010 census revealed that the total number of Mexicans in Mexico was 112.3 million. The Pew Hispanic Centre³⁵ states that the 2010 Census counted 50.5 million Hispanics in the U.S. making 16.3% of the total population. The Mexican-born population in the United States was 11.5 million in early 2009. In 2010 there were 6.5 million unauthorized Mexican immigrants living in the U.S.A. according to the Pew Hispanic Centre. One in seven Mexican workers migrate to the U.S.³⁶

Javier Díaz de León,³⁷ Executive Director of IME (*Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior* – Institute for Mexicans Abroad), gave the following statistics and date in 2011: There are more than 200 million migrants [of different nationalities] in the world today. The Mexican diaspora is the third biggest after China and India. 95% of migrant Mexicans are in the United States which amounts to 32 million Mexicans who live in the U.S. of which 12 million were born in Mexico and 7 million are

“*indocumentados*” (illegal immigrants). They send money to their families in Mexico known as remittances. In 2009 Mexico received 21.2 billion dollars in remittances. There is considered to be only 830,000 skilled Mexican migrants³⁸ in the U.S. and 70,000 in the rest of the world.

The Office for National Statistics in the U.K.,³⁹ from the annual population survey which covers residents in the U.K., shows 9,000 Mexican nationals residing in the U.K. for the period of April 2009 to March 2010. Mexican immigrants are in different countries for different reasons and circumstances: some are manual workers, others are skilled migrants or highly skilled workers (of large firms and corporations),⁴⁰ some are unauthorized workers, some are married to citizens of the host country, some have student or working visas, others are academics, intellectuals or artists.

Knowing these statistics and information I can now locate myself in relation to the group of Mexicans and other immigrants living abroad. Accordingly, when I emigrated from Mexico in 1986 to come to Europe I was a skilled migrant. I have now become a highly skilled migrant with dual nationality⁴¹ that allows me greater freedom and mobility. I was granted British Citizenship⁴² in 2009 and became a European citizen and part of the European Community. After having lived in the United Kingdom for twenty years I decided to move to Spain where I now have residence. I belong and identify with a very small minority community of Mexican diasporic artists and of diasporic artists living abroad as well as many other diasporic communities and other communities in the world.

We all have personal and collective identities. Hall (1989)⁴³ argues that we can define cultural identity in terms of one shared culture and our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes that provide us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning. As a Mexican I

obviously am of and share the Mexican identity with many other Mexicans. According to Hall: “We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture, which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’ positioned.”⁴⁴ We have a shared common identity with our cultural group but similarly there is the notion of identity as a personal construct based on personal and unique experiences. I was born into a middle class family in Mexico. I am a *mestiza*⁴⁵ due to my Indian and Spanish heritage. I hold a degree in Fine Arts from The Mexican Academy of Arts, “La Esmeralda” (1980-1985) which followed the institutionalized hegemonic cultural structure the government had at that time designed to educate artists in Mexico.⁴⁶ I have lived most of my adult life in England and Spain. My work as an artist researcher matured and consolidated while living in the United Kingdom, influenced by the contemporary artistic tendencies and thought processes and knowledge of the last twenty-eight years in Europe.

Hall argues that instead of thinking about identity as an already accomplished fact, we should think of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (Hall, 1989: 222). For Hall: “Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (ibid: 235). To follow Hall’s analysis,⁴⁷ I write and create art against the background of a mature life spent in the West and early origins in a Third World country. My specific artistic influences are: The Mexican painters Francisco Toledo and María Izquierdo, the Catalan painter Antoni Tàpies, the Irish-born British painter Francis Bacon, the German-born American artist Eva Hesse, the Swiss-German painter Paul Klee.⁴⁸ This has created hybrid representations in my work as an artist. My work has been in constant process of transformation.

Shattered Identity:

Processes of Making

Shattered Identity started in 2009 when I moved to Mojácar in the South of Spain in

the province of Almería, Andalucía. Mojácar is a small city in the foothills of the Sierra Cabrera Mountains and overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.⁴⁹ As one walks in the mountains one may find ancient objects such as Roman coins, bronze pieces, pieces of stone containers and ceramic sherds, dating from the recent to Palaeolithic. Many civilizations and cultures have inhabited this region of Almería and specifically Mojácar at different times.

In 2009 my partner and I began going for walks in the nearby mountains of Mojácar. The land is geologically very diverse, dry and sparsely populated. There are many old, abandoned “cortijos” or farmhouses scattered high in the mountains. While walking and climbing these mountains I found interesting sherds and rocks which I began to collect. The more I found the more interesting they became. One day we discovered another route on a mountain slope and another abandoned “cortijo”—but this time it was different. The slopes around this abandoned farmhouse had an extraordinary number of sherds. I filled my pockets until I could carry no more. We came back another day for even more.

Throughout many months we continued visiting this area and discovering these potsherds. When I came home I would clean every piece and tried to put them together to see if I could complete a plate, a pot or a bowl. I divided them into different groups or kinds. The more I brought the more I saw that they were sherds from various domestic pottery such as large jars and pots, glazed earthenware bowls and plates mostly green some blue, pitchers, jugs, plates and cups. Only some would match but the majority belong to different sets or pieces. My partner and I started wondering why there were so many different kinds of sherds in only the area surrounding this particular “cortijo”. Could something have happened that made these people intentionally destroy all their ceramics? By now I had collected a huge quantity of these pieces. I had to do something with this. It was sad to see so much beautiful pottery broken to pieces. What

made these people destroy such objects? I thought they must have been in a critical situation that made them leave their home and destroy their valuable possessions.

The answer came when I met the local historian Juan Grima Cervantes⁵⁰ and he confirmed my theory.⁵¹ He examined the sherds and was able to tell me the date and kind of ceramics they were. He told me that most were from the beginning of the twentieth century though a few were much older. He also told me that they were ceramics from nearby places near Almería because of the type of ceramics and colours of the glazes. And he described an impoverished diasporic population forced by debt to leave their homes and who destroyed what they could not carry rather than leave it to their creditors.

Formulation of Meaning

Shattered Identity (1) is a site-specific piece created in 2011 for the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Mojácar, Almería, Spain. It consists of a number of found sherds forming a face in the process of breaking. They are placed on the floor on a wooden surface covered with sand. It was accompanied by two photographs taken by the English engineer and photographer Gustavo Gillman.⁵² They are: *Family near the Almendral in Gergal (1896)* and *Family Group at Venta Mojonera in Bacares (1898)* which show the living conditions and poverty of farmers in Almería, Andalucía, that caused them to migrate to the Americas and elsewhere. Grima Cervantes corroborated the historical setting for this installation by lending these photos and providing written information about Mojácar's past also displayed with the artwork.

This site-specific piece was well received by the local population of Mojácar during the 2011 exhibition. It was placed at the entrance of the Miguel Angel Art Gallery and on the floor. People would comment on the different kinds of sherds because for some of them (mainly between the ages of 50-80) *Shattered Identity* triggered memories from their childhood years living in "cortijos" in the nearby mountains. One told me of the

poverty in which they lived and how as children they would look for sherds themselves and use them as toys. Another local told me that a dainty piece of white and blue ceramics reminded him of the cup his grandmother used to serve him milk when he visited her as a child.



Fig. 6. Detail of sherds of *Shattered Identity*. (2011) Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

For Robert Morris (1993)⁵³ quoted in Kaye (2000),⁵⁴ “Our encounter with objects in space forces us to reflect on our selves, which can never become ‘other,’ which can never become objects for our external examination”. Firstly my encounter with these objects on the slopes of the mountains of Almería made me reflect on their nature and towards the end this encounter became self-reflective. These objects became small pieces of a puzzle that I had to complete. The awareness of their existence, the search or an answer, the physical act of climbing the mountains and in many cases digging to reach these fragments, made the experience a long and laborious act.

When the viewer encountered *Shattered Identity* at the entrance of the gallery, he or she had to look down on the floor and sometimes bend to see these small sherds better. In other cases, the viewer would kneel down to touch the pieces, to experience the texture of the different sherds. For some time they would be transported to the space of *Shattered Identity*, reflect, be aware of these tiny objects and sometimes be moved by them and the piece itself.

There is another element that contributed to this piece and it is the fact that since I came to

live in Mojácar I have met a great number of people whose surname is “Montoya”. In Mexico City the only Montoyas I knew were those who were my personal family members. But the surname “Montoya” is a very common one in the area of Mojácar being that of one of the founding families that arrived in the fifteenth century. I wonder whether my antecedent used to live in this area and when it was that he left to start a new life in the Americas. Did he live in one of these abandoned “cortijos”? What made my ancestor leave and start a new life and family in Mexico? This piece was made as a consequence of migration from Almería, Spain to the Americas or elsewhere, but also in memory and imagining of my ancestor.

Shattered Identity (2), this same piece was part of the *In Memory Of* viva exhibition installation at the Chelsea Morgue in 2014. It was placed between the artwork, *Mythologies* and *Time for Justice*, but displayed differently, this time against the wall, on a ledge, and cascading to the floor. In this case, the piece serves to remind us of the shattered lives of the Mexican diaspora as well as reflecting on Montoya-Turnill’s own migration.

Structure of the Thesis:

The thesis is divided into two parts. Volume one links history and context to practice by examining the connections generated through the artwork as the research progressed. The practice has served to question various aspects of diaspora, Mexican identity construction, and *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, while issues and concerns arose to guide the research and formulate unfolding arguments.

Volume two consists of a catalogue of the artwork and the documentation of the 2011 exhibition, *Through the Mask*, held in Spain, and the 2014 viva exhibition, *In Memory Of*, in the U.K. The work, in the form of practice-based formulations⁵⁵ has been created between 2008 and 2014 in London, U.K. and in Almería, Spain. Throughout the thesis these key

pieces, grouped in bodies of work, are discussed and the contextual themes are analysed along with the work, methodologies, production and meaning.

In Chapter One the mask is regarded as a link, both actual and metaphoric, between Mexico's Pre-Hispanic past and the present popular form of *Lucha Libre*, analysing the syncretic and hybridic relationship. This section examines the interaction between past and present cultures and the extent to which the culture before the Spanish Conquest is still present.

The Aztec god, *Xipe Totec*, and the *Tzompantli*, (the Mesoamerican skull rack), are thematic links to past ritual and the present spectacle of *Lucha Libre* in this study. They are recurring tropes in my work and through them I make connections between the pre-Hispanic past, *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, and my practice. This body of work is connected thematically under the heading, *Through the Mask*. While working on this series of inquiries I felt as if I were experiencing revelations from two different, but connected, worlds, that of my Indian ancestors and the world of the *luchadores*.

Chapter Two explores the theme of the construction of Mexicanness. First from the historical point of view in the context of its cultural construction, and secondly by connection to the circus. This chapter includes a historical survey highlighting key figures and dates in the development of Mexican identity before and after the Mexican Revolution and the developments in *la maroma*, or popular circus, from which *Lucha Libre* evolved. The work of the Mexican artist María Izquierdo is analysed to draw connections and relationships to the circus and in connection with the creation of new work. Here, these connections and referents are expressed in two bodies of work: *Echoes of La Maroma* and *Contained Inside a Box*.

Chapter Three focuses on the present day social context of *Lucha Libre* emphasizing the

role and impact of new technologies and means of communication. Categories of *luchadores*, fans, and collectors are also described. Most importantly, emergent political and social activism in Mexico is explored through analysis of the positions of activists who draw upon the iconography of the masked *luchador*. The role of alternative media channels in social activism, promoting long-overdue change in Mexican society is discussed. My research also demonstrates the way in which the mask acquires an even stronger iconic and symbolic value, emblematic of justice, outside the *Lucha Libre* ring.

A body of work exploring these issues, and which is a critical response to the injustice and social inequality in Mexico, was produced. The artwork is grouped under the title, *Hues of the Passions*. Part of the artwork is formed of large format, sustained drawings exploring emergent social activism and the role of the mask as a symbol of justice. Central to my research is my position in relation to these issues as an artist from a diaspora, living away from her culture. As a consequence, a space has been opened in which I have been able to produce artworks from a critical and analytical perspective that in all likelihood would not have been available to me had I remained in my country. It is my sincere wish that these works of art may contribute to an ideology of justice and positive social change.

The piece, *Ius Soli*, invites reflection on the final phase of this thesis and it is incorporated in both exhibitions as a reminder of the three interlocking homes (Hall, 1990) I have acquired as an immigrant. *That Same Scream Again!* is an emotional response to events that developed on the 26th of September 2014 and subsequently in Mexico.

The second appendix to the thesis documents the exhibitions *Through the Mask*⁵⁶ and *In Memory Of*.⁵⁷ Both exhibitions reflect the curatorial aspect of the study. *Through the Mask* presented work done in connection with this study between 2008 and 2011. The exhibit was an opportunity to see the work from other points of view, to critique and discuss with

different audiences. The 2014, *In Memory Of* viva exhibition and performance, were developed to support the thesis' research and demonstrate the centrality and importance of the artistic project. The installation at The Chelsea Morgue integrates, unifies and brings together the different elements that constitute this study. Theory and scholarship merge with artistic project. *In Memory Of* links the work with current events and demonstrates the relevance of art in social and political activism and its role in the creation of awareness.

Although an artist's work is an ongoing, lifelong project, the process is not a seamless one. The present research and artworks have generated conclusions and artistic culminations that will lead me to another stage of research, practice, and inevitably, further questions.

I came to another question: Where is home for me? Jonathan Rutherford⁵⁸ in his essay: *A Place Called Home*,⁵⁹ recalls an interview with the American singer and actress Eartha Kitt.⁶⁰ Rutherford says that in the interview she recounted her desperate historical predicament of being confronted by white racism as well as the rejection of the black community in which she grew up due to her own hybrid background. When asked where her home was she replied "Home is within me" (Rutherford, 1990: 24). As with Eartha Kitt, I believe that for me, home is where I am, it exists within me.

¹ Madigan 2007, *Mondo Lucha A Go-Go*, p. 29. Dan Madigan is an American television producer, author and screenwriter. He has worked in the professional wrestling industry as well as working and producing for WWE Smackdown. His Lucha name is “Baron.”

² **Xipe Totec** is a deity from Pre-Hispanic mythology. He was the god of spring, fertility, and the renewal of the earth and all living things. He was “Our-Lord-Who-Was-Flayed”. He flayed himself to give food to humanity.

³ **Heuristic** – adj. [Gr. heuriskein to discover.] Serving to discover or reveal; ---applied to arguments and methods of demonstration which are persuasive rather than logically compelling, or which lead a person to find out for himself.---heuristically, adv.

Heuristic, n. Heuristic argument; also the science or art of heuristic procedure; heurctic.

Heurctic, n. [Gr. heuretikos inventive.] The logic of discovery. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster’s New Dictionary*.

⁴ **Diaspora** – n – [Gr. See diaspora] Literally, ‘Dispersion’ applied collectively a) To those Jews who, after Babylonian captivity, were scattered through the Old World, and later to Jewish Christian living among the heathen. Cf. James i. I b) By extension, to the Christian isolated from their own communion. Diaspora, [Gr. diaspora, a scattering, fr. dia through, asunder-speirein to sow]. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster’s New Dictionary*.

⁵ Daichendt 2012, pp. 113-114, chapter 7: *Revisiting Writing and Research*, quotes Schön, D. A. 1983, *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books. Daichendt states, “The place of knowledge is central to this discussion as Schön’s (1983) distinction between the knowledge in action and knowledge on reflection is important to consider. By reflecting on the art experience, the artist scholar is able to take a look and reflect on the process of art making. It is not as though one must shut off their thinking in order to create art then only through reflection can the scholar determine what has been done. In fact there is much thinking happening during the making process—but its not often realized until put into words.”

⁶ Daichendt 2012, p. 119. Daichendt argues that writing may also be used as a stimulus and inspiration and explains, “Writing that informs art making considers the work that aids, stimulates, and informs the artistic process...The writing could potentially continue throughout the creative practice but the pattern starts with influences like reading, drawing, looking, and thinking which then feeds the artist intellectually and practically. This process often is referred to as research and is the groundwork for making powerful and meaning artwork.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-100, chapter 6: *Practicing Reflecting Scholarship, Data sources and methods*.

⁸ Carlos Monsiváis Aceves (1938-2010) Mexican writer and essayist of culture and chronicle in contemporary Mexico.

⁹ Grobet 2006, p. 10, essay by Carlos Monsiváis (2003), *On Lucha Libre As A Masked Olympus*.

¹⁰ Bell 2009, pp. 158-169, chapter 5: *Characteristics of Ritual-like Activities*.

¹¹ Campbell 1993, pp. 3-25, chapter 1: *Myth and Dream*.

¹² **Émigré** – n. pl. émigrés (F. – gra’) [F.] An emigrant; specif.: a) One of the Royalist fugitives from France at the time of the French Revolution. b) A fugitive from Soviet Russia. Emigree –n- (F. émigré, **fem émigrée**) One forced to emigrate. Emigrant – [l.emigrans,-antis,pres.part. of emigrane to emigrate) 1) departing from country to settle permanently elsewhere. 2) migratory – of birds. Emigrant – n. One who emigrates, especif., an émigré. Syn.- emigrant, immigrant. Emigrant is used with reference to the country from which, immigrant with reference to the country into which, migration is made. The former marks the going out from a country, the latter the entrance into it. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster’s New Dictionary*.

¹³ **Immigrant** – n. [L. immigrans, pres part. of immigrare to go into. See immigrate]. One who immigrates; one who comes to a country for the purpose of permanent residence; - the correlative of emigrant. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster’s New Dictionary*.

¹⁴ **Hybridity** – n. State or quality of being by birth a hybrid. Hybrid – adj. 1) Of, pertaining to, or of the nature of, a hybrid; resulting from the union of the male and female of two species, races, etc... 2) Derived from unlike sources; having diverse and esp., incongruous elements in its composition. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster’s New Dictionary*.

¹⁵ **Translation** – n – act of one that translates. **Translate**, v; [L. translatus, used as past part. of trasferre to transfer. But from a different root]. 1) To bear, remove, or change, from one place, condition, etc, to another; to carry over, to transfer. 2) To turn into one’s own or another language; to make a new version of by rendering into another language. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster’s New Dictionary*.

¹⁶ Steven Vertovec is Director of the Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen and Honorary Joint Professor of Sociology and Ethnography, University of

Göttingen, [Online] Available: <www.mmg.mpg.de/departement/socio-cultural-diversity/scientific-staff/prof-dr-stein-vertovec/> [02 August 2011]. He is also co-Editor of the journal *Global Networks* and Editor of the Routledge book series “Transnationalism”.

¹⁷ Vertovec 1999, p. 1, *Three meanings of ‘diaspora’ exemplified among South Asian religions*.

¹⁸ Cohen 2008, p. xiv, *Global Diasporas*.

¹⁹ Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk 2005, p. 49, *Diaspora & Hybridity*.

²⁰ The information in Asian Dub Foundation (ADF) site and the video links denounce the violations of the civilian population’s human rights by the state and federal police forces. See link to Zapata: “This Land is Not For Sale”.

²¹ Hall 2007, audio recordings: *Hall in conversation with Les Back*, part II: *Diaspora and out-of-placeness*. Stuart Hall was interviewed by Les Back in 2007 but the conversation was published in 2009 in a special edition of cultural studies for *In the Ruins of Imperial Culture, Darkmatter*. In part I, *Conjuncture*: Hall’s notion of the conjuncture is more like Marx’s who saw “the hidden relation adding more levels of determination before you produce the concrete...” He believed that “The work is done by historical specificity, by understanding what is specific about certain moments and how those moments come together and form a kind of configuration—never one that is going to last forever—and again it never does. It always has unruly elements and is always struggling to master a terrain, etc. Those forces are going to produce another conjuncture, a shift to another conjuncture...” (transcript, 2007).

²² Stuart Hall (1932- 2014) is a cultural theorist and sociologist who lived and worked in the U.K. from 1951. He was one of the founding figures of the school of thought known as: British Cultural Studies or The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies.

²³ Hall 1990, p. 310, cited in Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk, 2005, p. 28. In relation to the concepts and notions on diaspora, Hall defines a diasporic individual as being the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging to one and at the same time to several homes.

²⁴ For the film director and producer Mira Nair, diaspora also means a sense of loss and longing. Some of her films reflect the paradox of being an immigrant and embody loneliness and the alienation that exile brings to the individual. Mira Nair (1957-) is an Indian film director and producer, interviewed by Gayatri Gopinath and Juli Wyman on 21 May 2007: *Cinema Diaspora: Discussion with Mira Nair* (see online link in Bibliography). In her film, *The Namesake*, Nair captures the profound sadness, sense of isolation and melancholy of what it is to die in a new country. *The Namesake*, directed by Mira Nair, is based on a novel by Jhumpa Lahiri, 2006, DVD: “A rich warm comedy drama which explores the lives of first-and-second generation immigrants to America”, Twentieth Century Fox.

²⁵ My work changed and became darker in the use of colour and themes.

²⁶ Fear of the other led the British politician Enoch Powell in 1968 in his infamous speech “Rivers of Blood” which created fear amongst white English population predicting that mass immigration to Britain would lead to violence and division in the street. In August 2011, fear of the other has led the TV historian David Starkey to claim: that the riots were connected to “black culture” and that “The whites have become black” when commenting on the August 2011 riots in Britain in a televised panel discussion, [Online] Available: <www.mediaspy.org/report/2011/08/13/anger-after-tv-historian-david-starkey-claims-the-whites-have-become-black/> [16 August 2011].

²⁷ Desire and Otherness – Homi K. Bhabha writing in his foreword to the 1986 edition of *Black Skin, White Masks* in relation to the process of identification of desire argues that firstly to exist is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness. He reflects and quotes Fanon: “It is always in relation to the place of the Other that the colonial desire is articulated: that is, in part, the fantasmatic space of possession that no one subject can simply occupy which permits the dream of the inversion of roles” in Fanon 2008, xxviii, *Black Skin, White Masks*. The foreword to the 2008 edition is by Ziauddin Sardar but it also includes the foreword written to the 1986 edition.

²⁸ Guillermo Gómez-Peña (1955-) is a Mexican performance artist, writer, activist, pedagogue and Artistic Director of San Francisco-based company La Pocha Nostra. He left Mexico in 1978 and went to U.S.A. to study and later developed his unique style of performance-activism: his theatricalizations of postcolonial theory.

²⁹ Roberto Sifuentes is an American interdisciplinary performance artist who has collaborated with Gómez-Peña in a number of performative projects.

³⁰ Gómez-Peña 2001, *Dangerous Border Crossers*, Part 1, *Performance Documents: Mexican Beasts and Living Santos*, pp. 35-45. This performance/installation was first premiered in 1994 in Arizona, U.S. Gómez-Peña explains, ‘The piece was based on a religious metafiction; we became the last two living *santos* [saints] from an unknown border religion, in search of sanctuary across

America. People were invited to experience this bizarre “pagan temple” and confess to the saints their intercultural fears and desires’ (2001: 35).

³¹ Ibid., pp. 41-3 contain the transcript of a selection of these confessions for example some of the confessions: (Fear) “Please don’t shoot me. I’m afraid of getting shot...by Mexicans, simply for being white”. (Desire) “I desire to fall in love with a Hispanic and be mistreated.”

³² Vertovec 2002, p.3. Vertovec argues: “For migrants, social networks are crucial for finding jobs and accommodation, circulating goods and services, as well as psychological support and continuous social and economic information. Social networks often guide migrants into or through specific places and occupations.” He states: “Migration networks based on organizational ties (schools, professional associations, agencies) serve better to match skill levels and jobs, although they are open for competition and therefore less certain in conditioning migration outcomes” (2002:5).

³³ Vertovec 1999, *Transnational social formations: Towards conceptual cross-fertilization*.

³⁴ INEGI – Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (National Institute of Statistics and Geography).

³⁵ Pew Hispanic Center renamed in 2013 as Pew Research Center’s Hispanic Trends Project – “Founded in 2001 the PHC is a nonpartisan research organization that seeks to improve understanding of the U.S Hispanic population and to chronicle Latinos’ growing impact on the nation. The Center does not take positions on policy issues”. It is located in Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

³⁶ Blanchard, J. (2006) Graphic based on statistics from Pew Hispanic Centre, San Francisco Chronicle, [Online] Available: < www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/object/article?f=/c/a/2006/05/21/MNGFQIVNAF1.DTL> [20 August 2011].

³⁷ Díaz de León 2011. On August 19th, 2011 in Montevideo Uruguay, the “Skilled Diaspora” Conference took place and Javier Díaz de León presented his paper: “Migración Calificada en America Latina: Desafío para las Políticas Públicas” (Skilled Migration in Latin America: Challenge to Public Policies). Díaz de León presented the latest data and statistics of Mexican migration, characteristics, objectives, strategies, and policies of the nation-state, links and networks with skilled migrants, challenges and opportunities of collaboration and communication.

³⁸ Vertovec 2002, p. 2. Vertovec explains, “Here, skilled migrants—most broadly defined as those in possession of a tertiary degree or extended specialized work experience – include architects, accountants and financial experts, engineers, technicians, researchers, scientists, chefs, teachers, health professionals, and – increasingly – specialists in information technology (IT, including computer professionals, computer engineers, managers, sales reps, etc.) (ibid: 2).

³⁹ Office for National Statistics in the U.K. and information from: What do they Know – request information. The Office for National Statistics state that the margin for error surrounding these estimates is +/- 4,000. The latest estimates available are for the period of April 2009 to March 2010.

⁴⁰ Vertovec 2002, p. 2. Vertovec points out that some researchers state that the term “migration” may not be the most accurate term regarding the highly skilled workers and instead, ‘movement’ or ‘mobility’ may be more apt terms. Vertovec quotes Koser and Salt (1997) explaining, “This is because movement of many highly skilled persons tends, today, to be intermittent and short term.” Koser, K. and Salt, J. 1997, pp. 51-67, *The geography of highly skilled international migration*, International Journal of Population Geography 2.

⁴¹ Dual Nationality – Migrant membership held by Mexican migrants gives one the right to have dual nationality and to vote as Mexican citizens in Mexico as well as in the country where one has citizenship and residence. According to Robert C. Smith (2003:12) in his paper, *Migrant Membership as an Instituted Process: Comparative Insights from the Mexican and Italian Cases*, states that the Mexican State’s attempts to institutionalize a thin form of Migrant membership in a ‘Global Nation’ which objective (late 1990’s) was to serve the PRI’s (Partido Revolucionario Institucional/Institutional Revolutionary Party) interests but resulted in a process of democratization in Mexico that created strong mobilization for US-resident migrants creating a strong membership. Smith 2003, WPTC-01-23, *Transnational Communities Programme*, Working Papers Series, edited by Ali Rogers, E.S.R.C. – Economic and Social Research Council, [Online] Available: <www.trascomm.ox.ac.uk/working-papers.htm> [02 August 2011].

⁴² British Citizenship – Oath of Allegiance: “I, (name), swear by Almighty God that, on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Her Heirs and Successors according to law” as stated in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, Schedule I, Home Office, 2003. Any person applying successfully to British citizenship

has to go through this ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, we were given a certificate, a spoon and application papers for British passport. See Home Office online information.

⁴³ Hall 1989, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, in Rutherford 1990, p. 223.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁴⁵ Mestiza – feminine for “mestizo” – term used in Mexico that means having Indian and Spanish ancestry (blood).

⁴⁶ See chapter 2, part 1: 2.1.1: *Construction of Mexicanness, Lucha Libre Mexicana and the Circus* where I extend on the analysis of the social and political ideology and cultural hegemonic policies the nation-state had over the production of art and culture from 1920s to the end of the 1990s. These government policies had an impact on art and artists creating a diaspora of artist of which I am part.

⁴⁷ Hall 1989, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, in Rutherford 1990, p. 223.

⁴⁸ Francisco Toledo (1940-), María Izquierdo (1902-1955), Antoni Tapies (1923 - 2012), Francis Bacon (1909-1992), Eva Hesse (1936-1970) and Paul Klee (1879-1929).

⁴⁹ According to Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España’s (INE – National Statistics Institute of Spain) 2011, Mojácar has 8,090 inhabitants. Almería was the cradle of some of the most important ancient cultures of Spain such as the Millares Culture (3000-2150 B.C.) and the Argar Culture (1700 – 1400 B.C.) and first described by the Belgian-Spanish archaeologist Luis Siret y Cels (1860-1934). Luis Siret y Cels and his brother Henri Siret investigated Neolithic, Chalcolithic (Copper Age) and Bronze Ages sites in El Algar and Los Millares. This meant great advance in the history of the South-eastern Iberian Peninsula and helped settle the sequence from Paleolithic to Copper Age in the zone. This was a great advance to the understanding of the history. Herguido, C. 1994, *Apuntes y documentos sobre Enrique y Luis Siret, ingenieros y arqueólogos*, Almería: Instituto de Estudios Almerienses y Ayuntamiento de Cuevas del Almanzora.

⁵⁰ Juan Grima Cervantes (1962 -) Spanish historian, academic, writer and publisher.

⁵¹ See Volume 2, Appendix 2, Documentation of *Through the Mask* Exhibition: Grima Cervantes 2011, *Cortijos and Pottery*.

⁵² Gustavo Gillman (1889-1922) British engineer and photographer who came to Spain at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. He worked mainly in the South of Spain in Andalucía in the development of the Mining Industry and the construction of the railway system that helped the introduction of British capital that was pivotal for the Industrial revolution that was going to transform Spain at the beginning of the 20th century. He photographed the people of that time that were going through many changes and the most radical historical transformations. Juan Grima has been able to collect and publish his photographic legacy: Grima Cervantes and Gillman Mellado 2010, *Almería Insólita*.

⁵³ Robert Morris – (1931-) American sculptor, conceptual artist and writer.

⁵⁴ Morris, R. 1993c [1968], p.165, ‘*The Present Tense of Space*’, *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, London: MIT Press, 175-210, cited in Kaye, N. 2000, p.30, *Site-Specific Art*.

⁵⁵ For images of practice-based formulations see Catalogue in Volume Two.

⁵⁶ *Through the Mask/A Través de la Máscara* (2011) solo exhibition in Galería Miguel Angel in Mojácar, Almería, Spain.

⁵⁷ *In Memory Of* (2014) viva exhibition and performance in The Morgue in Chelsea College of Arts, London, U.K.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Rutherford is editor of *Soundings* (journal) and professor of Cultural Studies at Middlesex University, U.K.

⁵⁹ This essay was first written for Lawrence & Wishart in 1989 for the “Changing Identities” event in London: *A place Called Home: Identity and the Cultural Politics of Difference*, and is in Rutherford 1990, p. 24, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Rutherford heard this interview to Eartha Kitt on Radio 4, U.K.

⁶⁰ Eartha Kitt (1927-2008) was an American singer, actress and cabaret star – diva.

CHAPTER ONE

Part 1. Syncretism and Hybridity

This chapter analyses the mask¹ as artifact and central element in the performance of the Mexican wrestler, associating the spectacle with ritual in the Pre-Hispanic Americas. An important resource in this section has been Roberta and Peter Markman's² study (1989: 167-178) and their evidence for the connection between present-day dance and Pre-Hispanic masked ritual performance. The location of the mask in time and its historical context are fundamental in the description of the syncretism and the hybrid aspects of conquest and post-Colonial legacy and their significance in representations of Mexican culture.

To examine these issues in depth a number of practical explorations using the mask as an icon and artifact serve as experiments enabling discovery, research and clarification. This body of work is grouped under the heading, *Through the Mask*. The experience of diaspora defines and influences my position distancing and giving me another perspective and critical view. My intention is to explore and examine these issues as an artist by drawing the mask, transforming the masks and constructing masks. These strategies have enabled me to see how ideas move about and are developed. The artworks themselves propose new inquiry and take me into other stages in this study.

1.1.1 Syncretism during the Acculturation Period

The word “syncretism” comes from the Greek *synkretismos* from the verb *synkretizein* – to combine. It is a term used mainly when referring to the process of uniting conflicting beliefs or forms of faith and worship or the uncritical acceptance of conflicting or divergent beliefs and principles.³

From the beginning of colonial imposition new religious forms and a blending of worlds appeared. The Markmans argue that it had taken so many years for the peoples of Mesoamerica to develop their mythic vision and their deeply entrenched ritual practice that they could never be completely destroyed or replaced by any force (1989:155).⁴ The essence of Pre-Hispanic religion still remains.

With the fall of Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Triple Alliance⁵ in 1521, the Spanish began the imposition of a new political, economic, social, and religious order. They closed off the new colony exporting its riches and exploiting its natural resources while bringing Christianity to the Indians. The success of the imposition of Christianity by the colonizers necessarily lagged behind their more earthly and concrete intentions and for obvious cultural reasons the Indian religious beliefs and ways of thinking were never fully supplanted. Instead, a new syncretic religion evolved.

Pre-Hispanic combat and ritualistic games were banned by the Spaniards, but the underlying religious beliefs and ritualistic practice remained encoded in the performative elements that survived in post-conquest syncretic form, such as the masked dance (Markman and Markman, 1989: 156). During this period of acculturation and indoctrination in the sixteenth century, the Spaniards brought to the indigenous population of their colonies folk dramas and dances, as well as the mask types then popular in Spain, such as the *Moriscas*, *Pastorelas* and *Diablos*⁶ (ibid: 161). The *Moriscas* were costume re-enactments of the triumph of the Christians over the Moors and the Indians found themselves participating in such performances (ibid: 161). They were always representations and dances portraying confrontation between two groups, of Good vs. Evil. Characters wore masks and different costumes or distinctive elements to distinguish between the two (ibid: 161-162).

These became the *Danzas de la Conquista* (Dances of the Conquest) (ibid: 162) that even today are performed in Spanish and other Indian languages (Möbius, 2007: 210). These practices, as in the festival of “Moros y Cristianos”, continue in communities and towns in Spain and through syncretic adaptation in Mexico as well. Masked Indians even celebrate in dance the defeat of the Moors in Medieval Spain, “la Reconquista” (the Reconquest), in some communities in Mexico. Some Pre-Hispanic masked dances and performances survived the Conquest, such as the dances of Guerrero and Morelos where the performers wear tiger and jaguar masks.⁷ The Markmans make the connection (1989: 167-178) between present dances and the Pre-Hispanic masked ritual performances. They point out, for example that the striking similarities between the jaguar related fertility ritual of widely distant villages is the result of evolution from a common source rather than from direct contact. Clear differences also indicate that the source lies relatively far in the past (ibid: 178).



Fig. 7. Máscara Tecuani⁸ Nahua, in Zitala, Guerrero, Mexico, Ritual and Dance
Leather, nylon, rope, mirrors, oil paint and bore hair -43cm x 32cm x 21cm, second part of twentieth century.
Image © the National museum of Anthropology, Mexico City

The Markmans (1989: 156) quote Eva Hunt⁹ who explains that when syncretism occurs the symbolic structure does not change. It is still there, buried under other layers; the spiritual vision of the indigenous people remains intact. The result is the blending of Christian and indigenous symbols and ritual which continues to the present day among the peoples of Mesoamerica (ibid: 156).

They go on to tell us that, on the surface, conversions to the new Catholic religion took place largely due to the numerous coincidences in belief and practice between the two religious systems (ibid: 156). Many priests and friars observed that Catholicism was becoming mixed with Indian idolatry and ancient rituals.¹⁰ The Markmans give us the example of the use of the cross in Catholicism to symbolize the meeting of the divine and the natural spirit and the Mesoamerican quincunx, a cross in which the centre is of the same importance as the arms representing the four cardinal directions and respective gods (ibid: 158).

The Markmans conclude,

“What is abundantly clear is that the tradition of masked ritual, as well as particular masks, survived the Conquest and that the particular survivals carried within their symbolic features, the meanings they had embodied in pre-Columbian society. More importantly, the continuing tradition of mask use allowed the mask to retain its centrality as a metaphor for the most fundamental relationship between humanity and the world of the spirit that created and sustains life” (1989:178).

This is especially the case in rural areas where dancers celebrate the Day of the Dead, the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and lately the present cult of *La Santa Muerte*.

1.1.2 Lucha Libre as a Hybrid Form

Appearances often deceive. Even though we think of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* as an essentially Mexican spectacle, it may be argued this is not entirely true –since its early origins and influences come from abroad.¹¹

Lucha Libre Mexicana in its early stages adopted mainly American and European wrestling practices and adapted them to local practices and the demands of audiences, promoters, broadcasters, and market consumption needs (Madigan, 2007).

The creation and communication of culture by “dominant players” in Mexico through marketing, institutions and their practices have also constructed *Lucha Libre*. Market forces have shaped *Lucha Libre* into a hybrid form—essentially a new form.

Hybridity refers to the process of transformation in the encounter between two or more cultures. This interaction brings innovations, translations, and new forms and meaning. For example, Homi K. Bhabha,¹² quoted in Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk, “...Bhabha uses hybridity as an ‘in-between’ term, referring to a ‘third space’, and to ambivalence and mimicry especially in the context of what might, uneasily, be called the colonial-cultural interface...” (2005: 71).

Lucha Libre Mexicana is a hybrid form that combines elements from different sports. Madigan (2007: 29)¹³ states that the term itself means “free-style fighting” and he explains, “It [free-style fighting] is a combination of various fighting techniques: wrestling, judo, jujitsu, grappling, kickboxing and boxing” (ibid: 29).

Contemporary wrestlers are increasingly being influenced by foreign styles and ways of thinking and representation about the sport and the performance, their masks and costumes, and even the training that shapes their bodies. This process of transformation and re-invention is bringing about new hybrid forms in *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. Performances abroad have been modified to please or adapt to a foreign public while other wrestlers believe in maintaining the most traditional form of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*.

Néstor García Canclini argues that

“ Industrialization and urbanization, generalized education, and union and political organizations have been reordering social life according to mass laws since the nineteenth century, before the appearance of the press, radio and television” (2005).¹⁴

García Canclini goes on to explain the global cultural processes that occur through the combination of technological innovations such as the new industrial, electronic, and informational processes of production, other formats, massive and transnational processes of circulation, new types of reception and appropriation (ibid: 186). They are transforming societies and cultures not only in Latin America but all over the world. These new technologies and methods of mass media broadcasting are having a great impact on the *luchador* and *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. A small group of *luchadores* are using new technologies to communicate with their fans, promote themselves and their products and interact globally with other promoters, audiences and wrestlers. In some cases there is interactivity between audiences and *luchadores* through social media channels.¹⁵ Promoters and media company broadcasters are making use of new technologies and printed media to profit, appropriate, transform, transmit, influence, manipulate and promote *Lucha Libre* matches and related programmes to mass audiences nationally and internationally.

All these interactions and active participation between audience and performers are bringing changes to *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. The performances of the *luchadores* in the United Kingdom, Spain and France since 2008 have influenced *Lucha Britannia*¹⁶ in London and the performance *La Lucha Libre vuelve al Price*¹⁷ (2010) in *Teatro Circo Price* in Madrid, Spain. *Lucha Britannia* is “masked *lucha libre* wrestling and cabaret *siniestro* in London”.¹⁸ *La Lucha vuelve al Price* is a homage to the old Spanish Price Theatre that used to host boxing and wrestling matches. This show is a combination of dancers (classic and flamenco), acrobats, a musician, and a “cantaor” boxer. Matches are performed inside a wrestling ring where the different styles of the artists intersect, interact and compete.

Ismael Galván, the Sevillian “bailaor” takes part in the performance *Ismael Galván vs. 3.000* in which he goes into combat with a boxer who is a cantaor. The flamencomic,

José Luis Ortiz Nuevo is the referee in the three rounds. Finally, Galván, who has a more experimental and avant-garde style, fights the 3.000 who are five pure flamenco performers.¹⁹ García Canclini is of the opinion that only through hybridization²⁰ can societies live in what he calls “interculturalism”, favouring exchange between cultural groups as opposed to the segregation that multiculturalism creates.²¹

1.1.3 The Mask as the Metaphoric Link between the Past and Present

Lucha Libre Mexicana is a sport and spectacle that has developed after Mexicans had contact with and were influenced by groups of people from other cultures and it has with adaptation to Mexican cultural traditions. Even the wrestler’s mask was imported from outside and later acquired new meaning through a process of cultural translation or hybridization. Equally, Madigan explains,

“Wrestling is always unique to the country in which it’s located, but merging styles would be part of the Lucha Libre tradition. Like the ultimate fighters today, who cross-train in several styles, the Luchadores cross-train so they can compete against anything they may face” (2007: 39).

I would argue that *Lucha Libre Mexicana* is both hybrid and syncretic. Through the process of encounters with other cultures from the nineteenth century to the present day it has been renewed and translated into new forms. *Lucha Libre* continues to evolve and be influenced by external elements through migration, diasporic groups abroad, networks and globalization.

Lucha Libre Mexicana, through a syncretic process, has combined Western practices and Indigenous performative ritualistic practices encoded in the performance of the *Danzas de la Conquista* (Conquest Dances). These developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and continue being represented in Indian and mestizo communities and towns throughout Mexico (Markman, 1989). In this sense there is a

direct link between *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and the syncretic forms of ritual combat and masked dances before and after the Conquest.

Carlos Monsiváis explains,

“Time and time again, the eloquence of the mask. Features are not abolished; they are eternally postponed. Identity is not disguised, but rather reconstituted. The unforgettable face does not disappear; it acquires another contexture. Thanks to the mask, *Lucha Libre* reminds of the obvious: appearances not only deceive, they also tell us their truth through alternate channels” (2003: 8-10).²²

There is a link between the use of the mask of the Pre-Hispanic people and the use of the mask by the Mexican *Luchador* precisely because the basic symbolic structure of beliefs and meaning still exists within the Indian and the mestizo population of Mexico (Markman and Markman, 1989). It is the mask that carries the symbolic transformation and the link between the ancient world and the modern world. The ritualistic practices and indigenous oral traditions are also encoded in the performative elements of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* precisely because of the continuity of *Danzas de la Conquista* (Dances of the Conquest) in Indian and mestizo communities throughout Mexico as well as the continuity of Indian oral traditions and languages. (Markman and Markman, 1989).

For the Mexican *luchador* the mask serves as the object of transformation that for some moments empowers him/her with god-like characteristics. The spectacle is cathartic and audiences are renewed after these combats. They believe in their heroes and these god-like figures take their task seriously and give themselves totally to their audiences. There is complicity and communion in the representation of Good versus Evil, translating into modern times the spectacle and religious worship that once were performed by the priests in honour of the god Xipe Totec. Their nature, in both cases, is dualistic; they are both human and divine. The masks that wrestlers wear

are second skins and are tied back in exactly the same way as the Pre-Hispanic priest would wear the skin of a sacrificial victim. They walk amongst fans and members of the public wearing their masks at all times so as not to give away their identity—and this also echoes the living god impersonators that for some time would walk amongst the people during the festivities in honour of Xipe Totec.



Fig. 8. Xipe Tótec²³ - clay sculpture. Image © National Museum of Anthropology of Mexico City.

The Mexican wrestler wears his mask to conceal his own identity and create a new one for his performance. The mask is the essence and representation of his new persona as a *Lucha Libre Mexicana* wrestler. In the case of the “Exóticos” (gay wrestlers), the mask is their make-up and full costume. The wrestler, Blue Demon Junior wears his father’s mask as a symbol of rebirth and of representation of his dead father. According to him, the mask is impregnated with his father’s spirit—the essence of Blue Demon.

Wrestling in Mexico as we know it now, was introduced in 1933 by Salvador Lutteroth who was a boxing promoter and successful businessman. After having witnessed the American wrestler, “Cyclone” McKey, who wore a mask to disguise his identity, and seeing the crowds reaction, he thought of introducing this element to the Mexican wrestler to add mystery to the matches and increase the audience. In this way he energized the sport, starting in the small *Modelo Arena* building in 1933 in Mexico

City. Today, the most important stadium is *Arena Mexico* in Mexico City that holds nearly 18,000 spectators.

Madigan explains,

‘The concept of the masked wrestler began as a North American gimmick. In 1915, when the wrestler named the “Masked Marvel” or, in Spanish “La Maravilla Enmascarada” (disguised wrestler Mort Henderson) first made his appearance in New York, the gimmick of a masked wrestler already existed’ (2007: 46).

He goes on to say that the use of the mask started when a wrestler had lost his popularity in his home territory and was not attracting a large enough audience to pay for the spectacle. Madigan says, “The best way to work and keep one’s identity a secret was to don a mask, take up a new moniker, and start a feud with a popular wrestler in another territory.” In this way he could start somewhere else without breaking his contract with his promoter and without revealing his real identity (ibid: 46-47).

Even though the mask was first used in the United States, it arrived in Mexico in 1933 with the vision of Lutteroth. The first wrestling mask was made in Mexico by a shoemaker, Antonio H. Martínez. In 1934 the Mexican wrestler Charro Aguayo asked him to design him a boot for wrestling (wrestlers had been using boxing boots until then). Madigan tells us that, Charro Aguayo was pleased with the result because it gave the *Luchador* the right support around the ankles (ibid: 48).

“Cyclone” McKey then asked Martínez to design a mask for him. According to Madigan, the first one was made of two pieces of tough suede sewn together (ibid: 48). It was very hard on his face because the material was too coarse and he could not breathe easily (ibid: 48). Martínez worked on the design and materials until he designed

one with four pieces with openings for mouth, eyes and ears that opened at the back with laces that could be tied up (Madigan: 2007). Today Martínez's heirs own a very successful business designing masks and outfits for Mexican *luchadores*. Jesús Martínez, "El Murcielago" (the bat) was the first Mexican *luchador* to wear a mask in the ring (ibid: 48). The complete outfit was a leather mask and a cape.²⁴

After these crude early masks came others made from pigskin. In 1949, the mask was modernised when "El Santo" *el Enmascarado de Plata* wore the first mask made in a soft satin material in bright colours, which made it more comfortable. The colour he chose was silver and was reinforced around the eyes and mouth. This started the modern era of comfortable bright masks.

For the Mexican wrestler the mask is the most representative symbol. When the wrestler wears his mask, not only does he hide his identity and remain anonymous, but it liberates in him characteristics that otherwise he would not or could not display. It empowers him with divine, unique traits and he feels ready to face his opponent in combat. I have come to believe that the *luchadores* wear their masks in the same way that our ancestors wore masks or the skins of sacrificed victims when impersonating different deities.

Some Mexican wrestlers look back into the past and search for symbols of Indianness and Mexicanness, which, once located, are incorporated into their masks, costumes, and performances. Good examples are Sangre Azteca and Blue Demon Junior. These wrestlers construct their performances around certain themes that connect them to the Pre-Hispanic past such as the Mexica warriors' combat fights. They incorporate symbols and motifs into their masks, costumes, entrance headpieces and music, and make a conscious decision to create belief and construct this link to the past.

1.1.4 Aztec Tropes: Xipe Totec and Tzompantli

Xipe Totec was the god of spring, fertility, and the renewal of the earth and all living things.²⁵ He was also called the Red Tezcatlipoca and red was his main colour of representation. He represented the East and was the patron of goldsmiths and the divinity of warriors offered in sacrifice. He was “Our-Lord-Who-Was-Flayed”²⁶ –He flayed himself to give food to humanity. They observed how the maize seed lost its skin before germinating as well as how snakes shed their skins. When he had no skin he was represented as a golden god.

In Xipe Totec life and earth exist in a continuous cycle and therefore he was regarded both as a god of creation and destruction and of sacrifices. Representations of the Xipe Totec ritual can be found in the *Florentine Codex*.²⁷ The Tlacaxipehualiztli festival is described in book II of the codex.

Every year, during the Tlacaxipehualiztli festival before the rainy season slaves would be selected and sacrificed to Xipe Totec. During such rituals and ceremonies the slaves to be sacrificed would be flayed and their skins subsequently worn by the priests. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, the Spanish chronicler, in his *Historia Verdadera de las Cosas de la Nueva España*, (1558-1577) in book II, chapters XXI and XXII,²⁸ describes how during the Tlacaxipehualiztli festival ritual, the priests wore these skins over their bodies and faces for twenty days in order to impersonate the god Xipe Totec.

When the priest wore the skin of the sacrificed victim during the Xipe Totec ritual, he became the impersonator of Xipe Totec but also his embodiment, a god-like figure that walked among the people (Royal Academy of Arts, 2002). It was a symbolic transmutation of the wearer into another being. The mask was the object that helped the priest and the audience bridge the gap between the world of humans and the world of gods.²⁹

The human skins were worn like a costume by a living person in a symbolic enactment of the live seed within the dead husk to instigate the renewal of the earth's fertility.³⁰ The god's impersonator, invested with Xipe Totec's attributes, mingled with the people during the festival—becoming a living and moving cult image (ibid: 422). It was both alive and inanimate. This festivity culminated in a gladiatorial combat where prisoners were tied to a stone and were killed by jaguar and eagle warriors (ibid: 422). They were then sacrificed and the priests wore their skins.

Another element I want to draw attention to is the Tzompantli. The Tzompantli was a wooden rack, which was used to publicly display human skulls, mainly those of sacrificial victims or war captives. The skulls were pierced in the middle and threaded along a stake and arranged in a horizontal line on a series of vertical posts (Miller and Taube, 2003). They were also used to display the heads of the losers in the ritualistic ballgame. Another way of arranging these skulls was one on top of each other vertically in a gourd tree next to the ball court (2003: 176). There are drawings from various codices and accounts by Bernal Díaz del Castillo³¹ who witnessed some of them—even one that displayed heads of Spaniards and their horses.

Part 2. Practice-Based Inquiries *Through The Mask*

A series of artworks have been grouped under the theme of *Through the Mask* and in them I question and explore the cultural meaning of my work as an artist of the diaspora. How much of the culture of my homeland and roots remain in the work? To what extent has it been translated, re-invented or adapted to new identities and situations outside Mexico? How much may be part of a distortion of memory or the mythical idea I carry of homeland?

In my attempt to reconnect to my cultural identity and homeland I also look to the past for symbols of Mexicanness that give me a sense of belonging and of cultural continuity with my origins. I consciously construct and incorporate symbols and representations of the mask, the Mexican wrestler and Pre-Hispanic motifs into my practice to create new forms of representation and assert part of my personal and cultural identity.

Culture is central in giving sense and meaning to the world we live in and who we are. Hall states,

“It’s true, of course, that we all don’t make sense of things in the same way and therefore that each of us has a little kind of conceptual world of our own, or rather we have our own sort of take on the conceptual world” (1997).³²

For Hall meaning arises because of the shared conceptual maps which groups or members of a culture or society share together (ibid: 9). He says that one learns or internalizes the shared maps of meaning with other people of the culture (ibid: 10). I learned in the years I lived in Mexico as a child and as a young adult the varied conceptual maps of my group within Mexican culture. I internalized a variety of

signs and symbols that give meaning to me as an individual and as member of Mexican society. They were reinforced over and over by the educational system, the media, society, art, etc... These symbols of Mexicanness now play an important part in my identity and work.

In my work the mask has iconic meaning and the Blue Demon mask and the Xipe Totec³³ mask are the icons taken as a starting point. The Blue Demon mask was bought in a market in Mexico City. It is a handmade copy of the original or official merchandise that the brand Blue Demon produces. For me, it represents contemporary Mexican popular urban culture and it takes me to my childhood and links my thoughts to markets, toys, wrestling on television, people wearing or selling the masks in the streets, comics, and the El Santo and Blue Demon films.



Fig.9. The Blue Demon Mask. Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

The Mask of Xipe Totec is made of grey volcanic stone with traces of red paint (Aztec [Mexica] civilization c.1440-1521, British Museum, London, Room 27).³⁴ It is also now believed to be a forgery from the nineteenth century and not Pre-Hispanic.³⁵ For me, the mask of Xipe Totec speaks of many things: historical continuity, Indianness, lost past, ancient Pre-Hispanic civilization, a glorious past, pyramids, fantastic art, sacrifices, rituals and ceremonies, and shamanism.



Fig. 10. The Mask of Xipe Totec.. Human face-shaped masked Am 1902, 1114. AN00964733_001
Image © Trustees of the British Museum

In these two examples of the mask, I can see my two Mexican selves or identities: the urban Mexico, of the Mexico City I grew up in, and the Indigenous Mexico. They symbolize my Mexicanness. The Blue Demon and Xipe Totec masks are both nostalgic and constructed symbols since the world I have created around them has undergone mythological metamorphosis as a result of seeing Mexico as both a native and from the outside.

The artwork is analysed through the different methodologies used—drawing, photography, creation of prototypes, interviews, analysis of meaning and symbols, and the process of exhibition itself. The first stages of this research resulted in the sculptural pieces *Flower and Song*, *Wall of Masks* and *Black Mask, White Thoughts* and the paintings *Xipe Totec*, *Tzompantli* and *Blue Demon Jr.* All are preceded by a number of preparatory drawings, sketches and prototypes.

I use the mask of the Mexican wrestler and/or representations of the mask used in Pre-Hispanic rituals as the impetus for my research because for me it represents a threshold, a ‘liminal object’ (Turner, 1974) that helps me bridge the gap between the visible and the invisible and the present and the past. It is also a connection between my Indianness, my Mexicanness and my diasporic identity. At times the mask is a self-

portrait revealing my true self instead of concealing it. The mask marks the liminal state of transition between consciousness into the unconscious that is opened in the moment of creation or creative performance.

1.2.1 Xipe Totec (Montoya-Turnill: 2009) and Tzompantli (Montoya-Turnill: 2009) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning.

The piece *Xipe Totec* is a painting using sand, oil and graphite on a wooden support measuring 1m x 1m. The piece *Tzompantli* is a painting using oil and graphite on a wooden support measuring 1m x 1m. Both pieces were made in London, U.K. in 2009.

The process began with two events. One was the “Aztecs” exhibition in London in 2002-2003³⁶ and the other a field trip to Mexico in 2009 when I visited the “Templo Mayor” and its museum and the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City. The “Aztecs” Exhibition, held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, brought to the United Kingdom an enormous quantity of artistic objects that anthropologists had found and studied for many years as well as the latest discoveries from the “Templo Mayor”. It was a great success and many people attended. I went various times, sometimes alone and other times taking students or friends.

Amongst the pieces there were stone and clay sculptures, figures and figurines of all sizes, ornaments made from different materials, masks, codexes, ceramic vessels, musical instruments, and reliefs belonging to altars on the side of pyramids. All this amounted to enormous information on the Aztec cultural legacy and the experience of this exhibition has had an enduring impact on me as an individual and in my practice.

Many of these art pieces I had previously studied or seen at the Museum of

Anthropology in Mexico City, in other exhibitions in Museums in other countries, and in books and encyclopaedias. So I welcomed seeing and appreciating them again. Others were new to me because they had only recently been discovered in the on-going excavations of the “Templo Mayor” in downtown Mexico City.

Of all the artistic objects the one that impressed me most was a stone sculpture of the representation of an Aztec priest impersonating the god Xipe Totec (2002: 173).³⁷ This was the first time I had been so near to this sculpture and I was able to study it closely. I especially observed the different colour stones and the realistic and intricate representation of the way the head-face skin was tied to the back of the priest’s head. This sparked a renewal of interest in the legacy of my culture and a re-discovery of this forgotten side after being away from Mexico for so long.

The catalogue of the Aztecs exhibition contains scholarly essays, photos and detailed explanations. A photograph of the architectural remains of the side of a pyramid shows a series of skulls in rows—a Tzompantli. This was “Shrine B, from Stage VI, is decorated with 240 stucco-covered stone skulls” (ibid: 52). Once, in Mexico, I was able to see this wall in situ. Another photograph of the inside of the museum of “Templo Mayor” is also of a Tzompantli with a row of skulls.

In my practice drawing has been a central and indispensable tool. Drawing has led to the creation of connections and understanding as a way of annotating ideas, by the creation of memory drawings and as an aid to visualization and imagination. The varied and intense experiences of being confronted with the multiple images and representations of Xipe Totec, Tzompantli, and the *luchadores* during their performances and in interviews—all are mediated by the process of drawing.

In September and October 2009 I gathered data during my field trip to Mexico.

I interviewed the Mexican wrestlers: Blue Demon Jr., Sangre Azteca, Cassandro, Solar, El Hijo de Solar, the referee and researcher Orlando Jiménez, and the *Mexican Lucha Libre* mask collector Christian Cymet López Suárez. In some instances drawings were made in situ of the wrestlers during the interviews. I made ink drawings and sketches on my return to the studio in London and later in Spain.

As John Berger says,

“FOR THE ARTIST DRAWING IS DISCOVERY. And that is not just a slick phrase, it is quite literally true. It is the actual act of drawing that forces the artist to look at the object in front of him, to dissect it in his mind’s eye and put it together again; or, if he is drawing from memory, that forces him to dredge his own mind, to discover the content of his own store of past observations.... A line, an area of tone, is not really important because it records what you have seen, but because of what it will lead you on to see” (2005).³⁸

There is a variety in the types of drawings I made for these two pieces. Some are sketches and spontaneous responses in situ – such as the drawings made very quickly of wrestlers during a match in 2008. Others are more meticulous studies of the object – such as the drawings of the mask of Xipe Totec that I made at the British Museum in London. Finally, there are the drawings made from memory of the encounters with the Mexican wrestlers and the matches.



Fig.11. Drawings of Xipe Totec Mask (Montoya-Turnill) 2008, London, U.K. 30cms x 30cms each. Mixed technique: ink, quink, graphite, wax crayon on Khadi paper. Exhibited in 2008 at Wimbledon Open Art Studios, Wimbledon, Greater London, U.K. and in 2011 at the Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Mojácar, Spain.

Berger (2005: 3) goes on to say, “A drawing is an autobiographical record of one’s

discovery of an event- seen, remembered or imagined. A ‘finished’ work is an attempt to construct an event in itself.” The drawings I have made throughout this research, in studio and in situ, are a direct and spontaneous response serving as both evidence and record of what I have witnessed and experienced. The later studio work, whether paintings or three dimensional constructions, reflects my final reflection, analysis and rendition of the event or subject matter. The documentary of the *Through the Mask* exhibition shows working drawings and sketches along with the final oil paintings and 3D pieces or installations and goes into detail about drawing and the developmental process.

Eight prototypes for Xipe Totec were made in 2008 measuring 28cms x 28cms. They are small paintings using mixed media: acrylic, graphite and sand on a wooden support. Three prototypes for Tzompantli were made in 2008 using acrylic, graphite and sand on a wooden support and measuring 30cms x 30cms and a third painting using oil and graphite on a wooden support measuring 23.5cms x 24cms.





Fig. 12. Prototypes for Xipe Totec (Montoya-Turnill) 2008, London, U.K. 28cms x 28cms each. Paintings using mixed media: acrylic, graphite and sand on a wooden support. Exhibited at Wimbledon Open Art Studios in 2008, Wimbledon, Greater London, U.K.



Fig. 13. Prototypes for Tzompantli (Montoya-Turnill) 2008, London, U.K. The first 2 Paintings were made by using mixed media: acrylic, graphite and sand on a wooden support and they measure 30cms x 30cms. The third painting is oil and graphite on a wooden support and measures 23.5cms x 24cms.

The tactility involved in the making of these small prototypes is important in the creative process. The materiality of the object is felt directly through the hands and, for me, the ‘making’ always brings an experience of renewal. Sand was added to most of them and each surface was then scratched and etched to create lines and shapes. They were painted with acrylic or oil adding a variety of layers and finishing with further marks with graphite to add contrast between the greys and blacks of the

acrylic or oil and graphite. My intention is to reflect the colour and the texture of those Pre-Hispanic masks, sculptures and reliefs. These prototypes serve as referents for larger scale work. The surfaces of the paintings, Xipe Totec and Tzompantli are then treated in a similar way, scratching and etching them in a ritualistic act of re-inventing a moment in time, of reconciling past and present, using whites, soft yellow light and greys with contrasting graphite marks. This way of treating the surface can be compared with some of the processes used by the Mexican artist Francisco Toledo. Baddeley and Fraser analyse the way Toledo develops his paintings and explain,

“The deliberate archaizing of the work is also a recognizable feature of the work...The surface of his paintings is frequently enriched with sand, enamels, acids and even gold dust and appears to have been etched and rubbed to a glowing iridescence...their physical presence is reminiscent of early cave paintings” (1992: 115).

1.2.2 Blue Demon Jr. (Montoya-Turnill: 2009) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This is an oil painting on linen that measures 1.10mx 1.10m made in 2011 in Spain. The process started with some drawings of the wrestler Blue Demon Jr. followed by small acrylic paintings on paper. Four prototypes were made using oil on wood, one measuring 20cms x 20cms and three 30cms x 30cms. They were all made in early 2009 in London.



Fig.14. Inside Wimbledon, U.K. studio. This image shows some prototypes using a variety of techniques: acrylic on paper, oil on wood, a small armature and some drawings on paper.



Fig. 15. Prototypes for *Blue Demon Jr.* (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K. The first one measures: 20cms x 20cms and the other three: 30cms x 30cms. They are oil paintings on a wooden support. Exhibited in the Exhibition “Through the Mask” in 2011 in Spain.

The final oil painting followed these early explorations of line, texture and colour.

There are two main figures in the square surface that represents the ring. The smaller figure became a self-portrait, the artist of the diaspora, and opposite is Blue Demon Jr. who wears his father’s mask. The intention of this painting is to show the moment of transfiguration when Blue Demon Junior becomes a figure who is of the dead, Blue Demon, his father, and in this ritual instant also—Xipe Totec. The layers, strokes, and lines of colour embody the otherness of the two characters and the spiritual and physical duality in every person. Present and past are represented as fused in each figure.

In 2008 when I started thinking about Xipe Totec and the mask the *luchador* wears, I thought that there must be a link between the past ritualistic impersonation of XipeTotec by priests during the Tlacaxipehualiztli ceremonies and the ritualistic aspect of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and the mask. A breakthrough came during the interview I had with

Blue Demon Junior in September 2009 in Mexico City, Mexico (see Appendix 1, Interview with Blue Demon Jr.). He told me,

“If you see the face of Xipe Totec and my face, just take this away. You take away this and it is me [pointing to a motif in his mask]. It is my face. I represent him in another way and besides I am a demon. In a way the Xipe Totec ritual is to put on, rebirth, imitate the dead one and to be reborn in the one who is alive” (Blue Demon Jr., 2009).



Fig. 16. Interview with Blue Demon Jr., Mexico, 2009. Image by Cayetano H. Ríos.

His words confirmed some of the arguments of this thesis regarding the perceived connection between *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and the *Xipe Totec* ritual practice.



Fig. 17. Blue Demon Jr. Enters the Arena (Cayetano H. Rios, 2011). Image by Cayetano H. Ríos. Blue Demon Jr. displays a feathered headpiece as part of his costume for his entrance during a performance at the Roundhouse, London, U.K., 2011.

1.2.3 Wall of Masks (Montoya-Turnill: 2009) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning.

The diasporic individual may inhabit many homes while at the same time belonging to none. (Hall, 1990).³⁹ Feelings of loss and out-of-placeness (Hall, 2007)⁴⁰ may cause us to develop psychological survival strategies and new avenues towards meaningfulness in life. If one is fortunate she will have gained a new point of view and deeper awareness, understanding, and knowledge than if those borders had not been crossed. The artist who has been dispersed may come to belong to a wider community, or communities, and influenced by these interactions create new connections, ideas, and combinations that ultimately bring new meaning to the art produced.

My art has always been a refuge for me, a place to find understanding and even, on occasion, answers to questions of survival under the most trying conditions. In the case of the piece, *Wall of Masks*, I once again crossed a border, but this time the threshold was between the conscious and the unconscious. With the development of the work unconscious connections and interconnections from somewhere deep within me came repeatedly to the surface, resulting in a very powerful piece and, I believe, helping me keep my sanity during a period of great personal difficulty. As Guy Brett says, “Art is a way of explaining the world, a form of thinking in materials, along a dialectic between their presence and their absence” (2004: 13). He explains that a proposal of some artists is that “Art should be fused with life” (ibid: 13).

The piece *Wall of Masks* was finalized in July 2009 but the process started in October 2008 with preparatory research and the phenomenological⁴¹ process.⁴² During the objectification phase, drawings were made in situ of the masks of Xipe Totec at the British Museum. Entries of other figurines and masks of Pre-Hispanic Xipe Totec representations were studied in the Anthropology Library and Research Centre of

the British Museum in order to look at and perceive the object as near as possible. I wanted to represent the object as close to reality as possible: “the thing-in-itself rather than the object experience or phenomenon”⁴³ (Kant: 1770).⁴⁴

For Berger image making begins with interrogating appearances and making marks. I have experienced something similar and agree when he says that drawing is a two-way process:

“To draw is not only to measure and put down, it is also to receive. When the intensity of looking reaches a certain degree, one becomes aware of an equally intense energy coming towards one, through the appearance of whatever it is being scrutinized...The encounter of these two energies, their dialogue, does have the form of question and answer. It is a ferocious and inarticulated dialogue. To sustain it requires faith” (2005: 77).

In this way the dialogue begins with the object encountered. Making decisions throughout the process one captures the essence, its energy, something that only through the act of drawing one is able to perceive, to recognize and capture. After the first stage of objectivity there came a subjectivity or imagination phase, allowing associations and connections to happen spontaneously. The experience and meaning of life as a diasporic artist was an essential interrogation in this phase along with the contemplation of the material object. By letting feelings and inner thoughts represent the object; the mind absorbs and internalizes it. The subconscious runs free and meaning develops mixing with other experiences and thoughts. In this process interconnectivities and transformations occur resulting in new relationships of meaning and new meanings. Isolated elements form new associations and new structures of form and content begin to appear. Finally synthesis results joining objectivity and subjectivity in the creation of something new.

After the drawings made from the Xipe Totec piece at the British Museum, there were drawings using ink and mixed media and small acrylic paintings in sketchbooks in the

studio. Parallel to this, the themes of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and Xipe Totec Pre-Hispanic rituals and ceremonies were studied from different sources. The Tzompantli⁴⁵ was also studied and analyzed and some drawings were made.

The synthesis occurred on a (thankfully unusual) day of high anxiety and I believe the creation of this piece to have been a performative healing act. In the studio, threads, ropes and cords were taken out of various boxes, while in an unpremeditated act the masks⁴⁶ were turned inside out and materials were placed inside each mask. Working quickly and making conscious decisions on composition, texture, size, width, and the placement, the piece was finished. The unconscious and the conscious were working at the same time, the unconscious providing the need and meaning, the conscious providing the answers on a practical level.

I hung the elements of the piece in a row on an empty wall, and contemplated the five different masks in a line. An then I was overcome by a feeling of calm and peace.

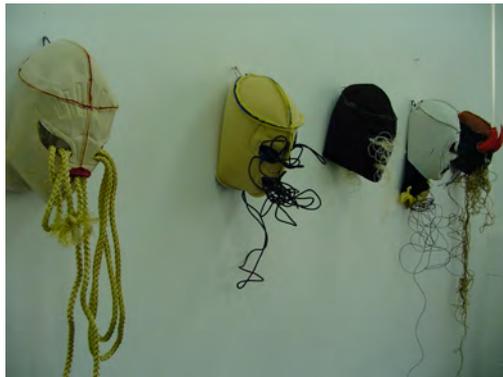


Fig. 18. Wall of Masks in the London studio. (2009) Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Wall of Masks became a series of five masks that are inside out. They were later placed on small wooden boards for display as if they were trophies. Each was

originally a mask purchased in a Mexican market and represented a different Mexican wrestler. They are made of different materials as are the various cords I employed. The fact that the stitching can be seen adds greatly to the feeling of the piece. After this, a series of ink drawings was made on paper. The sculptural piece and the drawings are in complete opposition and convey different states of being. In their creation I implemented a strategy of cycling from two dimensions to three and vice versa, resulting in new transformations, relationships, and the appearance of new meanings.

For the formulation of meaning of *Wall of Masks* the *Triadic Analytic Guide* was used.⁴⁷ This work is a ready-made ensemble of different objects with a strong element of the performative. It depicts, and literally is, the aftermath of a transformative event, each one of the masks having been turned inside out. On viewing the set of five masks the first impression is of being witness to the aftermath of some bloody, gory, ritualized event. The work also conveys a very strong sense of viewing a process of becoming something else, of a mysterious metamorphosis. While there is repetition, each 'mask' is different from the others and we perceive individuals who seem to be expelling, even vomiting something from within.

What is inside has been made visible through a series of tactile and repetitive acts. The unconscious has been revealed through traces or marks that have appeared in their orifices. In an instance of unconscious recollection the work emerged and in repetitive movements the masks were turned inside out and were filled with ropes and strings. Jean-Francois Lyotard refers to this as "working-through via anamnesis"⁴⁸ in the creation of art. Lyotard's 1997 lecture⁴⁹ is quoted in Bracha L. Ettinger's essay⁵⁰ when referring to the artist Eva Hesse's work:

"Anamnesis works in psychoanalysis through an infinite recurrence of an immemorial—yet always present—original scene, and artwork, says Lyotard,

emerges by a working-through via anamnesis to give traces to the invisible in the visible. In art, repetitions in anamnestic working-through do not re-establish the lost object but make present the unrepresentable Thing, crypted in the artwork's unconscious, that keeps returning, for its debt can't be liquidated" (2006:210).⁵¹

Ettinger, referring to Lyotard's analysis, goes on to say, "A spasm thus gives birth to an artwork's apparition amidst recurrence as a threshold" (ibid: 211) and,

"Via the artwork, the artist extracts from the world and from the psyche an object x and a link x so that both repetition and virtuality are revealed by form of materiality in the symbolic sphere" (2006: 212).

The five masks are displayed as if they were trophies of a transformative event.

There is an intentional connection to the Pre-Hispanic Tzompantli and the display of human skulls. For me this work can also be connected to the display of the Mexican wrestler Solar's⁵² wall of trophy masks from other *luchadores*, as well as to the Mexican collector Christian Cymet's⁵³ played masks collection of Mexican wrestlers. Many of his masks show signs of the 'combat'—having been ripped off or torn from the face of the adversary.



Fig.19. Solar and El Hijo de Solar in front of his Wall of Masks, 2009. Image by Cayetano H. Ríos.

The drawings that came after *Wall of Masks* have a peaceful mood. They are fluid and the masks seem to be speaking-- as if they contained flowery speech. The marks are like speech scrolls or volutes⁵⁴ found in the codexes. They seem alive as opposed to the feeling of dead beings in *Wall of Masks*. They are not trophies because

they have a poetic quality. The storm has gone. They represent masks and they are not inside out or displayed together in a line. They seem to be conscious and saying something pleasant. We may imagine we hear their voices, perhaps the Nahuatl language of the ancestors, and the poetry of flower and song.



Fig. 20. Drawings of Wall of Masks (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K. 30cms x 30cms each. Mixed media: ink, crayon, graphite on Khadi paper. Exhibited in 2011 at the Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Spain.

1.2.4 Flower and Song (Montoya-Turnill: 2011) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

Although the government and elite groups have often manipulated and constructed what Mexicanness, popular art and aesthetics should be, not everything has had negative and nationalistic consequences in the implementation of the contrasting visions of the various policy-shaping agents. Some of them have contributed positively in reevaluating the legacy of Indian Mesoamerican culture and of living Indian culture. Anthropological studies have had great impact in reconsidering the study of Pre-Hispanic civilization and the different Indian groups in the Mexican Republic. The

study of Nahuatl by leading Nahuatl scholars such as: Angel M. Garibay⁵⁵ and Miguel León-Portilla⁵⁶ throughout the last century has had great impact in creating interest in the study, analysis, palaeography and translation of Pre-Hispanic literature in Nahuatl. Because of these studies, León -Portilla and other scholars are working with living Indian communities and learning from them as well as from the translated Pre-Hispanic codexes and sixteenth century codexes and manuscripts that laid hidden for many centuries in European collections, libraries, convents and monasteries.

New discoveries of Pre-Hispanic art and artefacts from the *Templo Mayor* in downtown Mexico City and in new archaeological zones all over the Mexican Republic continue. The downside is that these policies continue to exploit and co-opt Indian groups, popular groups and folkloric practices and popular arts in the service of the power structure. It is still far from the case that different groups of people in Mexico are of equal status regarding human rights, respect and dignity.

Some Mexican artists have responded to the opportunity to re-evaluate the Indian heritage. Such is the case of the Mexican artist Francisco Toledo whose work is rich in stories and the mythology of our culture. My practice has also been influenced by the many discoveries and works of anthropologists, chroniclers, scholars, historians, artists, writers and poets who have understood, translated, and revalued our Indian heritage. As I will describe and explain throughout the thesis works such as: *Flower and Song*, *Black Mask*, *White Thoughts*, *Tzompantli* and *Xipe Totec* are the direct result of this knowledge and influence.

The process started with some preparatory drawings in a sketchbook at the end of 2009 and beginning of 2010 in the studio in Mojácar, Almería, Spain of the general idea of what the composition could look like. This was important as a way of working out on paper the ideas I was formulating. The phenomenological stage⁵⁷ began with concerns

about the transformation of materials and the representation of human-like skin.

Searching for the right material for the masks took some time because I wanted to have the material that could represent the skins that the priests wore of the sacrificed victims during the Tlacaxipehualiztli festival.⁵⁸ I tried various textiles without success until finally the “skin” came from Casablanca in Morocco by way of a friend in the leather trade. She sent me eight small, soft lambskins.

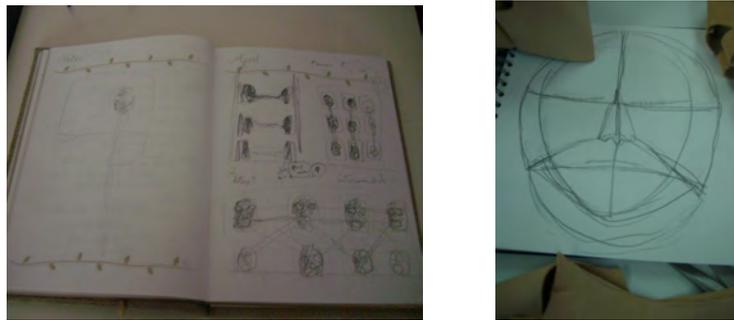


Fig. 21. Sketches for Flower and Song (Montoya-Turnill) 2010, Mojácar, Spain.

During the objectification phase, in order to get as close as possible to the theme and object, the drawings and sculptures of representations of skin-like masks of the Xipe Totec god were studied. Amongst objects and images I examined were Pre-Hispanic sculptures and small ceramics and golden figurines at the British Museum in London and in the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City as well as photographs and drawings of sculptures, ceramics and golden figurines of Xipe Totec and the description of the Tlacaxipehualiztli festival as described by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún in the Florentine Codex.

To make the masks I collaborated with a neighbour and friend, Sra. Luisa Gallardo, a Spanish seamstress. She brought her skills to this project as well as the machines to sew, mould and assemble the masks. There were many attempts at putting the masks together but they were not right because they were too rigid and lacked a sense of being human. The Xipe Totec masks that the Pre-Hispanic priest wore were of real human

skin. It was when I moved to the subjectivity phase that the process became fluid. In an unconscious act, the skins were turned to use the texture on the reverse side and instead of masks they became faces; they were no longer masks that were superimposed on a face. Eyes and mouths were added. This happened through the manipulation of the materials and the allowing of free associations and encouragement of mental connections. Wire was added to the back to give shape to the faces. I decided not to give them ears but added some holes to the heads to serve in the intended interconnection of all the face masks. New associations emerged as the process unfolded.



Fig. 22. Process of making the lambskin masks.

Nine masks out of the eleven that were made were assembled on a wooden support, upon which a flowery pattern in oil had been painted. Some small wooden blocks were attached to the back of the mask faces as well as wire armature to add more body.



Fig. 23. Sra. Luisa Gallardo. (2010) Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

The synthesis took place when the final composition and placement of each piece was decided. There had to be a central mask-face who would be the only one with eyes. This would be the figure of the shaman or hero that takes the group forward past a threshold. They are interconnected through the orifices in their heads and mouths with a variety of mobile cable chargers. The piece was completed in February 2011.



Fig. 24. Nine masks for Flower and Song being assembled.

The Triadic Analytic Guide⁵⁹ was followed to develop some questions and answers in relation to this piece such as: What is the meaning of the composition and the use of multiple masks? What does the background represent? Why are they interconnected? The guide is one of the strategies in the revelation of meaning.

Flower and Song is a sculptural piece that measures 1.20m x 1.20m. It is composed of nine lambskin face masks mounted on a wooden support. A flowery pattern is painted on the background in oil. The masks are all interconnected or joined by a number of different mobile chargers that come in and out the orifices on the heads and mouths. The reverse of the lambskin was used to give them human quality and texture.

The first impression is of a group of talking heads that are interconnected and communicating through a series of cables that are mimicking the branches of the elegant swirl of the flowery pattern in the background. My intention was to give a feeling of uneasiness or false sense of security as the piece is encountered by the

viewer. The aim of this artwork is to transmit the sensation of the moment when a group is in trance or going over a threshold as in a transcendental experience or meditative act. It is also my intention to transmit the notion that it is the mask that carries the symbolic transformation and the link between present and past.

The years 2009 to 2010 were an important time of reflection for me because of the impact the encounter with the work of a number of authors had on my research, thoughts, and practice. These encounters helped me to see my culture from a distance, as an émigré, through the eyes, minds and points of view of various authors and critically evaluate historical events and interactions between colonized and colonizers from long ago. This is a brief explanation of the historical events, data and ideas that have influenced the creation of the piece *Flower and Song*:

At the time of the Conquest in 1521, the dominant group was the Triple Alliance, often simply referred to as the Aztecs,⁶⁰ who were defeated by Spanish conquistadores led by Hernán Cortés. King Charles V was the King of Spain at this time and who funded the Conquest to extend his empire. An ideological justification for the military conquest, atrocities, genocide and dominance over these people and valuable land was obviously required. Hence the Indians were portrayed as bloodthirsty savages and barbarians who worshipped the devil and needed to be saved and converted to Christianity in order to gain heaven. The Spaniards had been chosen by God to bring them salvation.

According to Charles C. Mann,⁶¹ in 1524 a group of twelve Franciscan monks arrived in Mexico mandated by Cortes to win over the Indians spiritually (2006: 112-124). They met with a group of Mexica priests and the two delegations of elite clerics battled over the nature of God. As reported by Mann, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún knew ten of the twelve Franciscans and interviewed four of the Mexica priests. Forty

years later he reconstructed this encounter.⁶² In Sahagún's reconstruction the Franciscan monks found a group of very wise Mexica priests, high-ranking clerics and elite intellectuals similar to the monks themselves. They were skilled rhetoricians proud of their intellectual traditions. Mann explains,

'In the end the friars resorted to a crude but effective argument: the Indians had to pledge fealty to the Christian god, because their own "gods were not powerful enough to liberate them from the hands of the Spaniards." In a sober ceremony, the Mexica abjured their old religion and embraced Christianity' (2006: 114).

Sahagún, as well as others, comprehended the atrocities the Spanish Conquest had brought to the Indians and the immoral destruction of a great civilization but struggled with the Indians' sacrificial practices. For many years he worked to gather much information and archived it in manuscripts and in the *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España* and in the *Codex Florentino*.⁶³ Sahagún's manuscripts as well as others were kept in obscurity for centuries, censored and in some cases destroyed in order to justify or deny the cruelty of the Spanish Colonial Empire. In relation to the censorship León-Portilla tells us that,

'It is important to recall here that the Spanish royal authorities, including the Holy Office of the Inquisition, far from being inclined to preserve testimonies of the ancient culture, had ordered in many instances the confiscation and destruction of all sorts of "idolatrous objects," in particular idols and native books. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún himself had to face in 1577 the consequences of a Royal Cedula of Philip II...' (1980: 37).

Here is Eduard Seler,⁶⁴ cited in Benjamin Keen,⁶⁵

'Seler upheld the belief in the reality of the creative capacity of the ancient Mexicans and the originality of their achievements. He depicted them as a people capable of making accurate astronomical observations and complex mathematical calculations, a people whose picture writings, sculpture, and prayers revealed a poetic imagination disciplined and controlled by a set of beliefs about the universe. They were a people moving toward greater heights of self-expression and mastery of their environment and Seler regretted that they had not had a "couple of hundred years longer to develop [their] own peculiar civilization"' (1990: 450).

In the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, anthropologists, ethnographers, linguists, and other academics rediscovered old manuscripts and reevaluated American civilizations. The West rediscovered ancient Mexico as well. The Mexican Revolution in 1910 up to the 1940s also triggered a reclamation amongst Mexicans of their own past.

According to Fernando Horcasitas (1980),⁶⁶ between 1890 and 1910 there were only a few scholarly publications and a few students and scholars of Nahuatl and other Indian languages working on ancient texts, such as Seler in Germany, and Francisco del Paso y Troncoso in Mexico. The work was on a very small scale.⁶⁷ Later the work of two Mexican linguists contributed greatly to the understanding of Nahuatl literature and thought. Fr. Angel María Garibay Kintana's work became known in the 1940s and his student Miguel León-Portilla followed with more original work. Both of them researched and translated primary Nahuatl source documents. Most importantly they translated Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's Florentine Codex.

Horcasitas (1980: xv) explains that in the 1920s the Mexican priest, Fr. Garibay began to learn Nahuatl and his translations of Nahuatl poetry were published in the 1930s. He recognized the importance of Garibay's contribution when in 1940 *Llave del nahuatl* (Key to Nahuatl)⁶⁸ was published and since then Mexican and foreign scholars have worked assiduously to increase this knowledge. He states, "Our knowledge of Nahuatl literature, consequently, dates back only a little more than half a century..." (1980: xv).

Horcasitas goes on to say:

'... the Aztec now unfold before us as a puzzled, meditative people, ridden with questions about the essence of human and divine, perplexed by the real meanings of life and death. Their literature expresses these concerns in refined cadences, exultant at times, wistful at others, extolling friendship and music and pleasure and beauty. Among these poetic "strings of flowers", sung to the plaintive notes of the flute, are interwoven the subtle doubts that mystified the poet-philosophers:

preoccupations with this life and the hereafter, and the difficulties of finding truth on earth' (1980: xv).

León-Portilla has contributed greatly to the understanding and reevaluation of Nahuatl literature and thought through researching, translating, interpreting, and publishing several compilations of Nahuatl work. With such new discovery and enlightenment we have been better able to relate and connect with the Pre-Hispanic world view and ways of apprehension.

In Nahuatl rhetoric, things were frequently represented by the unusual device of naming two of their elements. León-Portilla explains,

*“Flower and song was a standard double epithet for poetry, the highest art; jade and quetzal feathers was a synecdoche for great value, in the way that Europeans might refer to gold and silver.”*⁶⁹

The poets, Edward Kissam and Michael Schmidt (1977),⁷⁰ when referring to Aztec poems and the Nahuatl language explain, “The Aztec (Nahuatl) language is synthetic rather than analytic; it builds up phrases conjugated from word units and particles. Each phrase is composed of several fused elements.”⁷¹

According to them, “Sahagún typified the native artists as men who ‘communicate with their own hearts’”(1977: 17). They state,

“Each poem relates to various levels of thought: literal, philosophical, mythical, and religious. The poetry tries to integrate these levels in a single statement, and only a small number of symbolic terms is common to all levels” (1977: 16).

The deeper meaning I intend to convey in the piece *Flower and Song* is the connection and rediscovery of this ancient thought and way of seeing the world. Through the different poems that have survived the Conquest the ancient voices are still heard. The

Indian heritage is still alive in Mexican culture and most deeply in the Indian groups that continue to speak Nahuatl and compose poetry. This artwork represents the communion and communication that still exists between “us” and “them”, the spirit world and Mother Nature. As León-Portilla (1980: 53) says, the Mesoamerican sages left, through metaphors and symbols in their literary work, a source of meaning and the means to preserve the memory of their life and thought.

Written in Book VI of the Florentine Codex and translated from the Nahuatl we have the following flower and song:

“Another time, it shall be thus, another time things shall be thus, in another time, in another place. What happened long ago and which now is no longer done, another time it shall be done, another time it shall be thus, as it was in very distant times. Those who live today shall live another time, they shall live once again.”⁷²

J.M.G. Le Clezio (2009)⁷³ poses the question of how those civilizations might have evolved if they hadn't been interrupted by the destruction of the Conquest. He argues that they were ahead of Europe in medicine, astronomy, irrigation, drainage and urbanism. Most importantly, that there was harmony and equilibrium between man and the world, a balance between body and the spirit and the union between the individual and the collective (2009: 205). He is of the opinion that Western man is now in disequilibrium and must reinvent all that once made up the beauty and harmony of the civilizations he has destroyed (ibid: 208). Thanks to the efforts, dedication and tireless work of scholars, anthropologists, ethnographers, linguists, historians, translators and writers the Amerindian legacy is being rescued. As Le Clezio points out, the last survivors took refuge in the most inaccessible and remote regions in mountains, deserts or forests (ibid: 206), and these last survivors have maintained their myths, language and spirituality. He states, ‘They continue to be the guardians of “Our Mother the Earth,” the observers of the laws of nature and the cycle of time’ (2009: 208).

Horcasitas says, “The pre-Columbian spirit and oral legacy aided the Indian to survive into our times” (1980: xvii). He explains,

“The Ancient Word or moral speech is still alive in many Indian communities and is expressed at marriage ceremonies in solemn sentences to strengthen the young couple in their new life. The cosmological myths are not dead: stories about the creation of man and the universe are still told...” (1980: xvi).⁷⁴

For one moving example, one may see for instance—an electronic link to the *Milpaneco* child Carlos Rafael Aparicio Alonso reciting the Nahuatl poem: “Yo amo el canto del Zenzontle” (I love the song of the Zenzontle bird) by the great poet King Nezahualcoyotl (1402-1472). The young boy belongs to the community of *Milpa Alta* which is the district with the highest indigenous population in Mexico City:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23dnpByHFOA>

Flower and Song represents this need to find the equilibrium between Nature and man in order to survive. It represents those voices of our ancestors the Mesoamerican Indians and the bridge that communicates what is Western with what is native American. We are all connected and interconnected through nature, our spirituality, our minds and in this century through virtual networks and technology. We are in great need of finding an equilibrium for the sake of survival itself.

1.2.5 Black Mask, White Thoughts⁷⁵ (Montoya-Turnill: 2011) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This piece developed in parallel with the piece *Flower and Song*. The analysis of the ritualistic elements in Pre-Hispanic ceremonies and in *Lucha Libre Mexicana* contributed to the creation of *Black Mask, White Thoughts*.

In recent years, much attention has focused on what ritual has in common with theatrical performance, dramatic spectacle, and public events. *Lucha Libre Mexicana* is

a ritual-like spectacle that unites old ancient sacral rites with modern performance transmitting cultural meaning to the Mexican public. During the interviews with the wrestlers: Blue Demon Junior, Sangre Azteca, Cassandro and Solar, it was clear that they were conscious of the weight of symbolic meaning carried by their masks and costumes and conveyed through intense sensory experience. The audience is mentally and emotionally pulled into a complex encounter where they actively take part in, and play an integral role in the performance.

Catherine Bell (2009)⁷⁶ has approached ritual theory and practice with a wider understanding of what ritual encompasses for us today as more complex social media and cultural construction of tradition create a variety of roles communicating many meanings. According to Bell,

‘In recent years, much attention has focused on what ritual has in common with theatrical performances, dramatic spectacles, and public events. Most of these comparisons rest on a recognition that the performative dimension per se—that is, the deliberate, self-conscious “doing” of highly symbolic actions in public—is key to what makes ritual, theatre, and spectacle what they are’ (2009: 159-160).

She argues that the qualities of performance can be analyzed in terms of several overlapping features, and argues, “First of all, performances communicate on multiple sensory levels, usually involving highly visual imagery, dramatic sounds, and sometimes even tactile, olfactory, and gustatory stimulation” (ibid: 160). Bell, quoting Handelman (1990)⁷⁷ explains,

“...the ritual-like nature of performative activities appears to lie in the multifaceted sensory experience, in the framing that creates a sense of condensed totality, and in the ability to shape people’s experience and cognitive ordering of the world. In brief, performances seem ritual-like because they explicitly model the world “ (ibid: 161).

In *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, through a ritualized fight, the forces of Good and Evil confront each other and as Monsiváis states, “Here the ghost of Olympics past

intervenes: rites of passage, carnivals, staged delirium, sacramental representations at full speed, love for the events on the arena” (2003: 8-10).

According to the Markmans (1989: xxi), Pre-Hispanic ritual has its origin in the shamanic heritage of early Mesoamerican religion⁷⁸ which relied upon belief in inner/outer, spirit/matter dichotomies (ibid: 144) as ways of explaining their natural world. Ritual performances allowed them to cross between these realms to participate and communicate with the source of the spirit. The mask serves as symbolic gateway between these two worlds. The Markmans explain,

‘When donned in ritual, the mask allowed men to become gods, to experience the numinous in all its intimacy and urgency... In Mesoamerica masked ritual, the world of the spirit and the world of daily existence met, and the dynamic tension between those two opposed worlds catapulted the masked impersonators of the gods, and, vicariously, those who participated by watching, out of the familiar routine of their daily existence into “a no-time and no-place that resists classification”, which Victor Turner⁷⁹ also called the “liminal experience”’ (1989: 66).

The process of making *Black Mask, White Thoughts* started in 2010 with sketchbook drawings and the exploration of best materials to use. This time black leather was used. It had a different feeling and texture. It was also made in collaboration with Sra. Luisa Gallardo in her workshop.

The Triad Analytic Guide⁸⁰ was applied to this artwork to make associations and reveal significance. During the objective stage, elements reoccur but different materials will always give different results and meaning. This piece is seen from a new perspective interrogating materials, composition and appearance starting the dialogue with the object as it takes shape.

For this piece, Lintel 24⁸¹ from Yaxchilán⁸² in Chiapas, Mexico was studied. It depicts the bloodletting ritual with the King of Yaxchilán, Shield-Jaguar II, and his

wife, Lady K'ab'al Xoc. He is holding a torch over his wife who is pulling a thorny rope through her tongue. Blood can be seen around her mouth and dropping into torn pieces of paper in a basket. This was a public ritual of self-sacrifice. The blood in the papers was burned in incense as an offering of food to the gods.⁸³ The rope is an element that reoccurs in my practice so I was attracted to this lintel in particular.

During the subjectivity or imagination phase drawings were made and cables were gathered. The synthesis took place when the piece became visible by connecting the different elements giving reign to the subconscious. In a quick gesture, it was assembled and hooks were added to ends of the cables coming out from the head of the mask face. The background contains the same flowery motif as *Flower and Song*, it was painted in reference to sacrificial blood. Memory cards of the recordings of the 2009 interviews of the wrestlers made in Mexico were incorporated. There is again a recurrence of elements. Ropes were changed for cables—some were electric cables, others mobile phone chargers. The change of materials was intended to bring the piece into the twenty-first century by making reference to new technologies. The cables had to be of the right texture (soft or hard) and thickness. On the head they had to be hard in order to keep upright and support the memory cards. The ones coming from the mouth had to be flexible and soft, dropping to the floor.

Black Mask, White Thoughts is a sculptural interactive piece.⁸⁴ It consists of a central black mask face on a wooden support painted with a flowery motif in red oil. From the head a number of cables come from various orifices that hold memory cards containing the recordings of the interviews of the *luchadores* made in Mexico during the 2009 fieldtrip. The tongue is sticking out of the mouth. It is pierced and from the orifice a number of cables are coming out and dropping to the floor. There is an MP3 player with a set of headphones to listen to the audio-recording of a selection of ten minutes of an interview with Blue Demon Jr. In the interview he explains how he has

to put on his mask in order to become his character even when he is at home and answering the phone with nobody looking if he is to speak as Blue Demon Jr. The conversation is between Blue Demon Jr. and myself in Spanish.

The first impression I intend to create on the viewer when he/she encounters this artwork is of a Medusa look-alike black head that is throwing up some cables (or perhaps the tongue is bleeding long black cables) on a red flowery interconnected background pattern. Memory cards coming out of the head are noticeable and there is an invitation to listen to it when one perceives the headphones. It is not a peaceful sight but it gives the sensation that it is somehow exploding or haemorrhaging and needs to be heard. It is as if it were in a state of trance or ecstasy and its inner thoughts have been brought to the foreground. The aim is to invite the viewer to reflect on the hidden messages that are inside the audio tapes and the hidden messages that still remain in rituals, codexes and stories that have been passed on from Indian generations throughout the years.



Fig. 25. Detail of Black Mask, White Thoughts. Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

What is the meaning of *Black Mask, White Thoughts* to me, the interpreter/creator?

This interactive piece represents the threshold and the transformation during a moment

of ecstasy or trance. This artwork for me represents the liminal space of being in between worlds, the present Mexico and the forgotten Indian world. As I reflected on the new knowledge acquired from the various texts I read and the codexes I have analysed, the Indian world unfolded. It had been hidden and forgotten but clues remain of this mythical world. Their voices and way of living are still present in Mexico. This artwork contains various hidden voices. I have divided them into the upper voices coming from the head and encoded in the memory cards and the hidden voices coming from the flowery speech from the mouth represented by long black cables. They are hidden voices I have encountered during my research. Firstly the upper voices, the voices of the *luchadores* recorded in memory cards. During the encounters with the *luchadores* in London and in Mexico, I entered their world. And secondly my encounter through the writings of past and present chroniclers, anthropologists, historians, linguists, academics and writers who have revealed to me the Indian world. The lower voices of the piece, coming from the mouth, are the voices of the Mesoamerican people encoded in their poems: flower and song, their languages⁸⁵ such as the Nahuatl and the art and architecture left in the American continent.

I have been allowed to enter, to some degree at least, the world of the Indian, largely destroyed by the Spanish colonizer and the attempt to impose cultural hegemony. Thankfully that endeavour was only partially successful. Especially, the extent to which Indian populations have maintained their native languages ensure the continuation of their cultures and legacy as it is passed on by oral tradition through generations.

There is still a deeply entrenched class/race structure today in Mexico. Even though the presidents have been democratically elected-- very soon they reveal their class-supremacist thoughts and faces behind their mestizo's masks. Franz Fanon states that after a Revolution or Independence, when the militants and peasants have

helped to accomplish this, the party leaders take control and are given administrative posts while all the rest disappear and become citizens (2001: 137).⁸⁶ He goes on to say, “The party is becoming a means of private advancement... Privileges multiply and corruption triumphs, while morality declines” (ibid: 138).

While Fanon wrote the above indictment more than half a century ago, it is regrettably still relevant to the current situation in Mexico. Mexican politicians hypocritically speak of a democratic government and fairness for all wearing their black (mestizo) masks while their internalized elitist and racist white thoughts betray their very own Mexicanness and the people they pretend to serve.

¹ **Mask**, n. [F. masque, fr. It. Maschera, mascara, fr. Ar. Maskharah buffoon (whence also ML> masca mask), fr. sakhira to ridicule. [f. MASQUE. MASQUERADE]. 1. A cover, or partial cover, for the face, used for disguise; as, a dancer's mask. 2. A festive dance or other diversion where all wear masks; a masquerade; hence, a revel; a delusive show; —now often spelled masque. "The world's vain mask." Milton. 3. That which disguises or conceals; a pretext or subterfuge; as, under the mask of night. 4. A person wearing a mask; a masker. 5. A grotesque false face worn at carnivals, etc. 6. A sculptured face or face and neck, or a copy of a face made by means of a mold or plaster, wax, etc; as, a death mask. 7. The head or face of an animal, as a fox or a dog. 8. A protective covering.... 12. Theatre. a. In classical antiquity, a figure of a head worn on the stage, serving to identify the character and project the voice. The Romans sometimes played without mask; the Greeks never. Ancient Greek masks used in Tragedy and Comedy. b. A form of dramatic performance in vogue. esp. Buckle in the 16th and 17th centuries, in which the actors wore masks and represented usually mythical or allegorical characters. The acting consisting only in dancing and dumb show; also, a dramatic composition for such performances; —now also spelled masque.

maskoid adj, [mask+-oid] like a mask, -n. Amer. Archaeol. A mask like carving, such as are found on ancient Mexican and Peruvian buildings. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster's New Dictionary*.

² Roberta Markman (-died 2000) was an American writer and professor of Comparative Literature; Peter Markman is an American writer and professor of English and Mythology.

³ **Syncretism** (fr. Greek synkretismos - fr. synkretizein) to combine. 1. The reconciliation or union of conflicting beliefs esp. religious beliefs, or a movement or effort intending such...2. Egregious compromise in religion or philosophy; eclecticism that is illogical or leads to inconsistency; uncritical acceptance of conflicting or divergent beliefs and principles. 3. In the development of a religion, the process of growth through coalescence of different forms of faith and worship or through accretions of tenets, customs, rites, etc, from those religions that are being superseded. 4. Philol. The union or fusion into one of two or more originally different inflectional forms, as of two cases. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster's New Dictionary*.

⁴ Markman and Markman 1989, p. 155. See chapter 11, *Syncretism, The Structural Effect of the Conquest*, pp. 155-166.

⁵ "In 1428-30...The Mexica and the Acolhua then formed a Triple Alliance with the Tepanecs of Tlacopan, which was designed to dominate the Basin and conquer distant regions...Tenochtitlan, as the Mexica called their settlement, had become one of world's largest cities by 1519, the year when Hernán Cortés and his Spanish conquistadores arrived...With an estimated 250,000 inhabitants..." Frances Berdan, *Aztec Society, Economy: Tribute and Warfare*, in Royal Academy of Arts, 2002, p. 38.

⁶ Pastorelas and Diablos are Spanish Nativity dances and representations depicting the struggle between Good and Evil and the final triumph of good Christians. . "On the basis of their understanding of pre-Columbian thought, both see the costumed figures identified as k'uk'ul conetik (literally, plumed serpents), as central to the rituals' rain symbolism" in Markman and Markman 1989, p. 177, quote Kurath, G. (1967) HMAI 6: 158-190, *Drama, Dance, and Music*. The wrestler Blue Demon Jr. wore a plumed headpiece as part of his costume for his entrances at the Roundhouse, London *Lucha Libre* performances resonating with the plumed serpent Pre-Hispanic symbolism. See figure. 15, p. 46.

⁷ See Markman and Markman 1989, pp. 167-178, chapter 12, *The Pre-Columbian Survivals, The Masks of the Tigre*.

⁸ Mascara Tecuani – used during the Dance of the Tecuanis or Tigers that represents a battle and sacrifice that is offered to Mother Earth in exchange of good crops in the year. Image from National Anthropology Museum Mexico city – Curator of this section: Ma. De Lourdes Maez Cubero, [Online] Available: <<http://www.mna.inah.gob.mx/index.php/salas-de-exhibicion/permanentes/etnografia/los-nahuas.html?Itemid=68>> [06 February 2013].

⁹ Hunt, E. 1977, pp. 247-8, *The Transformation of the Hummingbird: Cultural Roots of a Zinacantan Mythical Poem*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, quoted in Markman and Markman, 1989, p.156.

¹⁰ In Markman and Markman 1898, pp. 155-166, chapter 11, *Syncretism*, they give us further examples of such coincidences.

¹¹ Gerald W. Morton and George M. O' Brien explain that the oldest known record of wrestling is an statuette of a cast bronze figurine of wrestlers gripping each other's hips or belts. American

anthropologists found it in 1938 while excavating the 5000-year-old Sumerian temple of Kyfaje near Baghdad. They say, “It is significant that it was found at a religious site, for historians agree in tracing the origins of wrestling in ancient times to cults celebrating life and death. In Egyptian tombs stone friezes and paintings of wrestlers have been found” in Morton and O’ Brien 1985, p.7, *Wrestling to Rasslin’, Ancient Sport to American Spectacle*.

¹² Homi K. Bhabha (1949-) is the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities in the Department of English, the Director of the Humanities Center and the Senior Advisor on the Humanities to the President and Provost at Harvard University.

¹³ Dan Madigan is an American television producer, author and screenwriter. He has worked in the professional wrestling industry as well as working and producing for WWE Smackdown. His Lucha name is “Baron”.

¹⁴ García Canclini 2005, pp. 184-5, chapter 6, *The Popular and Popularity: From Political to Theatrical Representation*.

¹⁵ See Categories of Luchadores and Fans in Chapter Three, part 1, 3.1.3 and 3.1.4.

¹⁶ See Lucha Britannia and London School of Lucha Libre websites.

¹⁷ *La Lucha Libre vuelve al Price*, (2010) José Antonio Ortega, director, Francesca Lissa y Celso Pereira, acróbats, Cristian Guerrero, boxer, Igor Yebra, Sol Picó and Ismael Galván dancers, see websites: Es.madrid.com (2010) and Es pro Madrid (2008). *El Teatro Circo Price*, Revived the ambience of old combats at the Price – Director Jose Antonio Ortega put together in Madrid this classic and contemporary performance with acrobats Francesca Lissa y Celso Pereria, the boxer Christian Guerrero and the dancers Igor Yebra and Sol Pico. The English Thomas Price in Madrid originally created the Teatro Circo Price in 1868 that ran till 1970 reopening in 2007.

¹⁸ Lucha Britannia website.

¹⁹ Ismael Galván vs. 3.000, performance for “La Lucha Libre vuelve al Price” and Ismael Galván, Premio Max al Mejor Interprete de Danza Masculino (2010), see online links.

²⁰ García Canclini prefers to use the term hybridization instead of syncretism and mestizaje. He says that “...it [hybridization] includes diverse intercultural mixtures—not only the racial ones to which mestizaje tends to be limited—and because it permits the inclusion of the modern forms of hybridization better than does ‘syncretism’ a term that almost always refers to religious fusions or traditional symbolic movements.” Quoted from his notes, p. 11, *Hybrid Cultures*, Entrance.

²¹ In García Canclini’s official website: *Culturas híbridas, Estrategias para salir y entrar a la modernidad*.

²² Monsiváis (2003), *Lucha Libre As A Masked Olympus*, in Grobet 2006, pp. 8-11.

²³ Xipe Totec – Image from National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, [Online] Available: < <http://www.mna.inah.gob.mx/index.php/component/content/article/45-actuales/213-los-dioses-de-barro.html> /> [05 February 2013].

²⁴ For more detailed information on the creation and development of *Lucha Libre* masks, see Madigan 2007, pp. 46-49, *Masks*.

²⁵ See images and description in Royal Academy of Arts 2002, pp. 422-23, *IV Gods of Life*.

²⁶ See Xipe Totec in Miller and Taube 2003, pp. 188-9.

²⁷ Sahagún, Fray Bernardino, 16th c., *Florentine Codex or Historia General de las Cosas la Nueva España*. The Spanish missionary and chronicler Fray Bernardino de Sahagún was a Franciscan friar, linguist and ethnographer who arrived in Mexico after the Conquest to help with the Catholic evangelization of the Indian population of the new colony. He learned the Nahuatl Indian language allowing him to translate and document Indian thought and culture that was recorded in his *Florentine Codex*. He has been considered as the first anthropologist.

²⁸ De Zahagún, Fr. B., (Fr. Angel María Garibay K- ed. and translation, notes and appendix) 2006, chapter XXI, pp. 97-101: *De las ceremonias y sacrificios que se hacían en el segundo mes que se llamaba Tlacaxipehualiztli*, and chapter XXII, pp. 101-102: *De las fiestas y sacrificios que se hacían en el postrero dia del segundo mes, que se decía Tlacaxipehualiztli*.

²⁹ The Marksmans (1989: pp. 80-81) explain the Xipe Totec ritual, ‘The ritual and the art depicting it require us to consider separately the external covering and the essence of a living being. Most literally, the god the essence; he is “the flayed one” who is revealed by the stripping away of his covering mask according to the consistent logic of Mesoamerican sacrifice which always, at the sacrificial moment, opens or removes the outer to reveal the inner that is metaphorically the essence of life itself—the god. When that now-removed covering or mask was donned by another in ritual, the wearer almost literally found himself within the skin of the god. And after the skin had been flayed from the sacrificed body of the impersonator, the flesh

was cooked and eaten in a form of communion that reversed the metaphor by placing the god's essence within the ritual participant.'

³⁰ Royal Academy of Arts 2002, pp. 422-23. The description and analysis is partly based on Sahagún's description in his *Florentine Codex*.

³¹ Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1492-1584) was a Spanish soldier and chronicler that accompanied Hernán Cortés during the Conquest of Mexico. In his old age (72) he wrote, *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España /The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* that is a manuscript that serves as evidence of what he saw during this expedition and Conquest.

³² Hall 1997, p. 9, *Representation & the Media*.

³³ Xipe Totec was the Mesoamerican god of spring, fertility, and the renewal of the earth and all living things.

³⁴ Keen 1990, p. 444. According to Keen the mask of Xipe Totec was once in the collection of the British ethnologist Henry Christy, who travelled to Mexico in 1856 and 1857 with Edward B. Taylor and later became part of the collection of the British Museum.

³⁵ Jones, M., (1990) *Fake?: The art of deception*, exh. Cat., The British Museum Press and Pasztory, E. (1982) *Falsifications and misreconstructs*, Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, [Online] Available: < www.britishmuseum.org> [5 September 2012].

³⁶ The "Aztecs" exhibition ran from the 16th of November 2002 to the 11th of April 2003.

³⁷ Xipe Totec stone sculpture exhibited as part of the exhibition *Aztecs* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London from November 2002 to April 2003. See Royal Academy of Arts 2002, pp. 172-3, photograph and description: Xipe Totec, c.1350—1521, Aztec Volcanic stone and paint, 46 x 26.3 x 27.4 m. Museum der Kulturen Basel, Basle, IVb 647.

³⁸ Berger 2005, p. 3, from the article *Life-Drawing* that first appeared as *The Basis of all Painting and Sculpture in Drawing* in *The New Statesman Magazine*, published in Permanent Red by Methuen 1960.

³⁹ Hall (1990) p. 310, in Karlra, Kaur & Hutnyk 2005, p.28. In relation to the above concepts and notions on diaspora, Stuart Hall defines a diaporic individual as being the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging to one and at the same time to several homes.

⁴⁰ Hall (2007) in conversation with Les Back, audio recording published in 2009.

⁴¹ **Phenomenology** – n. [*phenomenon* + *-logy*; cf. F. *phénoménologie*.] **1.** The branch of science dealing with the description and classification of *phenomena*. **2. a.** With Kant, that division of metaphysics which treats of motion and rest as predictable of things. **b.** With Hegel, the doctrine of the growth of science or knowledge; considered as the 'phenomenology of the spirit,' the progress of mind from the lowest to the highest stages. **3.** Scientific description of actual phenomena, with avoidance of all interpretation, explanation, and evaluation.

Phenomenological, adj. – **Phenomenologically**, adv. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster's New Dictionary*.

⁴² Bill Prosser's approach to drawing and creating work from a phenomenological perspective. It consists of three steps: Objectification, Imagination and Synthesis. Bill Prosser is a British artist and researcher. See Appendix 1, Glossary.

⁴³ **Phenomenon**, n.; pl. **-ena**. [LL *phaenomenon*, fr. Gr. *phainomenon*, neut. Pres. part. of *phainesthai* to appear, pass. of *phainein* to show. See. PHANTOM.]. **1.** Any observable fact or event; as: **a.** In the broadest sense, any fact or event whatever; any item of experience of reality. **b.** In the original (Greek) usage, a fact or event in the changing and perceptible forms, as distinguished from the permanent essences of things. There was a double but related antithesis in the ancient conception, *phenomena* being the mutable, caused or developing aspects of things as opposed to their fixed and substantial natures, and also their perceptible aspects or appearances as opposed to their true or ideal being. The **phenomenal world** was thus distinguished both from the **ontal world** of permanent being and the **ideal world** of permanent truth. **c.** An object of sense perception as distinguished from an ultimate reality. This meaning is due to Kant's absolute separation of the thing-in-itself from the object of experience, or *phenomenon*. It is more thorough-going than the ancient distinction, since Kant asserts the utter unknowability of the thing-in-itself, while the ancients conceived essences to be knowable. **d.** In positivistic and scientific usage, any fact or event of scientific interest susceptible of scientific description and explanation. Commonly, however, this use retains the implication of change or mode of being, that is, of an event rather than a thing, and particularly of an event which illustrates the operation of some general law. **e.** In a secondary use in science (compare the popular use, def. 2.), a rare fact or event, or one of especial or unique significance. **2.** pl.

PHENOMENONS. An exceptional, unusual, or abnormal thing or occurrence; as, to regard an event as a *phenomenon*; hence, an extraordinary or remarkable person; a prodigy. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster's New Dictionary*.

⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) dissertation (1770): *On the Form and Principle of the Sensible and Intelligent World*.

⁴⁵ There are drawings of the Tzompantli in Codex Duran, 16th c., Aztec and Codex Vaticanus 3738 (ADEVA facsimile, 1979, folio 57r). Examples in architecture: Tzompantli in Chichen Itza and wall of Templo Mayor, Mexico City, Mexico.

⁴⁶ These were five different wrestling masks that had been bought in markets in Mexico.

⁴⁷ T.A.G – Triadic Analytic Guide was used. The British artist and researcher Paul Ryan developed T.A.G. See Appendix 1, Glossary.

⁴⁸ **Anamnesis** –n- [fro. Gr. anamnesis, fr. anamimneskein to recall to memory] w. 1. A recalling to mind; recollection. 2. Med. The past history of a case of disease. 3. [usually cap.] Eccl. In Western and Eastern Consecration, containing the assurance that the church is mindful of the injunction "Do this in commemoration of Me". In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster's New Dictionary*.

⁴⁹ Lyotard, JeanFrancoise, *Anamnesis: Of the Visible 2* is a lecture that was delivered by Lyotard at the Sorbonne University for the Societe Francaise d'Esthetique on November 8th, 1997.

⁵⁰ Bracha L. Ettinger's essay *Gaze-and Touching the not Enough Mother*, in De Zegher 2006, pp. 183-213.

⁵¹ See Ettinger's *Gaze-and-Touching the Not Enough Mother* in De Zegher 2006, pp. 183- 213. Ettinger refers to Jean-Francoise Lyotard's essay: *Anamnesis: Of the Visible, in Theory, Culture and Society*, 21:1 (2004) in understanding other artist's work.

⁵² Solar is a Mexican wrestler whom I interviewed in Mexico in September 2009 and visited his house, met his family and saw his trophies and mask collection displayed on walls.

⁵³ Christian Cymet has the biggest played wrestling masks collection in Mexico. I interviewed him in October 2009 in Mexico City and saw part o his collection.

⁵⁴ Speech scrolls or volutes --virgulas de la palabra—representation of speech found in Pre-Hispanic codexes.

⁵⁵ Fr. Angel María Garibay Kintana (1892-1967), Mexican priest, philologist, linguist, historian and scholar of Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican cultures, especially Nahuatl people of Central Mexico.

⁵⁶ Miguel León-Portilla (1926-) is a Mexican historian, anthropologist, philologist, linguist and scholar. He is the prime authority on Nahuatl thought and Literature. His doctoral thesis is on Nahuatl Philosophy.

⁵⁷ Phenomenological stage were the object is represented as near as possible to reality.

⁵⁸ Tlacaxipehualiztli festival in honour of Xipe Totec– see chapter one, part 1, 1.1.4: Aztec Tropes: Xipe Totec and Tzompantli. Each year during this festival, before the rainy season, slaves would be selected and sacrificed to Xipe Totec.

⁵⁹ See Appendix 1, Glossary.

⁶⁰ According to Mann (2006: 112), the Aztecs is the term given in the 19th century by the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt but in reality the Aztecs were actually the people of three nations, the members of the Triple Alliance and the dominant group was the Mexica.

⁶¹ Mann 2006, 1491.

⁶² According to Mann (2006: 113), Sahagún recorded this encounter in a manuscript as Mann tells us: "Only part of the original document survives, written in Nahuatl, the Mexica language, which Sahagún learned to speak fluently. Still, what remains is enough to indicate how the Mexica viewed their position vis-à-vis the Spanish: defeated, but not unequal."

⁶³ De Sahagún 2006, *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España/Codex Florentino*.

⁶⁴ Eduard Seler (1849-1922), prominent German anthropologist, ethno historian, linguist, epigrapher, academic and American scholar who devoted a lot of his life's work to Mesoamerican culture.

⁶⁵ Keen 1990. Benjamin Keen (1913-2002) was an American historian specialising in the history of colonial Latin America.

⁶⁶ Fernando Horcasitas (died 1980), Mexican anthropologist, Nahuatlo (specializing in Nahuatl) and ethno historian. He received a Guggenheim fellowship to work on studies of Colonial drama in Nahuatl. In 1974, Horcasitas's *El Teatro Nahuatl* was published by UNAM. When he died he left unfinished research on Nahuatl theatre. The documents were found in 22 boxes in the library of Tulane University, New Orleans, U.S.A. They were recovered by Maria Sten. After a long task of piecing everything together, making scholarly corrections and additions, Maria Sten and

German Viveros wrote: *Teatro Nahuatl II*, 2004, UNAM. Nahuatl Theatre is the Pre-Hispanic Aztec Theatre.

⁶⁷ In León-Portilla 1980, *Native Mesoamerican Spirituality, Ancient Myths, Discourses, Stories, Doctrines, Hymns, Poems from the Aztec, Yucatec, Quiche-Maya and Other Sacred Traditions*.

⁶⁸ Horcasitas tells us that *Llave del Nahuatl* was a grammar with an appendix containing many ancient texts (1980: xv).

⁶⁹ In Mann 2006, p. 123 and León-Portilla 1963, pp. 12-3, Tlamantinime.

⁷⁰ Edward Kissam (b.1943) and Michael Schmidt (b.1947) are poets who have studied Nahuatl poetry and have lived in Mexico. They have studied Garibay's and León-Portilla's translations and contributions.

⁷¹ They argue, "In a real sense, it is misleading to speak of words in an oral poetic tradition. The poets spoke and sang units of meaning – bundles of sound assembled into one long phrase in which the word units were so fused as to be merely tributary elements to a single, precise symbol or meaning. Each of these complex phrases was rhythmically constructed and related to other phrases in its context rhythmically, alliteratively, and semantically" (1977: 16). In Kissam and Schmidt 1977, pp. 9-18.

⁷² De Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, book VI, page 196, facsimile edition (Mexico, AGN, 1969) translated by Alfredo López Austin, in Le Clezio, (2009) *The Mexican Dream, Or, The Interrupted Thought of Amerindian Civilizations*, chapter seven.

⁷³ Jean-Marie Le Clezio is a French writer and professor, b.1940 and winner of 2008 Nobel Prize for Literature. He has studied Pre-Hispanic Amerindian civilizations and has published translations of Mayan sacred texts. His doctoral thesis is on Colonial Mexican history. See Le Clezio 2009, *The Mexican Dream, Or, The Interrupted Thought of Amerindian Civilizations*.

⁷⁴ Horcasitas explains, "Even some of the details of the epic of Quetzalcoatl, the culture hero, have survived among the inhabitants of communities at the foot of snowy peaks of Popocatepetl and Iztlacihuatl, scene of the Toltec mystic's departure from the country: The villagers point out traces of hands and feet on certain rocks and attribute these marks to the passing of a holy man in ages past" (1980: xvii).

⁷⁵ The title *Black Mask, White Thoughts* echoes Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* written in 1952.

⁷⁶ Bell 2009, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. Catherine M. Bell (-died 2008), writer and professor of Religious Studies and leading expert in the field of ritual studies. Her PhD is on History of Religions.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.161, chapter 5, *Characteristics of Ritual-like Activities, Performance*, Bell quotes Handelman 1990, p. 23, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁷⁸ See Markman and Markman (1989) chapter 4, pp. 101-107, *The Shamanistic Inner Vision*.

⁷⁹ Turner, V. (1974) *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, p 259, Ithaca: Cornell University Press quoted by the Markmans. Victor Turner (1920-1983) was a British cultural anthropologist known for his work in symbols, rituals and rites of passage. "Liminal experience" –according to Turner (*ibid.*: 242-243) as explained by the Markmans (1989: 67): '...the liminal zone in which they find themselves in neither day-to-day world that confers their public status on them nor the mysterious spiritual realm; it is "betwixt and between" in that "no-place and no-time" in which intellect and bodily energy can be "liberated" from "structural custom" to confront the mysteries of the spirit.'

⁸⁰ T.A.G. see Appendix 1, Glossary.

⁸¹ Lintel 24 from Yaxchilán is a limestone lintel (one of the six panels from temple 23 at Yaxchilán) of the Maya late Classic period (AD 600-900). The lintel has traces of blue and red pigment. It is part of the British Museum Collections.

⁸² Six lintels from Yaxchilán, Chiapas, Mexico, were removed at the request of Alfred Percival Maudslay at the end of the 19th century and some are on permanent display in the British Museum's Mexico gallery. A. Maudslay was a British colonial diplomat, explorer and archaeologist. He studied Mayan ruins and one of the first to record and photograph them. Unfortunately he destroyed part of temple 23 in order to take the 6 lintels to the U.K. One of them got lost on the way to Germany.

⁸³ We know all this thanks to being able to decipher the Mayan script or glyphs that accompany the lintels and that are found on the walls of the buildings in the compound in Chiapas, Mexico.

⁸⁴ The Triadic Analytic Guide was used to analyse it. See Glossary.

⁸⁵ There are many other languages Indian communities still speak in Mexico and Central America.

⁸⁶ Fanon 2001, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

CHAPTER TWO

Part 1. Construction of Mexicanness

This chapter explores the construction of Mexicanness as an exercise in social and cultural engineering, designed by a ruling elite, and aided by artists and intellectuals. This occurred over a period of many years with the conscientious intention to create a new nation state following the chaos and destruction of the long Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). It also follows the historical development of *Lucha Libre* during this period of national redefinition drawing upon analysis in Julio Revolledo Cárdenas's study¹ of the circus in Mexico.

Revolledo Cárdenas (2010: 25) tells us about the “maroma” exhibitions, the post-Conquest precursors of the modern circus whose early performers were primarily from Spain.² The “maroma” spectacles that continued until the nineteenth century, the foreign circuses that performed in Mexico, the principal national theaters and circuses that organized events and matches including foreign wrestlers and the foreign soldiers who brought and taught wrestling to Mexicans, all contributed to the development of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. By the 1930s *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, having been established and recognised in Mexico, had been influenced by British, Continental European, Japanese and American wrestling styles.

The work of the Mexican artist, María Izquierdo, a courageous individualist who would not submit to the canons established by the institutionalized system of that time, inspired a series of practical artistic explorations that I call *Echoes of La Maroma*. With this series of artworks and a second series called *Contained Inside a Box*, I attempt to demonstrate the complexity of the historical construction of what we have come to understand as Mexicanness. These works address the contradiction of the

inevitable falsity of the artificially manipulated, constructed Mexican identity and the paradoxical desire of Mexicans to “connect” with the past and their self-described Mexicanness. The Colonial legacy and class structure are still deeply embedded in Mexican society, marking, restricting, and defining the individual. Being part of a diaspora has enabled me to have a different awareness of political and social issues, including the condition of outsiders, like María Izquierdo, within Mexican society.

Not only do cultures themselves change, but also their perceived value and meaning undergo change as well. The Conquistadores believed the Indians of the Americas were savages who worshipped the Devil and that they, the Spaniards, had been chosen by God to save their souls. Today we understand better how this dogma served to impose an ideology that has justified many centuries of control and exploitation, of powerful manipulation and victimization. Obviously the imposition of the will of the powerful on weaker cultures was not unique to sixteenth century Spain but is arguably prevalent throughout the history of humanity.

Hall argues that the issue of power can never be excluded from the question of representation and explains:

“...the means of circulating those meanings become very widespread because, of course, the question of the circulation of meaning almost immediately involves the question of power. Who has the power, in what channels. Things become meaningful by the use of signifying practices. These practices help us give meaning because meaning is changeable and is not eternally fixed” (1999:14).

Additionally Hall states, “The production of meaning means that there is a kind of symbolic work, an activity, a practice, which has to go on in giving meaning to things and in communicating that meaning to someone else” (ibid: 14). He goes on to say,

“Meanings are not fixed, that there are also practices propagating meaning in our societies such as personal communication, the media and institutions. Sometimes

institutional systems take over and substitute face-to-face, person-to-person communication and exchange” (1999: 14).

I am aware that many of the symbols I am using in my practice have been learned and acquired consciously or unconsciously through living in three societies: the Mexican, the Spanish and the English. Many of my attitudes, beliefs and the meaning I give to the world have changed through the process of living in different cultures. This influences the way I think and the way I make use of symbols in my practice and in the production of meaning.

Reflecting on Oriana Baddeley and Valerie Fraser’s analysis³ of art and cultural identity among Latin American artists, I agree with many of their observations. In the processes of making work, there is a nostalgia for lost innocence, for the ritual power of the art of the past with its mysterious codes and patterning. My own work has developed with an increasingly political and social dimension (1989: 99). The processes of cultural syncretism cannot be overlooked—creating art while living in Western Europe but having a Latin American background will necessarily produce new forms and ways of approaching art. “The need to explore the past, to locate the distant body of the many-headed Hydra of contemporary culture, remains a strong motivating force for many Latin American artists, whatever the specific idiom of their work” (Baddeley and Fraser, 1989: 100).

I believe that for many of us the service and practice of art and life are interconnected and interactive at the deepest human levels. Among many other things one may think of, art may help us to cope with life, to understand or just deal with it, to transform, share or simply reflect upon it or feel more intensely. Most importantly art may help give meaning to lives seeking to detach themselves from institutional or nation-state ideology. Ultimately, as Antoni Tàpies (2011: 59) says, “I

want to integrate into my painting all that is felt today in my country, pleasant and unpleasant: suffering, painful experiences, imprisonments, a gesture of revolt. Art must live the truth.”⁴

Consequently each piece of work discussed in this study has been conceived after a process where the object or theme is explored through a number of strategies or stages. The process is as important as the end product and the work is conceived through the exploration of the object’s materiality or through the manipulation of materials. Drawing in my practice is not only mark making but the manipulation and exploration of materials to create marks, lines, forms and shapes. Physicality and the tactile play an important role in the act of drawing and creating work. As Catherine de Zegher explains,

‘Some artists treat the work of art less as an object and more as a process that “creates” the subject. They have submitted the complex structure of visual language to critical analysis, while also increasingly drawing on ideas of the relational that emerge in art-making...The significance of their work lies in the continuity of issues that developed earlier, but that were covered and denied any importance in art history. The spatial development of relation that the hand stages is also much linked to drawing, which is particularly suited to this visual and mental exploration, yet equally excluded from art history as a subservient medium until very recently. Drawing as primary response to the surrounding world is an outward gesture that links our inner impulses and thoughts to the Other through the touching of an inscriptive surface with repeated graphic marks’ (2006: 214).⁵

The artists that represent this approach and have influenced my work, are the German-born American artist, Eva Hesse (1936- 1970), the Mexican artist, Francisco Toledo (1940 -) and the Catalan artist, Antoni Tàpies (1923 - 2012).

2.1.1 Construction of Mexicanness, Lucha Libre Mexicana and the Circus

Mexicanness is best viewed as a creation of the combination of the historical Mexico and a culturally constructed Mexico, a post-colonial hybrid, and an understanding of it can only be approached from the perspective of historical process. The development of

Lucha Libre has markedly influenced as well as depended upon historical trends and the evolution of popular culture. What Octavio Paz says about the reasons he wrote the *Labyrinth of Solitude*, is instructive;

“The Mexican is not an essence but a history. Neither ontology nor psychology. What intrigued me (intrigues me) was not only ‘the national character’ but what that character hides: that which is behind the mask” (2007: 363).⁶



Fig. 26. The Olmec Wrestler / El Luchador Olmeca. Basalt sculpture 65cms high x 54.30cms x 43.50 cms, Mexico Pre-classic – Olmec - (1200-400 BC)⁷Cultures of the Golf Cost Room, National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City. Image © National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City.

Mexico’s history has always involved a struggle for land. The 1493 Papal Bull *Inter Caetera* granted the Spanish Monarchs and their successors the newly discovered lands and authorized the subjugation of its inhabitants. The Indians were dispossessed of their lands, religion and culture. This is the moment when all Indian combat sports and games, ritual dances and songs, artistic representations or any other forms of veneration of their gods were banned forever and substituted. When the great new city of Mexico was erected, a cathedral, a monastery, a governmental palace and grand houses were built on top of the defeated and destroyed Aztec imperial city. The Indians, their communities and markets were sent to the outskirts, outside its limits.



Fig.27. Acrobat / Acrobata. Caolin clay figurine 25cms x 16cms – Mexico Pre-classic – Tlatilco (1200-800 BC)⁸ Cultures of Central Highlands Room, National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City. Image © National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City

Since the times of the Colony there have been two realities in Mexico—imaginary Mexico and Mexico profundo as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (2007) defines them.⁹ This has created two ways of living that even though contradictory, have co-existed. These two worlds were conceived to be apart. The creation of “Nueva España” meant that the Crown, the Church, the Spanish nobility and some of the “conquistadores” became the owners of great expanses of land, natural resources and the labour of the Indians. Power in the colony was granted to the viceroy and the archbishop who were the representatives of the monarchy and the Pope in the colony with consequent struggles over power, land and resources among the different groups.¹⁰

Bonfil Batalla argues that Mexico profundo has inherited ways of living and seeing the world and a millennial interrelationship of man and Nature he calls “inherited knowledge” (ibid: 21).¹¹ He explains that for the Indian the land is not private or marketable but communal. It belongs to the community and communal work is an implicit collective obligation (ibid: 31-33). Cooperation is based on reciprocity as he points out,

“...he [the Indian] defines himself as belonging to an organized collectivity, group, a society, a village that possesses a cultural heritage formed and transmitted through history by successive generations” (2007: 21-22).

He also says, “The colonial origin of Mexican society has meant that the dominant

groups and classes are also those who foment the project of westernization, the creators of imaginary Mexico” (ibid: xvi).¹² Roger Bartra (2007) refers to the domination and exploitation by the nation state (elite groups and political group in power) as “a complex series of imaginary networks of power.”¹³ They have created “Lo Mexicano” (the Mexican) which is, in his view, an imaginary construction. Consequently this led to “the creation of a series of myths and mythical imagery” about what Mexican contemporary culture should be in support of and the legitimization of a hegemonic culture and elite class (ibid: 14-17).

The nineteenth century was a decisive time, as Julio Revollo Cárdenas (2010)¹⁴ tells us, when Mexico received great influence from many countries and a number of artists of all sorts would contribute to the Mexican circus. He states that after the Conquest, and before the arrival of the modern circus at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in “la Nueva España” there were exhibitions of “maromas” which were manifestations of physical abilities displayed in streets, squares of cities of the viceroyalty, farmyards, courtyards, tenements, neighbourhoods and bullrings (ibid: 25).¹⁵ He includes a print that illustrates a “maroma” performance in a courtyard in a tenement of “Nueva España” dated 1805 similar to the European prints depicting crowds attending performances of jugglers, dancers, pole climbers, tightrope walkers, musicians and wrestlers (ibid: 47).

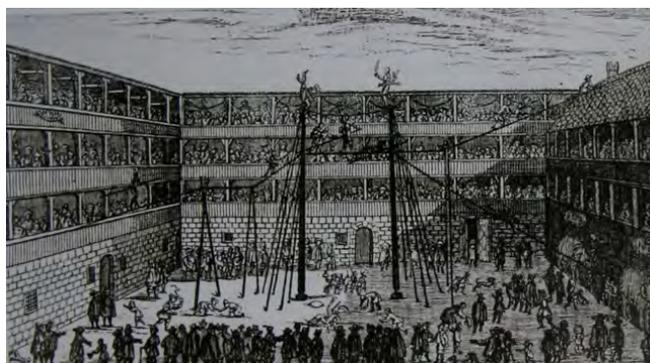


Fig. 28. La Maroma spectacle in a “vecindad” in Nueva España, 1805. Image in Julio Revollo Cárdenas’s *El Siglo de Oro del Circo en Mexico*, (2010: 47).

Historians consider the nineteenth century to be the Golden Age of the circus in Mexico (ibid: 19). It is interesting to note that the earliest recollections that we have of wrestling in Mexico are from this time. In Revolledo Cárdenas's study of the circus we find evidence of strongman acts and wrestling. He tells us that in 1845, the *Teatro de Nuevo Mexico* became the Anglo-American Circus where Daniel the elastic man, Edward Kelly the tightrope walker, a real African lion and the first strongman appeared. This strongman was Máximo Rentería who presented his act as Hercules, who also performed somersaults.¹⁶ Revolledo Cárdenas's (ibid: 38)¹⁷ explains "...from this time on characters playing Hercules appeared in the many public squares of the country"

Similarly, Möbius (2007: 66) points out that in Mexico during the nineteenth century in fairs, annual markets, and popular festivities, representations of strength and strongman acts were frequently included. She says that wrestling and boxing arrived in Latin America during this century through the introduction of modern sport by the British sailors and miners, other European immigrants and contact with the United States. Representations of wrestling, boxing and strength continued in small circuses and fairs (ibid: 66-67).

Citing Luis Reyes de la Maza's study (1972), Revolledo Cárdenas gives us more data concerning foreign theatre and circus companies that brought wrestling to Mexico in the XIX century. He says that in 1846 a French "maroma" company arrived at the National Theatre of Mexico and amongst its acts was a Frenchman called Turin who performed many dangerous acts concluding with a challenge to a member of the audience to fight with him (2010:39). In 1848 Turin participated in Greco-Roman wrestling against an American wrestler of surname Charles who was promoted as "El rey de los luchadores" (the king of wrestlers) and who may have remained in Mexico after the American invasion (Mexican-American war)¹⁸ (ibid: 39). Revolledo Cárdenas pinpoints the exact moment when "la lucha" started taking shape in Mexico. He quotes

Reyes de la Maza who explains,

“Both opponents gave public statements that created hype amongst the “luchas” [wrestling] fans without the knowledge that certainly everything had been fixed in advance. In this way this type of sports exhibition started in our country [Mexico]” (2010:39).¹⁹

These were the beginnings of the Mexican circus,²⁰ the popular theater²¹ and *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, all part of the early “maroma” spectacles, prior to evolving independently. Revollo Cardenas concludes that in the first half of the XIX century, there were different circus realities; on the one hand there were the public performances of physical ability and skill in squares, bullrings, farmyards and patios in neighborhoods all over the city, on the other, the embryonic presence of select foreign circus spectacles featuring equestrian acts as well as disciplines from the “maroma” companies (2010: 43).²²

During the time of the second French Intervention in Mexico (1862-1867),²³ Rafael Olivera Figueroa tells us that the Mexican Antonio Pérez de Prian, nicknamed “El Alcides Mexicano”,²⁴ learned wrestling from one of the French soldiers and later established a gymnasium in Mexico City to teach *Lucha Libre* (although writers from the period called it Greco-Roman wrestling) (2007).²⁵ The Greco-Roman style was the new style “French flat-hand wrestling” (Nash: 2012).²⁶ Likewise, Möbius (2004: 67) is of the opinion that at that time it more resembled Olympic wrestling. She maintains that it was not until Pérez de Prian fought and won over the American wrestler Henry Buckler that he got his famous name “El Alcides Mexicano” and in this way he is recognized as the first Mexican wrestler. After many years of wrestling he emigrated to Europe (ibid: 67).²⁷

Moreover, Christian Cymet²⁸ argues that Mexicans were influenced by the Napoleonic troops stationed in Mexico in the XIX century during the short reign of Emperor

Maximilian I of Mexico.²⁹ The Napoleonic troops wrestled as practice combat in times of peace and the Mexicans learned to wrestle from them.

Concerning the period of the government of Emperor Maximilian I, Revollo Cárdenas quotes Armando de María y Campos (1939)³⁰ who argues that there was a tendency to favor and value European and American spectacles in the city over popular spectacles of “maroma”, and consequently pushing them out of the national theaters, the courtyards and small states.

There is mention of other athletes in Revollo Cárdenas’s study: In 1869 Manuel Petterson was promoted by the Ambrosio Constanzo Company as Hercules, the strongman³¹ and the Gilfort Brothers, Robert and William, performed as Roman gladiators demonstrating physical strength and exhibiting their athletic bodies in combination with complicated physical exercises. The Gilfort Brothers were part of the Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson show in 1882 and in 1885 and 1886 of Barnum & Bailey’s. Revollo Cárdenas says that the Mexican public had by then developed an interest in “las luchas” (wrestling) and admired sculpted bodies (2010:193). Between the years 1896 and 1899 the Circo Teatro Orrin presented in Mexico City Greco-Roman matches between the American Billy Clark and the Italian Romulus with great success (Jiménez, 2013).³²

Both Christian Cymet and Möbius agree that the Frenchman Michaud Planchet in 1900 organized Greco-Roman wrestling in a bullfighting arena that belonged to José Espino Barrios.³³ In 1903 a second fight was organised in this same bullfighting arena between the Italian, Romulus, and the Mexican, Enrique Ugartechea. There had been no division between boxing and *Lucha Libre* until then. In 1903, Ugartechea became the first *Lucha Libre Mexicana* Champion.³⁴

Historians consider Enrique Ugartechea the man responsible for introducing wrestling as a sport in 1903 when he wrestled against a gladiator called “Romulus” in a bullring. Olivera Figueroa (2007: 22) also says that there is confusion as to whether it was *Lucha Libre* or Greco-Roman wrestling. Ugartechea won the title of “Campeón de Mexico” (Mexico’s Champion). Gil Larrea would win this title afterwards and worked for Salvador Lutteroth who, according to Olivera Figueroa, is the true founder of *Lucha Libre* in Mexico (ibid: 22).

According to John S. Nash (2012), in 1903 experienced judokas arrived in the United States to spread the Kodokan judo style or jujutsu (jiu-jitsu).³⁵ Nash explains that the Japanese Akitaro Ono arrived in the United States in 1905 and competed against the American Charles Orson who defeated him. While recovering, Ono was joined by Matsuyo Maeda who, using the Japanese style, defeated the “catch-as-catch-can” champion Sam Marburger. Maeda and Ono traveled to Europe in 1908 taking in “anything goes” matches and “catch-as-catch-can” wrestling competitions and were successful and influential in London with their Kodokan judo style (ibid: 2012). Nash states that towards the end of 1908 the Japanese judokas (or jiu-jitsu wrestlers): Satake Shinjiro, Tokugoro Ito, Matsuyo Maeda and Akitaro Ono, formed the group “The Four Kings of Cuba”. They would spend several years traveling, demonstrating and competing in Cuba, Mexico, El Salvador, Panama, Brazil and Peru.³⁶ *Lucha Libre Mexicana* benefited from and incorporated much of the Japanese wrestling style.

Orlando Jiménez (2013) explains that in the 1920s a wave of Greco-Roman champions arrived in Mexico participating in matches in the Principal and Colon theatres. The Principal Theatre had the performances of the world champion Giovanni Raicevich, The Invincibles, the Italian Ruggiero, the Irish Pat Conall, the Austrian Schmith, the Swedish Hjalmar Ludin and many others. In Colon Theatre, Antonio Fournier was the captain of the Greco-Roman wrestling team that included Count Koma and the Japanese

Nabutaka (ibid: 2013). Their different wrestling styles and techniques influenced Mexican wrestlers who learned from them.

Lutteroth founded the first *Lucha Libre* Company in Mexico in 1933. At this time, the conditions were favorable for Lutteroth to create this company and present the matches in a rented arena designed specifically for *Lucha Libre*. He had the experience of having been a boxing promoter and there was a pool of *luchadores* to choose from who were already known to the public and ready to entertain the new urban masses. The location of this first arena in a popular neighborhood of Mexico City meant that crowds had easy access to attend matches and see these emerging popular heroes compete.

It is important to consider the *Porfiriato* (Díaz's government: 1876-1910)³⁷ in order to understand the development of events that led to the construction of Mexicanness. Fabiola Martínez Rodríguez's analysis (2004)³⁸ of the artistic production (paintings, monuments and architecture) during the *Porfiriato*, corroborates the fact that the ideology and imagery were created by elite artists, intellectuals and government officials before the 1910 Revolution. She is of the opinion that the discursive manipulation of the past was used as a tool of propaganda to construct national narratives and consolidate ideas of mestizaje and criollismo (ibid: 2).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century, President Porfirio Díaz allowed foreign capital and businesses to enter Mexico modernizing industries and services. Unfortunately this only benefited the elite and perpetuated poverty and injustices for the working class and peasants who lost their lands. The great "haciendas" grew in the hands of a few. Díaz surrounded himself with a group of politicians who were called "the scientists" and who implemented rational methods that improved efficiency in order to modernize the country. During the *Porfiriato* anything

French was fashionable and the privileged upper-class took France as their role model. The main ideological tendencies were Positivism and Capitalism and Mexico's economy grew—but only to the benefit of a small plutocracy and foreign companies.

During these years sciences and arts in Mexico that followed European canons of aesthetics and ideology flourished and foreign theatre and circus companies, performers and artists were welcomed. These spectacles would dominate the social life of Mexico City and other important cities of the country and new theatres were built to hold such performances. The best of the world's acts and performances shown in important European cities would also come to Mexico City.³⁹

It was also a period when French architecture in public buildings, houses and monuments changed Mexico City. Towards the end of the “*Porfiriato*” in 1910, *El Angel de la Independencia* (The Angel of Independence) monument in Mexico City was inaugurated.⁴⁰ A hypocritical, nostalgic construction of a mythological past glorifying the Pre-Hispanic culture, while continuing to despise and oppress the very people of that culture, prevailed. Anything that was Indian was regarded as backward and in bad taste. Mexico's great Pre-Hispanic past was promoted to attract tourism and co-opted for exhibition to the outside world. There were also discoveries and advances in the area of Anthropology.

It is interesting to note that when Mexico participated in world fairs, as Ruth Hellier-Tinoco tells us, Mexican indigenous people were employed to promote exoticism. She explains that it was advantageous to perceive Mexico as an exotic and ancient place to explore and that, “Mexican Otherness acted as a form of promotion for the nation” (ibid: 55-56).⁴¹

Beginning in 1910 the Mexican Revolution brought down Díaz's government in a

bloody civil war in which many Mexicans from all walks of life and social class lost their lives. The conflict lasted ten years and more than a million people died or emigrated. The revolutionaries, inspired by the Russian Revolution, demanded a political and economic transformation and sweeping social and agrarian change. While there was discontent everywhere, the peasant fight was essentially a land struggle and the Indians' council of the elders asked Emiliano Zapata⁴² to take over their fight to recover their ancestral land and the right to benefit from the produce of their land and work. "Zapatismo" mandated the vindication of the peasant and Indian communities who had been dispossessed of their lands since the time of colonization.

Octavio Paz says, the Revolution that prevailed was only of the bourgeoisie with their desire to modernize Mexico while the Revolution of the south, of the peasants, was defeated with the assassination of their leader, Zapata and then its ideology was co-opted and deformed by those that succeeded to power (2004: 429).

Pancho Villa,⁴³ another hero of the Revolution, was also assassinated. From the ashes of the Revolution⁴⁴ the myths of Villa and Zapata arose and they became iconic heroes of the people. The nation state would co-opt the memory in the effort to create social cohesion and national identity. Villa's image was promoted and idealized in literature and cinema. Zapata was treated differently since he had been accepted as a pure hero and a popular mythic figure from the beginning.

Martínez Rodríguez states,

"After the Porfiriato the bridge between prehispanic [Pre-Hispanic] and contemporary *indígenas* was more successfully addressed, and the racial status of *mestizos* as quintessentially Mexican legitimized. Changes in perceptions of race, brought about by cultural anthropology and a disenchantment with Porfirian progress, would help make of *mestizaje* the dominant ideology after the Revolution" (2004:131).

These ideas continued to be influential given the necessity to unite and rebuild the nation after the long period of violence and class struggle.

During the years of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) *Lucha Libre* gained in popularity and many fights were organised in small bullfighting arenas and circuses all over the country. At this time some Mexican wrestlers would compete in the United States against American wrestlers who had been wrestling for longer. These were events of wrestling⁴⁵ or “lucha catch” or “catch-as-catch-can” as Madigan explains (2007). According to him, until this moment the Mexican wrestlers had been amateurs. A similar story developed in the United States and in relation to “catch-as-catch-can”, Madigan explains that it began in the late 1800s,

‘...when old-time travelling carnival circuits travelled about, staging “athletic shows,” or friendly grappling matches, and money wagers between the performers and the locals’ (ibid: 38).⁴⁶

Nash (2012) explains that during the American Civil War (1861-1865) soldiers practiced “grappling” to counteract boredom and once the war ended the veterans retained their passion for wrestling. He says,

‘To cater to this new found [sic] interest in all things wrestling, the barnstormers⁴⁷ and carnivals that travelled the land began offering wrestling exhibitions as part of their “Athletic Show” (or “AT Show” as they were known). An important part of the “AT show” involved the carnies offering a challenge, and cash prize, to any local who could best them...The barnstormer turned to the “all-in” style of Lancashire Catch-as-Catch-can for inspiration, coming up with an even laxer set of rules, often referred as “no-holds-barred”’ (Nash, 2012).

More importantly Nash describes how the new style of wrestling in the United States⁴⁸ emerged by incorporating wrestling styles that the new immigrant population had brought:

‘In this environment, American Catch-as-Catch-can wrestling went through a Darwinian evolution, quickly becoming an amalgamation of all the folk wrestling

of the new and old world. Thus, incorporating backwoods “rough and tumble”, freed slave “knocking and kicking”, British Lancashire, Cumbrian, Westmoreland, Cornish, and Devonshire (purring), as well as Scottish backhold, Irish collar-and-elbow and coraiocht, German/Austrian kampfringen and ringkampf and French la luttés a main platte (or flat hand). By the end of the 19th century, Japanese jujutsu holds were being added to the repertoire of many hookers’⁴⁹ (Nash, 2012).

Parallel to American wrestling, pro wrestling began to flourish in Europe as well (ibid: 38) along with the European Greco-Roman (French-flat hand style) wrestling.

Madigan’s analysis is particularly important to understand how “catch as catch can” influenced Mexican wrestling during the late twenties and the thirties. He explains,

‘The one country that readily adopted the competitive nature and dramatic flair that professional wrestling carried was Spain. The Spanish wholeheartedly accepted the entire machismo concept—fighting for honor. The Spanish style of wrestling was heavily influenced by what was called “catch as catch can” in America’ (ibid: 38).

Moreover, his analysis identifies one of the moments when Mexican wrestling began the transformation into “*Lucha Libre*” style. He states,

‘It was this fast-paced, hard style of wrestling that the Spanish learned and taught to their Mexican counterparts. The “catch” style gradually morphed into the *Lucha Libre* style. There was a harmonious union between Mexico and Spain when it came to sharing wrestling ideologies, training techniques and styles until Spanish Civil War put the kibosh on Mexican wrestlers going to Spain to practice their craft’ (ibid: 38-39).

There is evidence of the many “catch-as-catch-can” tournaments that took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the Spanish theatres, *Circo De Price* and *Circo Olimpia* and in *Fronton Jai-Alai*. The collection of newspapers and periodicals of the *Hemeroteca Nacional* of the *Biblioteca Nacional de España*,⁵⁰ gives us a vision of the “catch-as-catch-can” competitions through the articles and promotions published in *La Voz de Madrid*, *El Globo*, *El Heraldo de Madrid*, *Heraldo Deportivo* and *Cronica*.⁵¹

The first entry is from 1908 and the last is in 1936, after which articles mentioning “catch-as-catch-can” competitions no longer appear.

Madigan tells us that as a consequence of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) many top wrestlers, trainers, and promoters moved to Mexico, improving the quality of matches, management, organization and promotion of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* (ibid: 39).⁵²

The *Consejo Mexicano de Lucha Libre's* (CMLL) website⁵³ provides interesting data concerning the early part of the twentieth century in regards to *Lucha Libre*. They consider the time before 1933 when Lutteroth's founded the first company, as the “Stone Age” of *Lucha Libre*. Olivera Figueroa divides the stages of *Lucha Libre* in a similar way, before and after Lutteroth. He mentions the same wrestlers of this first stage as *CMLL*, from whom the first *Lucha Libre* heroes would come (2007: 22).⁵⁴

During the Mexican Revolution, and before Alvaro Obregón's presidency (1920-1924), the government of Venustiano Carranza (1914-1920) set out to create a new identity for the nation with the intention of incorporating everyone. It was a democratic government and a new era of nationalism and idealism alongside modernity prevailed. The 1917 Constitution was drawn during his presidency. The right to land, the right to work and regulated working hours, individual liberties, fair social policies, free and non-religious education for every child were among the tenets of this constitution. However, even though written into this constitution, agrarian reform was not implemented until Lázaro Cárdenas' presidency (1934-1940). Cárdenas not only implemented the agrarian reform but he created the “ejidos” (cooperatives or common land) for crop and livestock farming and most importantly he expropriated and nationalized sub-soil resources, especially oil.

The most intense period of redefinition and unification of the Mexican nation was between 1920 and 1940. The role of the nation state became central in the construction

of Mexico and *Mexicaneidad* (Mexicanness) and for this task, Obregón appointed José Vasconcelos minister of education in 1921.⁵⁵ In 1924, Plutarco Elías Calles became president and in 1928, at the end of this presidency, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* or PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party)⁵⁶ was founded. Hellier-Tinoco (2011:57) quotes Vaughan (1997) and Vaughan and Lewis (2006: 2):

“Forging the Mexican nation and creating a national identity, understood as *lo mexicano* (distinctively Mexican) and *mexicaneidad* (Mexicanness), involved generating a series of roughly shared assumptions and a set of symbols, icons, discourses, and places through this process of appropriation, dissemination, and celebration”.⁵⁷

The class in power went on to create and define Mexican society and regarding this Hellier-Tinoco says,

“Politically, economically, and culturally those charged with Mexican state formation reacted to and with global trends, and utilized a network of media and strategies familiar in many world contexts, encompassing education, art, radio, rhetoric, the press, mass mobilization, sport, social reform and party organization”(2011: 57).

The institutional system had taken over and exerted cultural hegemony over the nation attempting to dictate the meaning of *Mexicanness* in creating a new nation state. Going back to Hall, quoted before,

“... of course, the question of the circulation of meaning almost immediately involves the question of power. Who has the power, in what channels, to circulate which meanings to whom? Which is why the issue of power can never be bracketed out from the question of representation”(1997: 14).⁵⁸

The new Spanish colony had no place or plans for the indigenous population as equals and a system of castes was imposed upon the structure of this new society. This system has always entailed that Spaniards born in Spain were at the top, then the criollos (people born in Mexico of Spanish parents), then mestizos (mix of Spanish and Indian), and at the bottom the Indians, blacks and mulattos (mix of black and Indian).

This classification system has existed for centuries and is embedded, but the aftermath of revolution and modernization required a new assessment of race and ethnicity.

Bonfil Batalla (2007: 113) argues that for the Mexican government and the elite classes, the intention has been “to redeem” the Indian population by incorporating it into the national plan. But in reality it only appropriates the symbols of Mexico Profundo to commodify the Indian and fabricate an image of a mestizo country (ibid: 114). Bonfil Batalla also points out,

“De-Indianization is a historical process through which populations that originally possessed a particular and distinctive identity, based upon their own culture, are forced to renounce that identity, with all the consequent changes in their social organization and culture. De-Indianization is not the result of biological mixture, but the pressure of an ethnocide that ultimately blocks the historical continuity of a people as a culturally differentiated group” (2007: 17).

Contrary to the belief that Mexicans live in a “mestizo society”, the product of only two cultures, the Indian and European, Bonfil Batalla is of the opinion that

“...the reality is different, because the majority of the popular classes and sectors have Indian origins, often recent [a continual Indian culture]. In consequence, they have been able to maintain many more elements of Mesoamerican culture. On the other hand, some upper-class sectors are derived more or less directly from the Spanish colonizers and tend to conserve non-Indian cultural forms” (ibid: 43).

During Calles’s government, José Vasconcelos, the minister of education, published plans for his utopian project consisting of two parts: “*La raza cosmica*” (The cosmic race) in 1925 and “*Indologia*” (Indiology) in 1926 (Gallo, 2010: 207). Calles supported these projects in order to incorporate the Indian population into modern Mexico and to educate and shape the rest into this new society. In Vasconcelos’s utopian project he envisioned a great future for the people of Latin America. He believed that there would be different stages (ibid: 207)⁵⁹ in the development of the new society. Ruben Gallo describes the third stage,

‘During the third stage, Vasconcelos believed that the Americas would see the emergence of a “cosmic race”, a superior ethnicity resulting from generations of intermarriage among all Latin American peoples’ (ibid: 208).⁶⁰

Educating society was of essential importance for this utopian project and buildings and institutions had to be constructed and developed. Gallo explains,

‘Vasconcelos saw his construction projects as catalysts for the country’s advancement toward the utopian “third stage”: public schools, gymnasiums, and the Ministry of Education building – even the murals of Diego Rivera which he commissioned for its walls – were all designed to solidify the nation’s position on the “intellectual stage” and prevent it from sliding back into the barbarism of the “warrior stage”’ (ibid: 208).⁶¹

The complete programme Vasconcelos had in mind was never implemented since he was never elected president of Mexico (he campaigned for the presidency in 1929 and lost) (ibid: 222). But some of his educational projects did go ahead. Equally, Hellier-Tinoco (2011: 59) says that government institutions, arts, intellectuals, and politicians were instrumental in strategies for shaping indigenismo and mestizaje (racial mixing). Moreover, she argues that the creation of *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP)⁶² in 1921 was significant and central in implementing didactic strategies and policies through intellectuals, artists, pedagogues, and politicians that brought great changes to Mexican society and fostered nationalism. This department was responsible for education and culture (ibid: 60-67).

Along similar lines, Bartra argues that stereotypes, symbols and ideology of Mexicanness have been promoted through and with the complicity of the mediums of cinema, radio, TV, journalism, discourse, songs, the arts, and literature (2007: 19-20).⁶³ In his view, Mexican stereotypes have been codified largely by intellectuals choosing ways, places, images, and symbols to represent the Mexican character (ibid: 15).

Hellier-Tinoco concludes that there were two basic aspects the government considered

in forging Mexicanness: the use of popular and rural aesthetics as a base and popular arts as the embodiment of the ultimate expression of Mexicanness (2011: 66-67).⁶⁴ Her detailed analysis describes how popular and rural images and popular arts were appropriated, re-contextualized, and co-modified to construct Mexicanness and how they were circulated through extensive and powerful systems challenging embedded concepts and old knowledge (ibid: 3-6).⁶⁵

For this study Bonfil Batalla's ideas of *Mexico profundo* serve as guide to locate the groups where most of the *luchadores* have come from along with the inherited knowledge and culture of their communities. Most of the first *luchadores* came from the proletariat and lived and worked in working class neighborhoods or barrios of bigger cities or came from small towns or villages. Very few were of Western background or the middle class. Some of them made a good living due to their success as *luchadores* and provided their sons and daughters a better standard of living and education. Alvaro Fernández Reyes analyses (2004)⁶⁶ the process of urbanization that took place in Mexico City throughout the 1920s and 1950s, when migration of great numbers of people from the rural areas to the urban, to the spaces of the "barrios" and "vecindades" took place and created this new popular-urban class. For Fernández Reyes these places serve as "cultural containers" of traditions and customs between *vecindad*, *barrio*, and *lucha libre* arenas and as centers of attraction for these social groups (2004: 76).

This great migration into the cities, especially Mexico City, created huge *colonias populares* (popular neighborhoods) and what are called *ciudades perdidas* (lost cities). Steven J. Bachelor's analysis (2004)⁶⁷ of St. Julia, a "ciudad perdida", gives us an insight into such spaces where communities developed during those early years. Carlos Monsiváis (1981),⁶⁸ quoted by Bachelor, argues that Santa Julia exemplified the cultural worlds of working-class life in Mexico City and helped give birth to the "mass presence that now defines Mexico City" and Mexican culture.⁶⁹ Bachelor goes on to quote

Monsiváis, saying that,

“The barrio was especially known for its well-attended weekend carpas (tent shows), where members of the popular classes would converge for low-budget (and often low-brow) entertainment. From these weekend carpas emerged several highly celebrated figures of Mexican cinema and working class favorites, including Adalberto Martínez Resortes and Cantinflas, the famed comic and perennial working-class underdog” (2004: 281-282).⁷⁰

From these communities and barrios the *luchador* was to emerge as another working-class hero, later becoming actors of *Luchador* cinema. Most fans attending *lucha libre* matches would also come from the same communities. Bartra (2007) says that for Monsiváis popular class culture is about a vital and generous culture that resists the oppression of the hegemonic national culture arising from the mass communication media of the State, the Catholic Church, and underpinned by transnational enterprises and capital.⁷¹

2.1.2 María Izquierdo and the Circus in Mexico

The work of the Mexican artist María Izquierdo (1905-1955)⁷² has been especially important for the present study and considered in depth. Izquierdo was someone who worked against the grain of that construction of Mexicanness promoted by the government, was unsponsored and is consequently less well known. The muralists of this period created works that reinforced the conventional Mexican narrative and monopolized all projects. They became well known and prosperous, unlike Izquierdo who died in poverty at the age of fifty. In 1944 Izquierdo was commissioned to create a cycle of murals by the *Palacio del Departamento del Distrito Federal* (the capital district’s administration headquarters) selecting the theme of “the arts” (Ferrer, 1997: 27). Unfortunately, as Ferrer states,

‘Just before she was to commence work at the site, a committee consisting of “los tres grandes”—Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros—cancelled the project, based on their opinion that she lacked the necessary technical experience to execute it. The decision bitterly angered Izquierdo’ (Ibid: 27).

Izquierdo lived during the period of the new Mexican nationalism and idealism when the institutional system attempted to exercise a cultural hegemony over the country. However much her work may have been expressive of her Mexicanness, she would not align herself with the post-revolutionary artistic ideology promoting a specific national identity (Ferrer and Debroise). According to Elizabeth Ferrer (1997: 12) Izquierdo and Rufino Tamayo,⁷³ partners in life as well as studio space in the early 1930s, held similar views of art; that first and foremost it must convey the universal and the poetic.

While created during some of the most intense years of Mexican redefinition and modernization, Izquierdo's work, especially of the 1930s, always exhibits her personal insight and commitment "to speak to the universal" (Ferrer: 16) along with her newfound engagement with popular performance and the circus in and around Mexico City. Izquierdo was an outsider who looked for themes that expressed this aspect of her life. In the circus and the life of the circus performers she would find the reflection. Ferrer explains, "Beginning in 1932 and simultaneous with the circus works, Izquierdo created a number of small-scale allegorical compositions, all watercolors, that are among the most poignant of her career" (ibid: 15).

As stated in Olivier Debroise's essay,⁷⁴ Izquierdo, towards 1932, discovered a perpetual fair that reinvented itself every night (1997: 60). He states, "...a true bohemia in the heart of a city in an endless process of transformation—a city of displaced beings, like herself, who had emigrated from the countryside." Debroise tells us how Izquierdo became fascinated and visited small circuses in the city's outskirts, the tents of the vaudeville shows⁷⁵ near the Guerrero and Tepito neighborhoods, and the low-life cabarets (ibid: 60). He says, "It was a way of life at the fringes of conventionalism, like the lives of the individuals who performed in the theatre or the circus" (ibid: 60).

Izquierdo befriended some of the performers of these circuses whom she often visited

and of whom she made some drawings. She listened to their stories that would later inspire her paintings. As Debroise points out, “Izquierdo revealed this suburban world from the inside, from an existentially poetic stance that transformed the descriptive...” (1997: 60). For Ferrer, “With the circus she constructed a closed, silent world, one in which an audience is rarely visible, and where performers seem suspended in motion” (1997: 14).

María de Jesús González and Jesse Sloan argue that, “...the circus became a metaphor by which Izquierdo could express the new role women could achieve in Mexico’s traditionally male-dominated society” (2012: 239).⁷⁶ Although González and Sloan mention shows like “Carpa García” as possible influences on Izquierdo’s work, I would point out that she was mainly part of the urban/suburban Mexico City scene and “Carpa García” was a Mexican-American spectacle for the communities in the United States and/or the border.⁷⁷

She was a feminist, according to Ferrer, and a political activist who cultivated many friends amongst artists and literati and played an important role in the culture of Mexico City of that time (1997:14). Izquierdo’s Artistic Creed:

“I strive to make my work reflect the authentic Mexico, which I feel and love. I avoid themes that are anecdotal, folkloric, and political because they do not have poetic or expressive strength, and I think that in the world of painting, a work is an open window to the human imagination” (1947).⁷⁸

As Izquierdo entered the world of the circus and its performers, I have entered the world of *Lucha Libre*, gotten to know the people, their stories and have used drawing as a methodology to capture profound meaningful experiences.

Part 2a. Practice-Based Inquiries *Echoes of La Maroma*

Through the series of artwork under the thematic title *Echoes de la Maroma*, I investigate as constructs the representations of Mexicanness currently promoted in the media and art world. My intention is to challenge and denounce hegemonic power and the result is disturbing and discomfoting. The government and cultural institutions continue to send to exhibitions abroad the same artworks and artists who have represented Mexicanness for generations. The same concepts are perpetuated and new ways of engaging with art and unconventional talent go unrecognized. Olivier Debroise's (ed.) et all study,⁷⁹ *La Era de la Discrepancia* (The Age of Discrepancies), confirms and demonstrates the manner in which official art institutions had, for more than three decades (1968-1997), neglected any experimental artistic work portraying "political, aesthetic or ideological dissent" (de la Fuente, 2006: 9) or opposition to the "ruling hegemony and dominant aesthetics values" in Mexico. Juan Ramón de la Fuente states,

"From the late 1960s on, like the wave of energy that radiated out after the Big Bang, Mexican visual art entered a period where the dominant artistic values were subject to constant interrogation, with consequences that have crossed over into the new millennium. From that time onwards, Mexican artists affirmed their right to dissent from the canons dictated by official institutions, by the market, and by conventional tastes guided by cultural industries. This exceptional period in our country's cultural history had not been systematically explored in a general manner by Mexican art historians"(2006: 9).⁸⁰

My practice does not represent an artistic aesthetic corresponding to, or representative of, constructed Mexicanness or its perception. My artwork is the result of many years of engagement and reflection combined with the influence and experience of living in both Mexico and Europe. I add my voice in opposition and rebellion to those of the outsiders and the excluded everywhere. I challenge the ideas of Mexicanness created and promulgated by a dominant elite to manipulate and control Mexican citizens. By

de-constructing Mexicanness we may reclaim meaningful representations of Mexican culture. Both the circus and *Lucha Libre* are predominately outsider, itinerant spectacles depending on travel to reach audiences. As an artist of a diaspora I am also an outsider and have lived in varied, disparate locations. I have had to come to terms with the understanding that many ideas about my own Mexicanness are in reality feelings of nostalgia for something that never existed.

2.2a.1 Angel of Liberty I and Angel of Liberty II (Montoya-Turnill: 2010)

Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

These pieces are two 1.10m x1.30m oil paintings on linen painted in Spain in 2010. María Izquierdo's 1937 painting, *Allegory of Liberty*,⁸¹ was taken as a reference and starting point to produce drawings and then a small prototype for *Angel of Liberty*. Her painting is one of the allegorical compositions created at the height of her career and which Antonin Artaud admired. For Artaud, Izquierdo was the only painter truly reflecting the indigenous roots of Mexico in her work (Geis, 2005: 1).⁸² Artaud states in an article in Mexican weekly magazine:

“I came to Mexico searching for indigenous art, not for an imitation of European art. But imitations of European art in all forms abound, while truly Mexican art cannot be found. Only the paintings of Maria Izquierdo give off an inspiration that is truly Indian” (Ferrer, 1997: 16).⁸³



Fig.29. Drawings for Angel of Liberty I & II (Montoya-Turnill) 2010, Spain. Sketchbook – graphite on paper (36cms x 24.5cms) and drawing using mixed media: graphite, ink and crayon on paper (27cms x 41cms). Exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Spain.



Fig. 30. Prototype for Angel of Liberty I & II (Montoya-Turnill) 2010, Spain 22.5cms x 31.5cms. Small painting using mixed media: acrylic and graphite on watercolour paper. Exhibited in 2011 at the Miguel Angel Art Gallery in the exhibition *Through the Mask* in Spain.

My first thought was to create only one piece but two were made as part of the process of developing a colour language and it made sense to leave one of them with a dramatic light contrasting with the boldness of the black figures. The second one includes marks made with graphite. Allowing these two approaches created two visions of the same theme.

The political and social context in which these pieces have been created has shaped their development and the work exhibits a response to unjust authoritarian policies of control. Mexico is going through a very brutal and bloody period in which the tissue of society is being torn apart by powerful forces with the citizenry caught in the middle. As in María Izquierdo's time the government is brutalising the population and perpetuating oppression.

As reported by Ferrer (1997), at the same time Izquierdo was painting the circus works she also created small-scale allegorical compositions⁸⁴ that are among the most poignant of her career. They are distinctly "un-Mexican" differing from the nationalistically oriented work of the muralists (ibid: 15-16). She states that in these works Izquierdo would speak to the universal by depicting such elements as classical

Greek columns and temples, and figures representing the female (ibid: 16). For Terri Geis⁸⁵ (2005: 7), in *Allegory of Liberty* there are the motifs of fire, mythical figures, and violence against women, and the angel is a symbol of sacrifice and death. Geis says, “The repetition of their severed heads recalls the many images from pre-Hispanic codices in which warriors and priests clutch the severed heads of their sacrificial victims” (ibid: 7). Geis explains,

“The painting addresses the costs of war and the price of freedom within the nation-state, with the standard allegorical figure of winged liberty serving as the bearer of the violent sacrifice required for liberty’s fulfilment: human lives. The decapitated, sacrificed women are victims of powers completely beyond their control, ironically undermining the painting’s title of ‘liberty’”(2005: 7-8)⁸⁶

My work makes a political and social statement on the situation of victims of the state and its policies that have brought so much violence to Mexico. In *Angel of Liberty I and II*, the angel is carrying the heads of victims of the “war on drugs” and redeeming them, taking them to a safer place and a place to rest. It represents the brutality of the cartels, the policies of both the American and the Mexican governments and the inability to find justice in Mexico.

2.2a.2 Circo, Maroma y Teatro (Montoya-Turnill 2013) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This artwork is an oil painting, a diptych contained inside a silver box. Its lower surface measures 24cms x 16cms x 6.5cms and the upper surface measures: 22.5cms x 14.5cms x 6.5cms. When you open it a mask or severed head is revealed in the upper part and a group of masks in the lower part. The background is painted in dramatic yellow and pink light reflects the sky in turmoil.

The container of this artwork is a silver box made by the Argentine goldsmith Juan Carlos Pallarols.⁸⁷ The choice of this silver box is important because it stands for the

precious commodities from the Americas that foreign nations have sought to exploit and appropriate. Deals are made by politicians behind the scenes much the same as secret deals are made between *Lucha Libre* promoters (Levi, 2008). The masks depict the pain, terror, exploitation, and atrocities wreaked upon populations when natural resources are taken from their lands.

The title *Circo Maroma y Teatro* is derived from Juvenal's Latin phrase:⁸⁸ "Panem et Circenses"⁸⁹ (Bread and Circuses, Bread and Games) and the Spanish phrase: "Pan, Circo, Maroma y Teatro" or "Circo, maroma y Teatro" (Circus, Tumble and Theatre), and is used in Mexico when referring to both Mexican politics and *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. Heather Levi (2008)⁹⁰ makes a connection between *Lucha Libre* and politics in Mexico in that both engage in secret deals and duplicity, and for her the mask is metaphorical in the political arena (Ibid: xvii). Politics and *Lucha Libre* also share elements resembling the ancient Roman circus.

My intention in this piece is to make the comparison between the government of the Roman Empire and that of Mexico, and the use of spectacle as a means of mass control. The compliance of the governed may also be bought with food, money, or gifts; the 'pan/bread' half of the refrain. In Mexico both forms of manipulation have been virtually institutionalized ever since the PRI came to power on the heels of the Revolution. The attempt to construct and impose a new national identity was at the heart of the endeavour to control the masses, practically from the start. And from the beginning the ruling class has had the support of an elite group of artists, intellectuals, and government officials in the maintenance of its domination and privilege.

During the July 2012 Mexican elections there were people who gave their vote to the PRI candidate in exchange for "Soriana" cards (supermarket cards to redeem for food), telephone cards, bags of cement, other gifts, money, and favours.⁹¹ The media

supported and promoted the presidential campaign of Enrique Peña Nieto, the PRI party candidate. His victory was widely seen as having been rigged and fraudulent and Mexicans all over the Republic demonstrated in protest. They demanded a recount of votes, an investigation into political deceit and corruption and the democratization of the media as a constitutional right.

This climate of injustice has brought an emergence of activist political groups and individuals in Mexico including some in exile. Such are the cases of *Morena Cultura*,⁹² *Morenaje*,⁹³ *Movimiento Ciudadano*,⁹⁴ *Partido del Trabajo*,⁹⁵ *El Santo* and *El Santuario*,⁹⁶ *#YoSoy132*,⁹⁷ *Anonymous Mexico*,⁹⁸ and *Partido Popular* (2014). To make matters worse, some analysts are of the opinion that other candidates throughout the country also bought votes using similar schemes. Edgardo Buscaglia has shown in his studies⁹⁹ that in Mexico all the political parties have been penetrated and captured to some extent by organized crime. New dissident, courageous voices are coming forward to challenge corrupt authority in Mexico. This artwork has proposed new questions also addressed in the series *Hues of the Passions* included in chapter 3.

2.2a.3 The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box (Montoya-Turnill 2012 and 2013)

Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

The lives and intimate stories of the *luchadores* I encountered during my interviews and research¹⁰⁰ often affected me greatly. They were stories of resilience, optimism and courage. One story in particular, of the childhood of Blue Demon Junior, inspired the work I describe in this section.

Because the infant's biological mother, Liliana, was not able to cope or provide for him and with no father present, Liliana's father, a personal friend of the famous *luchador* Blue Demon, asked him for assistance. Blue Demon agreed to take the child into his family and raise him as his own and he spent the first six years of his life

surrounded by the love and happiness of the adoptive family. Then suddenly his fortunate world collapsed when Liliana demanded the child be returned. Since he had never been legally adopted there was no alternative but to agree and at six years of age the boy was transferred to a mother he did not know and a man she then lived with, his now 'step-father'. They then moved far away to another state, far from the only family the boy had ever known.

The child suffered especially horrible abuse. Because both 'parents' worked at night and could not supervise the boy they decided to place him inside a wooden box every evening before going to work. Every evening the poor child was nailed inside. In the morning the box would be opened and he would be given a one peso coin to buy his breakfast on the way to school.

In telling this awful tale of his young boyhood Blue Demon Jr. does not dwell on the horrible terror of being en-coffined nightly. He describes crying himself to sleep—but most importantly he tells how he was able to adapt and find a way to cope with the horror by imagining the box was a vehicle that took him to far away places. His prison became a place of dreams in which he could be anywhere and do anything.

When he was eight years old the 'family' returned to Mexico City where, one day, following great physical abuse by the stepfather, the boy decided he could endure no more and must escape. Taking advantage of an unguarded moment he fled through a window to the street and found a taxi driver willing to take him to an address he had faithfully remembered, the address of Blue Demon.

When his older step-sister opened the door she was horrified to see the child in such a state—he had been badly beaten. Blue Demon was at a *Lucha Libre* match, but when he returned that evening he embraced the boy and promised he would never leave him

again. He was true to his word and when the biological mother demanded him back Blue Demon threatened to denounce her for child abuse if she ever dared to bother them again. And thus the boy became Blue Demon's son and carries on his legacy today.

These are drawings made of the child inside the box dreaming he is inside a circus ring and that one day he will be free. The aim is to explore compositions showing the child dreaming of being outside the box. These drawings were made in 2012. They measure 25cms x 25cms and are ink, graphite and crayon on paper.



Fig. 31. Drawings for *The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box* (Montoya-Turnill) 2012, Spain, 25cms x 25cms.

Two sketches were made that measure 25cms x 25cms made in 2012 that became the basis for the composition of the painting *The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box* (2013). These sketches show the boy dreaming of who he will become in the future, Blue Demon Junior, a great hero confronting his adversaries in the ring and in life.



Fig. 32. Sketches for painting *The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box* (Montoya-Turnill) 2012, Spain 25cms x 25cms.

For the painting *The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box*, marble dust, gold leaf, white amate paper, khadi paper and acrylic were used on a wooden support. It measures 30cms x 30cms. My intention is to represent the contrast between dark and light, confrontation between good and evil and redemption at the end of the journey. There is contrast in the materials used; the roughness of the marble dust against the soft texture of the paper, the darkness of the greys, dark blues and blacks against the hues of the bright yellows, ochers and gold leaf. It is also a reflection of the opposite situations of being inside and being outside the box, of being inside and outside your homeland. The box is a metaphor for perceived homeland.



Fig.33. Detail of the painting *The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box* (Montoya-Turnill) 2013, Spain. Mixed media.

2.2a.4 Holds and Aerial Moves- Llaves y Lances (Montoya-Turnill 2010 and 2011) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

These explorations include three phases. First some drawings were made in my

sketchbook in 2010 in the studio in Spain. These drawings are of *Lucha Libre* holds¹⁰¹ measuring 36cms x 24.5cms. The aim was to explore the body of the *luchador* in movement and different combinations through the holds they have created. They are quick drawings that capture movement and expression and the sketchbook was on display in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at the Miguel Angel Art Gallery in 2011 in Spain.



Fig.34. Sketchbook with Drawings of Holds (Montoya-Turnill) 2010, Spain, 36cms x 24.5cms. This sketchbook was in a display box in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at the Miguel Angel Art Gallery in 2011 in Spain.

Secondly, after these quick drawings, I selected some holds to explore further using mixed drawing techniques. They are drawings of *the Hold: El Zarape* (Montoya-Turnill) 2011, Spain. Each measures 42.5cms x 30cms. Mixed media include: ink, quink, crayon and graphite on khadi paper. They were also exhibited in 2011 as part of the *Through the Mask* exhibition.



Fig. 35. Drawings of the Hold :El Zarape (Montoya-Turnill) 2011, Spain. Each one measures 42.5cms x 30cms, mixed media: ink, quink, crayon and graphite on Khadi paper. Exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* in Spain.

And thirdly, in 2011 prototypes of a hold were created to explore colour and form.

They measure 30cms x 30cms and are oil on a wooden support. Here colour becomes a metaphor for movement. The third in this group of three, is the most successful in colour balance and composition. This will become an oil painting on a bigger scale. These explorations are the beginning of further work that I will develop in time.



Fig. 36. Prototypes of a Hold (Montoya-Turnill) 2011, Spain, 30cms x 30cms. Paintings using mixed media: oil and graphite on a wooden support. Exhibited in 2011 at the Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Spain.

Part 2b. Practice-Based Inquiries *Contained Inside a Box*

With this series of practical explorations that I call *Contained Inside a Box* I examine the notion of the outsider. Both the *luchador* and the circus artist are alien to the mainstream performance genres and have generally not been promoted or considered as important symbols or representative of Mexico. In both *Lucha Libre* and the circus the spectacle occurs in a ring entered by the performers from the outside but the action also spills over into the space of the audience outside the ring.

Thinking about these contained spaces I decided to enclose the explorations within boxes. These artworks are assemblages that enabled experimentation in three-dimensional space manipulating different materials and creating new associations. The piece, *Circo, Maroma y Teatro*, is unique among the works, being a painting within a box and not an assemblage. Other processes besides drawing and painting are used in the assemblages including, and depending on the piece: gathering found objects, selecting materials, wrapping, scrunching, tying, erasing, adding, cutting, tearing, repeating, grouping, burning, opening, closing, throwing, hiding, revealing, concealing, photocopying, and gluing. Every piece in each assemblage has been chosen and/or has gone through a process of transformation and has been fixed in a specific way. Meaning is developed through the association and combination of discrete elements within a predetermined space. Amongst the components within the boxes a relationship and a dialogue exists.



Fig. 37. Contained inside a box explorations I. Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

2.2b.1 Mythical Acrobatics (Montoya-Turnill 2013) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This piece consists of 9 paper seeds inside a box and one paper seed outside this box. A wooden cigar box measuring 19.7cms x 8cms x 7.7cms has been painted black, within are nine paper seeds and inside the lid there is a small torn paper which is part of the debris from the piece *Tortured*, described in Chapter 3. In this piece one can make out a portion of the still visible words: Mythical acrobatics.



Fig. 38. Torn piece of paper: Mythical Acrobatics, (2013). Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

The poster designed by the promotion company *ComoNo*¹⁰² for the London *Lucha Libre* debut conveys a number of impressions. The words *Lucha Libre* are in a circus or carnival style and El Hijo del Santo¹⁰³ figure is midair in an aerial move, Blue Demon Jr.¹⁰⁴ is challenging the viewer and behind him there is a *luchador* wearing a charro outfit and a black Mexican sombrero.

This artwork alludes to the legacy the Mexican *luchadores* have left with their performances in London, where *Lucha Libre* has influenced *Lucha Britannia* and left many followers. The images selected to be made into seeds came from the magazine: *Luchas 2000, El Deporte Espectaculo*, published on the 7th of July 2008 in Mexico, three days following the London Roundhouse debut. There is an article by Karlo Colin: *Todo X El Todo Enciende Londres* (Everything X Everything Ignites London) describing the event. He concludes by lamenting, that of all the Mexican media, only his magazine was present for this important event. There are photos taken on the night and one of myself holding the Mexican flag with a *luchador* also appeared in this issue.

Some of this printed material has been manipulated to become round seeds and wrapped with paper string. Some drawings are incorporated and wrapped and bound in a similar way. The torn piece of paper on the lid belongs to the original poster advertising the event in London. Everything is contained inside the box as a memory of the event.

2.2b.2 Lucha Libre Seeds (Montoya-Turnill 2013) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This piece consists of 6 seeds and 2 pods inside a wooden box that measures 28cms x 17.5cms x 13.5cms. The pods have small round seeds made from printed material with images conveying symbols of Mexican identity including Frida Kahlo, Emiliano Zapata, The Virgen of Guadalupe, The Day of the Dead and some *luchadores*. This piece continues the exploration of the leaving of seeds, planting seeds and the spread of constructed symbols of Mexicanness. Embedded from childhood, memories, and symbols of a constructed cultural identity disperse with the diaspora. Nostalgically, I have chosen to perpetuate some of them.

2.2b.3 Buried (Montoya-Turnill 2013) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

Buried is a performative act that includes: the act of making an assemblage, the act of climbing a mountain, and the act of burying a box. With these practical acts I send a message into the uncertain future, a memorial to *Lucha Libre* and testament to what has been.

The assemblage is a collection of *Lucha Libre* memorabilia and data gathered and placed inside a black tin box measuring 23.5cms x 22cms x 6.5cms. It contains: an unofficial *Lucha Libre* mask bought from a street vendor outside the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, a poster of *Lucha Libre London* that advertised the first performance of the *luchadores* in London, U.K., two unofficial plastic toy figures of Cassandro and Blue Demons Jr., a *luchador* badge bought at the Roundhouse during the show, and a small glass jar with a message about *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and its performance in London in 2008.

The day following the completion of the assemblage, I went climbing in the Sierra Cabrera Mountains of Almería in Andalucía, Southern Spain, carrying it with me. At the summit of a ridge high above the sea below I came to the mouth of a cave, an apparently bottomless vertical shaft. Here I let the tin box fall into the cave. It was several seconds as the sound of it falling faded and finally stopped. After a moments meditation I turned and began the descent back. The assemblage is deeply buried within the cave, but perhaps some day it will be found by some explorer in some unknown future who may wonder at its meaning, even imagining, perhaps, that it has been a form of testimony. With this performative act my intention has been to create an understanding of the leaving of traces that become messages from the past, like those left buried by my Indian ancestors.

2.2b.4 Diaspora: Earth, Seeds and Blood (Montoya-Turnill 2013) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This artwork consists of a box measuring 7.3cms x 6cms X 2.6cms. It contains chilli seeds on the upper lid with some drops of my blood and soil from Frida Kahlo's museum/house in Coyoacán, Mexico in the lower lid. The box, made from olive wood, was found in a Spanish hardware store. The seeds, like the soil, come from Mexico.

This piece was put together after a long period of reading and writing about the history of the construction of Mexicanness, when suddenly I experienced a sense of gestalt and conclusion. That powerful sensation manifested itself in an unplanned act of making, followed by a process of reflection and critique. The piece, in its small size and simplicity, seems a synthesis and concentration of a long undertaking. People who have seen it say that it seems talismanic, something magical, or like a religious artefact.

For me, it summarizes the mythical idea of homeland I carry within me. The Mexican soil within it is literally my land, and with the blood, evokes the eternal struggle for the land. The seeds represent the dispersal of many Mexicans around the world, the Mexican diaspora, making reference to the word's Greek origin, referring to dispersal, especially of seed. That we disperse not only our DNA, the seed, but our culture is a fundamental truth I believe the work conveys by the act of its creation and its very existence. The blood also stands for my family and my legacy to my children born and raised in London, England. It is a bit of the essence of an artist of a diaspora.

2.2b.5 Frankincense and Copal¹⁰⁵ (Montoya-Turnill 2013) Processes of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This assemblage is a piece that consists of a wooden box measuring: 18cms x 11cms x 12cms. The box is divided into two equal individual compartments with corresponding lids. The box was bought in an English antique shop many years ago.

Inside one of the compartments there is frankincense and Mexican copal and a photocopy of a photograph of my mother when she was a girl. This printed-paper has gone through a process of transformation by scrunching it and tying it with thin white paper string. It has become a seed. The second compartment has an amount of copal and the printed material is a portrait of Zapata. It has also been transformed in the same way, becoming a seed.

The process for this artwork started with two other pieces: *Grandpa's Secret Jewels* and *Marcella's Elegantes 12*.¹⁰⁶ Both artworks are contained inside boxes. They are autobiographical works dealing with family memory and family oral histories. They question identity and birth origins: birth mother, substitute mother and the mother who raises the child. As I grew, I had very little knowledge of my maternal grandfather. I only knew that he was a lawyer, his name was Alfredo Ortega, he was the governor of the State of Morelos State in Mexico from 1923 to 1924 and that he had died when my mother was one year old. I had only seen two photographs of him. My mother was taken away to the town of Ocotlán, Jalisco and kept away from politics and any extensive knowledge of her birth father.



Fig. 39. *Grandpa's Secret Jewels*, (2013). Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill



Fig. 40. Marcella's Elegantes 12, (2013). Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill.

Upon researching the Mexican Revolution in connection with the present thesis, I came across Edgar Rojano's study, *Las Cenizas del Zapatismo*,¹⁰⁷ where I was surprised to discover information about my grandfather Alfredo Ortega. Rojano describes the times and circumstances by which my mother's father became governor of Morelos in 1923 and his deeds in office.¹⁰⁸ Most importantly I learned that he, as a young lawyer had been a Zapatista, one of the intellectuals that supported Zapata in his struggle during the Mexican Revolution. When Zapata was assassinated the Zapatistas regrouped and rewrote their manifesto to continue the struggle. All the leaders signed and I found my grandfather's signature among the names.¹⁰⁹

Frankincense and copal are both purifying ceremonial essences and symbolic of the Catholic and Indian religions I have inherited. Meditating on them I reflect upon the syncretic and dualistic character of my identity. For me they also represent Alfredo Ortega's two secrets: the birth of my mother and that he was a Zapatista. I have come to believe that Alfredo Ortega was an idealist, a dreamer, and an outsider. He fought against the dictates of the powerful elite of his time and for the betterment of Mexican society for all its people. Zapata often said: "Tierra y Libertad" (Land and Freedom).¹¹⁰ The words are like seeds that remain alive among the ashes of Zapatismo. It is an artwork full of nostalgia, images of a mythical land and heroes, and hope for a profound

political and social reform to bring equality, justice and the rule of law.

On completing the artworks of both the series *Echoes de la Maroma* and *Contained Inside a Box* I understood that there is a pattern and commonality amongst them. On viewing the finished works together I see that they have helped me clarify and understand what it is to honour the dead. These explorations are about the “the memory of the defeated” and “La memoria del ausente” (the memory of the one who is absent). They are about keeping the memory of the dead. They are like traces, vestiges, or remnants contained in the different boxes, held carefully within each, to remember.



Fig. 41. Contained inside boxes, (2013). Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill.

The works also remind me of Christian Cymet’s collection of “torn masks” that I saw he kept in boxes (his collection constitutes archival data and evidence and serves to remember those combats where *luchadores* lost their masks). They are reminders of part of the collection of “cabelleras perdidas por luchadores” (wrestlers’ shorn locks lost in battle) which the *Lucha Libre* fan Doña Virginia Aguilera¹¹¹ kept wrapped in paper inside cookie cardboard boxes. They are reminders of the *luchador* Solar’s wall of masks I saw in his home memorializing his triumphs over his opponents. And finally they are reminders of the many parents and family members who keep home altars with photos and object of, and candles for the murdered and disappeared victims of violence and injustice in Mexico. These artworks enabled me to proceed to the next stage of this study, to reflect further on political and social activism and the power of the mask outside the ring.

¹ Revollo Cárdenas 2010, p.25, *El Siglo de Oro del Circo en Mexico*.

² Ibid., Revollo Cárdenas tells us that the word “maroma” or “mabrumah” was the name for the hemp cord used by tightrope walkers or “maromeros” but soon it became the term of anyone showing great physical skill.

³ Baddeley and Fraser 1989, *Drawing the Line*.

⁴ Tàpies (2011: 58) is of the opinion, “To paint is a way of reflecting on life—reflection being more active than pure contemplation—, it is the will of seeing and sinking into reality, of collaborating in its discovery, in its comprehension. To paint is also to create reality”. See Tàpies, A. (2011) *Collected Essays: Complete Writing, Volume II, The Practice of Art: Statements*, pp. 52-64.

⁵ Armstrong and De Zegher 2006, p. 214, *Women Artists at the Millennium*, Catherine De Zegher’s essay: *The Inside Is The Outside: The Relational As The (Feminine) Space*.

⁶ My translation in Paz 2007, p. 363 in Postdata.

⁷ Formative Mesoamerica: Image from Mexico’s National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico, City. It was discovered in 1933 at Arroyo Sonso in the state of Veracruz Mexico between the Olmec centres of Tenochtitlan and La Venta and it has been dated near the end of the Olmec Culture. For Marcia Castro-Leal Encino this figure represents an important figure of “political-religious hierarchy” because of his moustache and goatee. Archaeologist Marcia Castro-Leal Encino curator of *Culturas de la Costa Del Golfo de Mexico*, National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, [Online] Available: <<http://www.mna.inah.gob.mx/index.php/salas-de-exhibicion/permanentes/arqueologia/culturas-de-la-costa-del-golfo-de-mexico.html>> [05 February 2013]. The art historian Roy Craven suggests that the figure is that of a shaman. The influence of the Olmec culture extended to other areas of Mexico. Castro-Leal Encino has a PhD – sculptures of the Gulf of Mexico and daughter of Antonio Castro Leal UNAM’s Dean, Mexican lawyer, diplomat and writer. Image – author: Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City.

⁸ Clay figurine found as part of a burial site in Tlatilco a pre-Columbian village in the Valley of Mexico. There are other such like figurines showing Olmec influence. They were discovered in the 1930s and in the 40s further excavations took place in the area of Tlatilco uncovering even more artefacts and figurines. According to Patricia Ochoa Castillo, it represents a contortionist who along with musicians and dancers formed part of religious festivities. Archaeologist Patricia Ochoa Castillo curator *Pre-clasico en el Altiplano Central*. Image from National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City.

⁹ Bonfil Batalla 2007, *Mexico Profundo, Reclaiming a Civilization*. For the Mexican ethnologist and anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla there is evidence that in present day Mexican society there is still “the presence of the Indian and the persistence of an ancient civilization that five hundred years of Colonialism and then westernization thought had destroyed (2007: xviii). He claims that throughout the years there has been “a coexistence of two civilizations, Mesoamerican and Western that has meant two civilizational programs, two ideal models for society and two different possible futures” (2007: xv). Bonfil Batalla’s ethnological research was linked to social reality and its transformation.

¹⁰ See Benítez 2004, *Los Primeros Mexicanos, La Vida Criolla en el Siglo XVI*, where he describes the first years of the new cities built in Mexico or *Nueva España*, the specific psychological, political and economic characteristics of the new generations of “criollos” (sons and daughters of Spaniards born in Mexico), the class division that later became embedded in Mexican society and the treatment of Indians by the dominant groups and classes. By making use of primary sources from the sixteenth century, Benítez is able to give us a picture and historical account of the political and social life as well as the contradictions of the people and the cities in the *Nueva España*. He argues that some of these characteristics still persist today in Mexican society. He explains, “El hijo del conquistador o del primer poblador nacido en la Nueva España, es decir, el primer mexicano en el tiempo, no es un hombre muerto. Con sorpresa observamos que su actitud ante la vida, sus ideas y sus sentimientos, la consideración que tenía de su mundo, viven hoy en nuestros contemporáneos. La supervivencia del hombre colonial, desaparecida la Colonia, es un fenómeno al que asistimos en calidad de testigos y de participantes” (2004: 278). “The son of the conquistador or the first colonist born in *Nueva España*, in other words, the first Mexican in time, is not a dead man. Surprisingly we observe that his attitude to life, his ideas and feelings, the way he perceived his world, are still present in

our contemporaries. The survival of the colonial man, once the Colony had disappeared, is a phenomenon in which we take part as witnesses and participants.” (my translation).

¹¹ Bonfill Batalla argues that the Indian ancestors have transmitted their cultural heritage in all forms of social organization, rights, responsibilities, as members of families, communities and cultural groups. There is a system of social organization: family, lineage, barrio and community that translates in “self-sufficient’ type of economy (2007: 28). Cooperation is based on reciprocity. Bonfil Batalla explains “...he [the Indian] defines himself as belonging to an organized collectivity, group, a society, a village that possesses a cultural heritage formed and transmitted through history by successive generations” (2007: pp. 21-22).

¹² Bonfill Batalla (2007: 43) states that contrary to the belief that we live in a “mestizo society”, the product of only two cultures, the Indian and European, he is of the opinion that “the reality is different because the majority of the popular classes and sectors have Indian origins, often recent. In consequence, they have been able to maintain many more elements of Mesoamerican culture.” Bonfill Batalla proposes a new national project of ‘cultural pluralism” where our Mesoamerican heritage is incorporated with all the different groups to form a larger society affecting national, political and economic decisions (2007: 165-168). He explains that Mexicans have to, “...try to construct a pluralistic nation in which Mesoamerican civilization, embodied in a great variety of cultures, has the place it deserves, a place that allows to view the West from Mexico” (ibid: 175) and that “...we [the Mexicans] should understand and take advantage of the West’s achievements, from the viewpoint of a civilization that is our own because it was forged here in this land, step by step, since remotest antiquity. That civilization is not dead, because it breathes in the heart of *Mexico profundo*. The adoption of a pluralistic project, which recognizes the validity of the Mesoamerican civilizational process, will make us want to be what we really are and what we can be” (2007: 175).

¹³ My translation of “...el conjunto de redes imaginarias de poder”, in Bartra 2007, p. 14.

¹⁴ Revollo Cárdenas 2010, p. 14.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 25. Revollo Cárdenas tells us that towards the end of XVIII many artists mostly from Spain displayed their physical abilities in public. He explains that there were acrobats, clowns, puppeteers, tamed bears and dogs, and musicians. These acts had a festive character and the artists were called “maromeros” (tumblers).

¹⁶ Revollo Cárdenas (2010: 38) cites Archivo Histórico del D.F., Diversiones Públicas, vol. 798. Exp. 158, as reference for this data.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 38 my translation.

¹⁸ The Mexican-American war or the U.S. Intervention (1846-1848) was an armed conflict due to the annexation of Texas to the United States and a debt Mexico had with the U.S. Mexico considered Texas as part of its territory but Texas wanted its independence. Mexico lost this war and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo resulting in the annexation of territories of the North of Mexico to the U.S.A. (Texas, New Mexico and part of California).

¹⁹ My Translation of Revollo Cárdenas (2010: 41-2) quote of Reyes de la Maza, Luis (1972) *Cien años de teatro en México*, Mexico: Sep Setentas 61.

²⁰ The early popular Mexican circus or “circo de carpa” most of the times was a travelling tent show performing under a great big “carpa” (tent). We can also say “La Carpa del Circo” when we refer to the great tent of the circus. More established, usually foreign, circus companies performed in great theatres in Mexico city or other important cities such as *Teatro Principal*, *Gran Circo Teatro Orrin* or *Teatro de Nuevo Mexico*. These were permanent structures. See Revollo Cárdenas, 2010.

²¹ As the play writer/filmmaker Luis Valdez (1998) explained that coming out of the Revolution in the 1920s in Mexico, popular theatre of the circuses gave way to the “Teatro de Carpa” (Carpa tradition) or “Teatro Tepache” where great quantities of “tepache” was drunk and the audience was free to shout back at the performers. In: *Necessary Theatre: Luis Valdez* (1998), interview by UCSD Professor of Theatre Jorge Huerta, University of California television (UCTV), [Online] Available, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-DaYL8cx9o&feature=relmfu>> [14 May 2012] and This is Us! - Luis Valdez [Online] Available: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isPFm9A_xRM&feature=related> [15 May 2012]. One of the meanings of the Spanish word “carpa” refers to a great tent that is used as a temporal building for any kind of spectacle. (Carpa- una tienda usada como edificio temporal). In this early Mexican popular theatre the popular was its principal element and way of expressing. The characters that were represented were from the “barrio”. They were created and represented by the “barrio” men. Characters such as Palillo, Chicote, Resortes and Cantinflas were created who

were the popular man “el lepero”. The “teatro del género chico” or popular theatre also named “Revista lírica Mexicana” presented performances by dancers and singers alongside comic sketches where the government and the Mexican elite classes were ridiculed and criticized. Audiences consisted of members of the popular classes as well as artists, intellectuals and journalists who wanted to have fun and criticize the people in power. Mexico always kept its links with Europe and particularly with Spain. The “teatro del género chico” in Mexico was influenced by the Spanish “zarzuela” and “obras líricas” of the “Teatro de Variedades”. Towards the end of the XIX century, companies from Spain arrived in Mexico and represented plays with political edge such as “Vivitos y Coleando” and “En la Tierra como en el Cielo” influences greatly Mexican popular theatre. As Valdez explains (1998), Federico Garcia Lorca’s plays would also have great impact in Mexico and Latin America during the 30s. Lorca’s company “La Barraca” travelling in a truck in the 1930s inspired Luis Valdez amongst other influences to create his “Teatro Campesino” (Peasants Theatre) in 1965. As he said, it was created with the farm workers in the picket lines. Luis Valdez is considered the Father of Chicano Theatre (ibid: UC television interview). In the Mexican- American border another circus tradition developed that was called “Carpa”. This type of circus incorporated both the popular circus and the “Teatro de Carpa”. They were family-run businesses of Mexicans who had fled during or after the Revolution. As Teresa Palomo Acosta says, these travelling shows will present their performances in rural South Texas. Palomo Acosta quotes Nicolás Kanellos that argues that the carpas combined traditional circus routines with theatrical traditions mixing acrobatics, pantomime, clowning, singing and dancing, comedy routines and dramatic monologues, in Kanellos, N, (1987) *Mexican American Theatre: Legacy and Reality*.

²² My translation in Revollo Cárdenas 2010.

²³ Second French Intervention in Mexico or Maximilian Affair (1862-1867) was the period when Emperor Napoleon III of France imposed the Second French Empire on Mexico backed by Great Britain and Spain at the beginning and naming Archduke Maximilian of Austria as Emperor Maximilian I of Mexico. It started when president Benito Juárez stopped foreign debt payments angering France, Spain and Great Britain, their desire to gain control in Mexico and the desire of Napoleon III to get hold of Mexico’s silver mines. During this time French troops were stationed in Mexico and when they were not in combat they used to practice wrestling as a way of keeping in shape. They passed on wrestling techniques to Mexicans. It ended after many battles, the Mexican Republican army victories, the threat the United States posed to France, the withdrawal of Napoleon III’s troops in 1866 and the execution of Emperor Maximilian I in 1867.

²⁴ Alcides is another name for Hercules.

²⁵ Olivera Figueroa 2007, p. 22.

²⁶ John S. Nash is a guest columnist of Cageside Seats, NB Nation. See Nash J.S. (2012) *The Forgotten Age of MMA, Part I: The Golden Age of Wrestling and the Lost Art of American Catch-as-Catch can*.

²⁷ Möbius 2007, p. 67. Möbius tells us that Pérez de Prian funded his own gymnasium calling it “Gimnasio Higiénico y Medicinal” (Hygienic and Medicinal Gymnasium).

²⁸ 2009 Interview to Mask Collector Christian Cymet in Mexico City.

²⁹ Maximilian I of Mexico, Emperor of Mexico (1832-1867) reigned for 3 years and 70 days with the backing of Napoleon III of France. He was executed in Mexico. He and Empress Carlota lived in Chapultepec Palace in Mexico City.

³⁰ Revollo Cárdenas 2010, p. 55. Revollo Cárdenas quotes María y Campos, A. de (1939) *Los payasos, poetas del pueblo* (El circo en Mexico, crónica), p. 149, Mexico: Ediciones Botas.

³¹ Revollo Cárdenas 2010, p. 89. Revollo Cárdenas quotes María y Campos, A. de (1939) *Los payasos, poetas del pueblo* (El circo en Mexico, crónica), p. 175, Mexico: Ediciones Botas.

³² In Orlando Jiménez’s historical account for the 2013 exhibition *Lucha Libre, Una Historia Jamás Contada*, in *El Museo del Noroeste*, Monterrey, Mexico.

³³ 2009 Interview to Christian Cymet and Möbius 2007, p. 68.

³⁴ Möbius 2007, p.68. Precise dates are mentioned in Möbius’s thesis and Christian Cymet gave me similar data during the interview.

³⁵ Nash (2012) explains, “Jujutsu would be rescued from the brink of extinction, and then go on to rapidly spread across the globe, thanks to Kano Jigoro’s revolutionary Kodakan judo. In London and Paris, Eastern and Western disciplines would be merged, giving birth to the new hybrid fighting styles of Bartitsu and *defense dans la rue*.” See his article, *Part IV: Ultimate Fighting of the Belle Epoque*.

³⁶ To extend more on Kodokan judo see Nash (2012), *Part II: The Rise of Judo and the Dawn of a New Age*.

³⁷ Porfiriato is Porfirio Díaz's government. Porfirio Díaz presidency was a dictatorship that lasted from 1877 to 1910 with an interrupted period from 1880 to 1884 when Manuel González became president of Mexico. After his presidency Porfirio Díaz was re elected.

³⁸ Martínez Rodríguez, F. (2004) Doctoral thesis: *Civilizing the Prehispanic: Neo-Prehispanic Imagery and Constructions of Nationhood in Porfirian Mexico (1876-1910)*, Camberwell College of Arts, University of the Arts London. (Doctor in Philosophy in Art History).

³⁹ Revollo Cárdenas in his study (2010: 237) says that the beginning of the XX century and the 1910 Revolution mark the rupture and extinction of the elegant European style equestrian circus that had dominated most of the XIX and beginning of XX centuries and had brought great spectacles and performers to Mexico. This period of the circus in Mexico is called "classic circus" and was represented by the Lailson, Green, Chiarini and Orrin companies which contributed to the birth of a Mexican circus (ibid: 237). Revollo Cárdenas says that the Mexican government in 1910 decided to cancel the right to use the land where Circo Teatro Orrin was and whose owners were foreigners. It was demolished to construct a park that later became "Parque Aquiles Serdán", a public space (ibid: 273). See Chapter 8, pp. 237–275.

⁴⁰ El Angel de Independencia (Angel of Independence) originally Columna de Independencia, was built to commemorate the centennial of the beginning of Mexico's War of Independence. It was inaugurated by Porfirio Díaz in 1910. The construction started in 1902. It is one of Mexico City's most important landmarks in Paseo de la Reforma avenue. It resembles the July Column in Paris and the Victory Column in Berlin.

⁴¹ Hellier-Tinoco referring to: Lumholtz 1904 and Starr 1908 in Hellier-Tinoco 2011, p. 56.

⁴² Emiliano Zapata (1879-1919) was born in Anenecuilco, Morelos, Mexico. He was the military leader of the Mexican resistance and the peasants during the Mexican Revolution. He commanded the *Ejército Libertador del Sur* (Liberation Army of the South) and is known as *El Caudillo del Sur* (the Commander or Leader of the South). He has become a myth and the icon of social struggle in Mexico. He represents morality, truth and justice for the common man in Mexico. *¡Zapata Vive, La Lucha Sigue!* (Zapata is alive, the struggle continues!) is a slogan for social combat. See *¡Zapata Vive! Documental History Cannel 1/5*, [Online] Available: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OplERr3fiKg>> [04 February 2014].

⁴³ Pancho or Francisco Villa commanded the Revolutionary army of the North of Mexico and who was central in winning various battles that led to the triumph of the Revolution. He was betrayed and assassinated.

⁴⁴ The Ashes of the Revolution – after Edgar Rojano's MA title dissertation (2010) *Las Cenizas del Zapatismo* (the Ashes of *Zapatismo*).

⁴⁵ **wrestling**, n. —Act of one who wrestles; especif., the sport consisting of the hand-to-hand combat between two unarmed contestants who seek to throw each other. The various styles of wrestling differ in their definition of a fall and in the governing rules. In **Greco-Roman** wrestling, tripping and taking hold of the legs are forbidden, and a fall is gained (that is, the bout is won) by the contestant who pins both his opponent's shoulders to the ground. In **catch-as-catch-can**, all holds are permitted except such as may be barred by mutual consent, and a fall is defined as in Greco-Roman style. For description of the holds or chips, etc., used in these styles, see HALF NELSON; HAMMER LOCK; SCISSORS, 5; HEAD SPIN; BRIDGE, n., 23.

Lancashire wrestling is essentially the same as catch-as catch-can. In **Cumberland** and **Westmorland** wrestling, the contestants stand chest to chest, grasping each other around the body. The one first losing his hold, or touching the ground with any part of his body except his feet, loses the bout. If both fall to the ground at the same time, it is a *dogfall*, and must be wrestled over. In the **Cornwall** and **Devon** wrestling, the wrestlers compete in strong loose linen jackets, catching hold of the jacket, or anywhere above the waist. Two shoulders and one hip, or two hips and one shoulder, must touch the ground simultaneously to constitute a fall, and if a man is thrown otherwise than on his back the contestants get upon their feet and the bout recommences. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster's New Dictionary*.

⁴⁶ Madigan 2007, p. 38. He says in relation to American wrestling's beginnings, "Puritanical leanings aside, the carny circuit was a place where the local townsfolk came to spend some money, eat some candy and see another side of life they didn't get the opportunity to experience in their suburban lives. A major part of the carny shows was the circus strongman. These legendary men of strength, from Eugen Sandow, "Father of Modern Bodybuilding," to Louis Cyr, have all, at one time or another, been part of the carnival circuit. The other manly aspect

was the wrestling or “wrassilin” exhibitions that were put on between carny ringers and the local gentry. There, in those simple and friendly (but rough) competitions, the seeds of an industry were planted” (2007).

⁴⁷ **Barnstorm** – v. – To perform plays in barns where a theatre is lacking; --said of an itinerant actor. Hence, to play, make speeches, etc. in small towns or in the country—**barnstomer**. In G & C Merriam Company 1945, *Webster’s New Dictionary*.

⁴⁸ For more in depth analysis of these early days when catch-as-catch-can wrestling, or catch wrestling, style arrived in the United States, see Mark S. Hewitt (2005) *Catch Wrestling, A Wild and Wooly Look at the Early Days of Pro Wrestling in America*. In particular chapter one, pp. 5-11, *The Strangler and The Lancashire Lad*, where he describes in detail the very first match in 1887 in the United States between the American Evan Lewis and the English (from Wigan) Tom Connors. This first match began a wave of British wrestlers competing against their American counterparts and the introduction of Lancashire style that will later be combined with local styles. Hewitt explains, “Adopting catch-as-catch-can as their own and then adding some elements from backwoods rough-and-tumble brawling and swapping some techniques with Japanese judo/jiu-jitsu, the North Americans produced a unique and devastating martial art” (2005: 11).

⁴⁹ Hooks practiced hooking. Nash (2012) explains, “Hooking” was the art of using techniques that were either unknown to the general public, or technically illegal under most rules.” In his article: In Part I, *The Golden Age of Wrestling and the Lost Art of American Catch-as-Catch-can*. In Hewitt (2005), p. 275, Glossary, definitions: **hook**: A submission hold in catch-as-catch-can wrestling that includes wristlocks, toe holds, and armlocks. **hooker**: A tough professional wrestler who is skilled in all the submission holds of catch-as-catch-can wrestling.

⁵⁰ *Biblioteca Nacional de España* and *Hemeroteca Digital* - newspaper and publications online library – see websites in Bibliography.

⁵¹ In 1908 the Spanish newspaper *El Heraldo de Madrid* reports the results of the London Olympic Games where wrestling was represented in the two categories of Greco-Roman and catch-as-catch-can styles, [Online] Available: <<http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0000569752&page=5&search=catch+as+as+catch+can&lang=en>> In June 1913 *El Heraldo de Madrid* has an article publishing the rules for the Paris 1913 Lucha Libre World Competition as well as the list of competitors, [Online] Available: <<http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0000642232&page=4&search=catch+as+as+catch+can&lang=en>> In the same month and year *El Heraldo de Madrid* published an article on the *Campeonato Mundial de Lucha Libre en el Circo Paris* (World Lucha Libre Championship in the Circus of Paris) where Spain was disqualified, [Online] Available: <<http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0000643367&page=4&search=catch+as+as+catch+can&lang=en>> In 1936 the *El Heraldo de Madrid* published an article on the Spanish impresario Joaquin Gasca responsible for bringing “catch-as-catch-can” performances to the Circo De Price in Madrid, Spain, [Online] Available: <<http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0001107599&page=13&search=catch+as+as+catch+can&lang=en>> and The newspaper *Cronica* in 1936 reports and has photos of the tournament of the Spanish Pablo Gardizabal vs. Mike Brendel the American Tiger, [Online] Available: <<http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0003343184&page=9&search=catch+as+as+catch+can&lang=en>> [11 January 2014].

⁵² Madigan 2007, p. 39. He says, “After the war, Lucha returned to Spain, but by the early 1960s the public had lost interest in the sport that, years before, had seemed poised to rival soccer as the favorite Spanish pastime.” Except for the Canary Islands’s tradition of *Lucha Canaria* – national sport linked to the Guanches.

⁵³ *Consejo Mexicano de Lucha Libre* is one of the main companies that promotes *Lucha Libre* in Mexico. The following dates and data can be found in CMLL’s official website: In 1910 the company of the Italian champion Giovanni Relesevitch arrived in Mexico and performed in “Teatro Principal” at the same time that the company of Antonio Fournier brought Conde Koma and Satake Nabutaka to “Teatro Colon”. The confrontation between these two companies and their wrestlers brought good business to them. In 1921 the foreign company of Constand Le Marin took to Mexico León Navarro who had been the European middle weight champion. Later on they promoted the Rumanian Sond and many others. In 1923 the company of Constand Le Marin went back to Mexico and this time bringing the Japanese Kawamula. Both Kawamula and Hercules Sampson performed in the “Fronton Nacional”. In 1930 George Gadfrey who had

been a famous boxer arrived in Mexico accompanied by Sergeant Russell. My translation of information in Consejo Mexicano de Lucha Libre website.

⁵⁴ Olivera Figueroa (2007: 22) mentions the performances of “Pandilla de Desesperados” (Desperate gang) in “Arena Nacional” in the 1930s. Erby Swift was in charge of eight wrestlers of different nationalities who took part in and with outstanding performances. He says that these battles were very violent and on many occasions the police had to interfere. They became the first heroes that medicine and engineer students admired and wanted to emulate for their knowledge, strength and corpulence.

⁵⁵ José Vasconcelos (1882-1959) was the Dean of UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) from 1920 to 1921 and coined the University’s motto, “Por Mi Raza Hablará el Espíritu” (For my race the spirit will speak). Gallo (2010: 203) explains, “The National Stadium was the most ambitious, most expensive, and most controversial project undertaken by José Vasconcelos, one of the most influential thinkers of the postrevolutionary period, who served as Álvaro Obregón’s minister of education from 1921 to 1924.”

⁵⁶ *Partido Revolucionario Institucional – PRI* (Institutional Revolutionary Party) ruled Mexico during 70 years and came back to power in 2012.

⁵⁷ Vaughan, Mary Kay, and Lewis, Stephen, eds. 2006, *The Eagle and the Virgen: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press in Hellier-Tinoco 2011, *Embodying Mexico*.

⁵⁸ Hall 1997, p. 14, *Representation and the Media*.

⁵⁹ Regarding Vasconcelos’s *La raza cósmica* utopian project, Gallo states, ‘He [Vasconcelos] envisions a slow evolution from barbarism to civilization that will take nations through three stages: first, there is the “material or war period”, a primitive stage during which countries are governed by strongmen who rule by brute force; then comes a more advanced ‘intellectual or political period’, marked by the development of laws and institutions to safeguard the collective well-being; and the process culminates with “the spiritual or aesthetic period”, a utopian state of pure bliss in which daily life is devoted to the pursuit of aesthetic ideals’ (2010: 207).

⁶⁰ Gallo 2010, p. 208. He goes on describing Vasconcelos utopia: “He [Vasconcelos] also predicted a future clash of civilizations between the Anglo-Saxons and the new Latin race. Here the treatise approaches fantastic literature: the author envisions the future capital of Latin America as a bustling city towering over the Amazon and called *Universopolis*”.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Gallo state, that for Vasconcelos saw the Mexican Revolution as regression into a primitive stage of society: the “warrior stage” or “age of the warrior”.

⁶² *Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP)* – The Secretariat of Public Education was created in 1921. Every student in Mexico is given a set of books designed by SEP as part of the curriculum.

⁶³ Bartra 2007, pp. 19-20, see also pp. 168 and 218.

⁶⁴ Hellier-Tinoco 2011, p. 66. She refers to: Rick López (2006) *The Noche Mexicana and the Exhibition of Popular Arts: Two Ways of Exalting Mexicanness* – in *The Eagle and the Virgen: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, edited by Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen Lewis, 23-42, Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press.

⁶⁵ Hellier-Tinoco 2011, see Introduction pp. 3-6. She states: “Mexico and Mexicanness are constructs created, shaped, and performed through discourse, photographs, dances, places, peoples, words, bodies, colors, foods, languages, musics, texts, films, journeys, stones, and memories” (2011: 3).

⁶⁶ Fernández Reyes, A.A. (2004) *Santo, El Enmascarado de Plata: Mito y Realidad de un Héroe Mexicano Moderno, Mexico*, El Colegio de Michoacan, CONACULTA. Semanario Permanente de Análisis Cinematográfico. Alvaro A. Fernández Reyes (2004) MA thesis: *Santo, El Enmascarado de Plata: Mito y Realidad de un Héroe Mexicano Moderno*.

⁶⁷ Stephan J. Bachelor’s essay in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov (eds.) 2004, pp. 273-326. *Fragments of a Golden Age*.

⁶⁸ Carlos Monsiváis Aceves (1938-2010) was a Mexican writer, critic of Mexican popular culture, journalist, social activist and Mexico’s chronicler.

⁶⁹ Bachelor’s essay in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov (eds.) 2004, p. 281. Monsiváis is quoted by Bachelor, originally in Monsiváis, C. (1981) *Escenas de Pudor y Livianidad*, p. 241, Mexico: Grijalvo.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 281-282. Monsiváis is quoted by Bachelor, originally in Monsiváis, C. (1981) *Escenas de Pudor y Livianidad*, p.238. Bachelor also directs us to Lomnitz, C. (1996) pp. 55-68, *Fissures in Contemporary Mexican Nationalism*, Public Culture 9.

⁷¹ Bartra 2007, p. 256, my translation of Bartra's notes originally in Monsiváis, C. (1985), *De algunos problemas del término "cultural nacional" en México*, Revista Occidental, year 2, number 1.

⁷² Here's a small summary on biographical data of the Mexican artist María Izquierdo taken from Olivier Debroise's essay, *The Shared Studio, María Izquierdo and Rufino Tamayo*, pp. 49-63, and Elena Poniatowska's essay, *María Izquierdo, On Horseback*, pp. 81-87, in Americas Society Art Gallery 1997, *The True Poetry, The Art of María Izquierdo*. María Cenobia Izquierdo was born in 1905 in San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco, Mexico. She spent her childhood in San Juan and Aguascalientes. At the age of fourteen her family married her to the ex-militar turned journalist Cándido Posadas and went to live to Torreón, Coahuila. They moved to Mexico city in 1923. They had three children. In 1927 Izquierdo became an art student at "Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes" (the old Art Academy of San Carlos). In 1929 Diego Rivera became its director. In a school's exhibition Rivera singled Izquierdo out and later organised a solo show of her work at the Modern Art Gallery of the National Theatre. In 1928 René d'Harnoncourt included two of Izquierdo's paintings in the "Mexican Arts" itinerant exhibition organized by the America Federation of Arts of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1930 she travelled to New York where she had a solo exhibition at the Art Center. In the early 1930s, the Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo and María Izquierdo lived together and shared an art studio for four years until Tamayo left her to marry Olga. In 1936, Izquierdo met Antonin Artaud whom she befriended and helped during his eight months stay in Mexico. Artaud was taken by her work and took some of her small paintings to Paris where he organized a show of her work. In 1938 the Chilean Raúl Uribe, director of Galeria de Arte Mexicano, became her manager and six years later her husband. In 1948 Izquierdo suffered her first embolism and suffered partial paralysis that lasted eight months. She never gave up and continued painting. She divorced Uribe and a lot of her friends abandoned her. She died in 1955 at the age of fifty-three from a fifth embolism.

⁷³ According to Elizabeth Ferrer in Americas Society Art Gallery (1997: 12), the Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991) had rejected the artistic path that Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera had chosen and named social realism and art that would serve as catalyst for change after the Mexican Revolution.

⁷⁴ Debroise, O., *The Shared Studio, María Izquierdo and Rufino Tamayo*, in Americas Society Art Gallery 1997, pp. 19-63, *The True Poetry, The Art of María Izquierdo*.

⁷⁵ Debroise's Spanish version for "the tents of the vaudeville shows" he uses the words: "las carpas del teatro de revista" (1997: 114) – or teatro de carpa in Mexico City unlike the "Circo de Carpa" that developed in the Mexican American communities of the United States. Debroise tells us that Izquierdo visited dance halls, small itinerant [travelling] circuses (la carpa del pequeño circo itinerante), churchyards, corral, and stables... (1997: pp. 60 and 114).

⁷⁶ González, M. de J. and Sloan, J. (2007) *María Izquierdo: Images of the Circus*, The Journal of Popular Culture, Volume 40, Issue 2, pp. 238-248, April 2007.

⁷⁷ See endnote 21, pp. 121-122: Teatro de Carpa, Carpa.

⁷⁸ In Americas Society Art Gallery 1997, p.17, Ferrer quotes Maria Izquierdo's "Credo Artístico" in 45 Autorretratos de Pintores Mexicanos, Siglos XVIII al XX, (1947) Mexico City: Palacio de Bellas Artes; reprinted in Cervantes, ed., María Izquierdo, p. 145. Translation by Elizabeth Ferrer.

⁷⁹ Debroise (ed.), Medina and Teratoma A.C. 2007, *La Era de la Discrepancia: Arte y Cultura en México, 1968-1997/ The Age of Discrepancies: Art & Visual Culture in Mexico, 1968-1997*.

⁸⁰ Debroise (ed.), Medina and Terratoma, A. C. 2007, in Introductory essay to the book by Juan Ramón de la Fuente Dean of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)

⁸¹ María Izquierdo's *Allegory of Liberty* (1937) is a watercolour painting on paper, 21 x 26.5cm, part of Blaisten Museum's collection, Mexico.

⁸² Geis refers to Dawn Ades's essay: *Orbits of the Savage Moon: Surrealism and the Representation of the Female Subject in Mexico and Postwar Paris*, Whitney Chadwick (ed.) 1998, pp. 106-127, *Mirror images: Women, Surrealism and Self Representation*. Ades states how Izquierdo with these small paintings entered the surrealist "orbit" when Artaud took thirty of them to Paris where he held an exhibition at the Galerie Van de Berg in Montparnasse in 1937.

⁸³ Ferrer quotes: Artaud, A. (1936) August 23, n.p., *La pintura de María Izquierdo: Comentario y posdata*, Revista de Revistas, Mexico City.

⁸⁴ These allegorical compositions were going to be the ones Antonin Artaud took to exhibit at the Galerie Van den Berg in Montparnasse when he went back to Paris in 1937. Artaud befriended María Izquierdo in 1936 when he arrived in Mexico City.

⁸⁵ Geis 2005, *The voyaging reality: Maria Izquierdo and Antonin Artaud, Mexico and Paris*.

⁸⁶ Geis explains (2005: 8), “Through her interaction with Artaud, Izquierdo’s work metamorphosed into an allegorical vision that melded a dark, mystical and perhaps oneiric vision of pre-Hispanic culture with a modern, post-revolutionary sensibility.”

⁸⁷ Juan Carlos Pallarols (1942-). His craftsmanship also includes presidential batons and sacred work such as chalices and crucifixes for the Church. His work is sought after and represents exquisite pieces of criolle tradition in the Americas that are bought by rich collectors and foreigners.

⁸⁸ Juvenal – Decimus Iunius Iuuenalis was a Roman writer and Satirist born in 60 AD who published his works from AD 112 to 130AD.

⁸⁹ “Panem et Circenses” in Juvenal’s Satire X – The Futility of Aspirations: “...Long ago, the people cast off its worries, when we stopped selling our votes. A body that used to confer commands, legions, rods, and everything else, has now narrowed its scope, and is eager and anxious for two things only: bread and races”. (77-81 in pp. 88-89) in Juvenal, *The Satires*, (1999) translated by Rudd, N. and Barr, W. (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁹⁰ Levi 2008, *The World of Lucha Libre, Secrets, Revelations, and Mexican National Identity*.

⁹¹ Electoral fraud – see Taibo II, P. I., Poniatowska E., Díaz Polanco H., Mejía Madrid F., Vasconcelos H., Martínez S., Miguel P., Ramírez Cuevas J. and Suárez del Real J. A. (2012) *Libro Fraude Electoral 2012*, Mexico: Para Creer en Libertad A.C.

⁹² *Morena Cultura* - Movement of National Regeneration. Headed by the presidential 2012 PDR candidate Manuel López Obrador: AMLO. Evidence and testimonies of electoral fraud in: Libro Fraude Electoral 2012 writers and academics: Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Elena Poniatowska, Héctor Díaz Polanco, Fabrizio Mejía Madrid, Héctor Vasconcelos, Sanjuana Martínez, Pedro Miguel, Jesús Ramírez Cuevas y Jose Alonso Suárez del Real.

⁹³ *Morenaje* –Young People and Students Movement of National Regeneration. Its objective is to foster young peoples participation in the effort to transform public life in Mexico. Funded in October 2011. Luisa María Alcalde Luján talks about situation of young people in Mexico (2011) see online links in Bibliography.

⁹⁴ *Movimiento Ciudadano* (Citizens Movement) is a political party funded in 2011.

⁹⁵ *Partido del Trabajo* (Work Party or Plan Nacional para la Defensa de la Democracia y la Dignidad de Mexico) or the National Plan to Defend Democracy and Mexico’s Dignity. See online link in Bibliography.

⁹⁶ *El5anto* or *Ruy Salgado* (not his real name) and his online collaborators and the virtual site are called: *El Santuario*. *El Santo* is a political and social commentator, blogger and political activist.

⁹⁷ *#YoSoy132* (I am 132) – Mexican student protest movement centered around democratization of Mexico and its media. It began against the imposition of the PRI’s candidate (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) Enrique Peña Nieto and the media coverage of the 2012 elections for president. See online links in Bibliography.

⁹⁸ *Anonymous* is a hacker group created in 2003 that consists of an online and offline anarchic collective of web users and part of a digitized world brain. They wear the Guy Fawkes mask from the film *V for Vendetta* based on Alan Moore and David Lloyd’s 1983 comic *V for Vendetta*. The communications are done by one member wearing this mask and through social media. *Anonymous Mexico* is a hackers collective formed in 2011 that denounces drug cartels criminality and the corruption in the Mexican political system and the 2012 electoral fraud in Mexico. They usually end their communications with this statement: “Knowledge is free. We are Anonymous. We are Legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us”. See online links in Bibliography.

⁹⁹ See Edgardo Buscaglia studies. Edgardo Buscaglia holds a PhD in Jurisprudence and Social Policy and a PhD in Economics. He serves as a legal/economic senior adviser to several international organizations (e.g. UN and World Bank), bilateral institutions in the U.S. (USAID) and in Europe (GTZ) and the US Government. He is the founder of Latin American and Caribbean Law and Economics Association.

¹⁰⁰ See interview made to Blue Demon Jr. by El Hijo del Santo in *Experiencias con el Hijo del Santo – Blue Demon Jr. p.1*.

¹⁰¹ **Holds and Aerial Moves** (Llaves y Lances): **llave**: en ciertas clases de lucha, lance que consiste en hacer presa en el cuerpo del adversario, o en alguna parte de él, para inmovilizarlo o derribarlo. **Lance**: acción o efecto de lanzar (arrojar), es un movimiento, un desplazamiento. Real Academia Española (2003) Diccionario de la Lengua Española (dictionary).

Llave – my translation: **Hold**: in certain types of *lucha* it is an action that consists of taking hold of an opponent's body or part of his/her body in order to immobilize or take him/her down. Once the opponent is immobilized with his shoulders and back to the canvas, the referee must count to three in order to win a point. This category is divided into these three kinds, “presas, agarres and amarres”, that depend on the combination of body movement/restriction. They have been developed by *luchadores* throughout the years.

Lance – my translation: **Aerial move**: action of throwing your body, it is a movement of displacement of the body. In these spectacular acrobatic movements, the *luchador* throws himself into mid-air in order to land on his opponent sometimes hitting him and other times kicking him off. The aerial moves are full of acrobatics, action and danger.

¹⁰² *ComoNo* is the major promoter of live Latin American music in the U.K. as well as La Linea Festival of Latin American music. Andy Wood is its founder and director. In an interview with Wood in 2008, he told me that the event was publicised and geared towards the British public and not for the Latin public living in London and the U.K. and the prices were high ranging from £70 near the ring seats to £20 in the outer far area of the Roundhouse theatre. The following years the most expensive tickets went down to £50.

¹⁰³ El Hijo del Santo: see Appendix 1, Biographies of Wrestlers and Other Lucha Libre Personalities.

¹⁰⁴ Blue Demon Jr.: see Appendix 1, Biographies of Wrestlers and Other Lucha Libre Personalities.

¹⁰⁵ See Incense and Copal in Appendix 1, Glossary.

¹⁰⁶ The artworks “Grandpa’s Secret Jewels” and “Marcella’s Elegantes 12” came after the realization that an adoptive mother, whom we considered her birth mother, raised my mother, was not and that she was the result of an affair my maternal grandfather had. As a consequence my mother was taken from her real birth mother given to a substitute mother who later gave her into adoption to a couple who became her father and mother. She grew up with them from the age of one to the age of twenty-five.

¹⁰⁷ Rojano, E. (2010) MA thesis *Las Cenizas del Zapatismo*. Edgar Rojano is the director of Museo de la Revolución, Mexico City (Revolution Museum). See online link in Bibliography.

¹⁰⁸ See Rojano 2010, chapter 4, pp. 83-113, *Las Cenizas del Zapatismo, Morelos y la Campaña Presidencial*, chapter 4, pp. 83-113.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, chapter 1, p. 14, *Y Si Zapata No Hubiera Muerto...* Rojano quotes the manifesto, “*Al pueblo Mexicano*” that the Zapatistas, wrote: “...renovamos hoy ante la Nación Mexicana, nuestros juramentos de fidelidad a la causa, nuestra protesta de adhesión a los principios, y le hacemos saber que hoy como antes [...] hemos de seguir enfrentandonos a los defensores de la moderna tiranía [...] Nuestro lema es y ha sido siempre: Hasta vencer o morir”. My translation: “...we renew today in front of the Mexican Nation, our oath of faith to the cause, our protest in support to principles, and we let you know that today as it was before [...] we will continue confronting those that defend the modern tyranny [...] Our motto is and has always been: To win or die” (1919). Rojano takes this data from the Genovevo de la O Archive, Box 19, expedient 9, document 4, *Al Pueblo Mexicano*, 15th April 1919. He also tells us that in a solidarity act the main military leaders signed and they were: Francisco Mendoza, Genovevo de la O, Jesús Capistrán, Fortino Ayaquica, Maurilio Mejía, Leopoldo Reynoso Díaz e Ismael Velasco; the intellectuals Gildardo Magaña and Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama; and prominent civilians such as doctor José Parres and the lawyer **Alfredo D. Ortega** (my maternal grandfather).

¹¹⁰ The phrase “Tierra y Libertad” (Land and Freedom) that Emiliano Zapata often used has been attributed to the Mexican anarchist, journalist, writer and political and social activist, Ricardo Flores Magón (1873-1922). Others attribute the origin of this phrase to the Russian: Zemlya I Volya (Land and Freedom) of the end of the nineteenth century before the 1905 Russian Revolution, quoted from Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán in (1993) Ricardo Flores Magón, *Antología*, p. 144, Mexico: UNAM. See Bibliotecas, TV, *Zapata*, online link in Bibliography.

¹¹¹ Doña Virginia Aguilera: see Appendix 1.

CHAPTER THREE

Part 1. Lucha Libre Mexicana

“The true strong masked characters are those outside the ring”
(Fernández Reyes, 2004: 221)

This practice-based research project continues the scholarly discussion of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* in particular vis-à-vis Heather Levi (2008)¹ and Alvaro A. Fernández Reyes (2004),² and especially regarding emerging political and social activism in Mexico in the present day. Levi's is an investigation of the creation of the *luchador* as a mythical figure at the intersection of politics and national identity. I respond to the use of the *luchador* mask in political discourse as an artist and react both politically and artistically to the work of today's activists. Of paramount importance are the extreme violence and lawlessness arising from the drug trade, the imposition by fraud, of the President of Mexico in 2012, pervasive manipulation of and by the mass media and wholesale systemic corruption.

Levi relates *Lucha Libre* to politics and its relevance to political discourse (ibid: 83). She sees a connection between the masking and unmasking of characters (ibid: 128) in both Mexican politics and *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. Levi is of the opinion that the decline of the *Lucha Libre* in the 1990s corresponds to the decline of a political system (ibid: 220-221). She states, “In a sense lucha libre's ‘secret’ was that it was a parody of the post revolutionary state.” And notes that, “...if a system that is parodied loses its hegemony, then parody loses its power” (ibid: 221). I am of the opinion that the power of the parody is greater than ever. The latest political developments have shown that behind a smokescreen of political theatre many deals were made between political parties and the same hegemonic structures have remained. All of this suggests that the signifying practice of critical political parody has been maintained in *Lucha Libre*.

The critical analysis of the scholars Roger Bartra (2007),³ Denis Dresser (2011),⁴ John Ackerman (2012),⁵ and Juan Pardinás (2011)⁶ provide background for Mexico's contemporary economic, political and social situation for this study. I have also drawn upon Jim Freedman's study (1988)⁷ of the story of the Canadian wrestling venture "Big Bear Promotions" and fans in the small cities and towns of Northern Ontario. His description reveals the world of these early travelling shows in their original form in Canada and the United States and is relevant to the early stages of Mexican wrestling. These early stages are reflected in the small promotions of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* still existing in barrios (poor neighbourhoods) and small arenas in Mexico.

Freedman's work is partly an ethnographic study of the wrestling fans of small travelling promotions before their takeover by powerful business interests controlling major cities and venues.⁸ There are similarities between the fans. Ma Pickles, for example, was eighty-eight and lived in an old folks home. Freedman tells of her encyclopaedic memory of wrestling and how "she took the spotlight at the shows with her flare-ups, her struts around the ring and her jousting with referees and heels" (ibid: 24). The similarities between the Canadian, Ma Pickles, and the Mexican, Doña Virginia Aguilera⁹ called "abuelita de la *Lucha Libre Mexicana*" (*Lucha Libre Mexicana's* grandma), are surprising. Abuelita Aguilera also belongs to the forgotten working class.

In this section of the thesis, I have grouped the *luchadores* and fans in categories, some of them reflecting new trends and advances in the media and technology. Along these lines, I have created a body of work grouped under the title *Hues of the Passions* relevant to the above issues and concerns. The process of creation of these pieces and their outcome directed inquiry and generated questions concerning emergent political and social activism in Mexico. I reflect on the importance of alternative media channels in the emergence of new activism and awareness in Mexican society, especially among

the youth. Finally, the way the iconography of the masked *luchador* has been drawn upon in the interest of activism is especially pertinent.

3.1.1 The Act of Wrestling in Lucha Libre Mexicana

Lucha Libre Mexicana is a combination of sport, entertainment and storytelling.

Madigan (2007)¹⁰ argues that the masked wrestlers are fighting superheroes that not only exist in the pages of comic books and movies such as El Santo and Blue Demon,¹¹ but who walk and live amongst people before their transformation in the wrestling ring. There are many personalities and a broad range of fame and distinction (some examples are given in the section on categories of *luchadores*). According to Madigan, *Lucha Libre* means free-style fighting,

Since *Lucha Libre Mexicana* incorporates many fighting techniques, it is often referred to as “el Pancrancio” (the pankration) in Mexico, referring to the ancient Greek Olympic sport of the pankration that included wrestling, boxing and kicking as illustrated in ancient sculpture and pottery.



Fig.42. Panathenaic prize amphora, signed by the potter Kittos.¹² AN00034629_001

Image © The Trustees of the British Museum

Mexican wrestling is the second most important spectacle in Mexico after football (INEGI).¹³ The *luchadores* are divided into two categories: the *tecnicos* (technical) and the *rudos* (rough). The *tecnicos* always follow the rules and the *rudos* always cheat, betray and commit fouls. Audiences are expected to take part during *Lucha Libre* performances by shouting at, and even physically interacting, with them. Wrestlers

interact with audiences by provoking them, instigating their shouts and reacting to the crowd's demands at all times. The audience demonstrates complicity in believing in the performance. Roland Barthes (1993)¹⁴ argues that what is displayed during wrestling is "the great spectacle of suffering, defeat and justice". In Mexican wrestling the struggle between good and evil and the spectacle of suffering, defeat and justice, are both concentrated and amplified amidst the shouts and demands of the people endeavouring to influence the outcome.

Lucha Libre Mexicana is a critical parody of the political system (Levi, 2008), it manifests the common man's exclusion from political discourse and the lack of equal rights and opportunities in his life. As Dresser explains in her analysis of contemporary Mexico (2011: 51-63), *Lucha Libre Mexicana* reflects the tensions that exist in a Mexican society that is immersed in a capitalist system favouring an elite class and the political group in power. In relation to wrestling and the politics of culture Nicholas Sammonds tells us,

“...professional wrestling is neither merely sport nor entertainment. It is a popular entertainment form, but, like its antecedents, it is also a hotly contested site for working out social, cultural, political, and economic ideas and desires” (2005).¹⁵

Lucha Libre fans participate in a ritual of exaggeration of their emotions in which all are allowed to express their anger, aggressive instincts, and passionate search for meaning in the midst of life's injustice. Barthes (1993: 15) says, “The virtue of all-in wrestling is that it is the spectacle of excess” and Monsiváis (1998)¹⁶ tells us,

‘And at the *luchas*, which take place in the open air of marginalization, one attends a genuine Human Comedy, where the hues of the passions (dissimulation, refined cruelty, Pharisaism, the sensation of “I owe nothing to nobody”) find the sign to carry them, express them, and carry them in triumph’ (2005: 94).¹⁷



Fig. 43. Lucha Libre Mexicana in London 2008. Image by Cayetano H. Rios

Lucha Libre is fervent melodrama in which good and evil characters confront one another while allegorically portraying the unfair power of the few and the oppression of a suffering society. *Lucha Libre* fans see their stories of injustice and suffering reflected in the ring and are willing to suspend their disbelief to join the spectacle and make it a more vivid and sanguine experience. Juan Villoro (2011)¹⁸ says, it is “extreme theatre that aspires to the limit of its representation” and he goes on to describe what happens in matches when wrestlers bet mask vs. mask or mask vs. hair (when a *luchador* has already lost his masks in a previous combat):

‘When a “rudo” [rough wrestler] amongst the “rudos” loses the battle where he bets his hair, the tag demands that he kneels down on the canvas, begs for mercy, sees the barber who will shave him arrive and he will cry inconsolably in front of the shouts that humiliate him. Only that which is excessive is normal in these surroundings. Each luchador competes in dramatization with that instant in which Tosca¹⁹ launches himself to his sure death from the great wall’s precipice’ (2011: 16).²⁰



Fig. 44. Taking Magno’s Mask off. Image by Cayetano H. Rios
This is the moment when Blue Demon Jr. attempted to take Magno’s mask off during a *Lucha Libre* performance at the Roundhouse, London, U.K. in 2011.

In these matches, they fight for total vanquishment and the end result is the removal of the mask or the shaving of the *luchador's* hair. *Lucha Libre's* wrestling ring is a place where rituals and stories are played out. The fight is a great theatrical spectacle and, at some moments indeed, is genuine and bloody. People shout: “¡Quiero ver Sangre!” (I want to see blood!) and they are heard. Defeat is necessary to punish and humiliate the loser even to the extent of taking away in certain matches the most precious, the mask. The winner keeps the mask as a trophy to later display in his/her “wall of masks”. Monsiváis (1998) explains,

“In the arena, the recently shorn mane of the rival is a war trophy, and it is the war itself, the unmasking is the loss of face, and the world and national sceptres are dreams of glory that the Bronze Race can recognize” (2005: 91).²¹

Lucha Libre Mexicana can be compared to those early 1980s wrestling promotions Freedman saw and recorded in Canada when he accompanied the Wildman in his venture. The Wildman was a Canadian wrestler and owner of Big Bear Promotions whose wrestling acts also included wrestling with an actual bear. Freedman's ethnographical study (1988) is a commentary on the reality of inequality in Canadian working class people's lives, the political and economic system, and how this in turn is reflected in the performative. *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and the small 1980s Canadian wrestling promotions share many similarities. Both of them tell the hopeless stories of the working class and the excluded by listening to the many voices of their fans. As Freedman (ibid: 158) says, “The stories of their lives joined those in the show”. During my interviews with the Mexican wrestlers I heard many of their tragic stories and of how *Lucha Libre* had changed or even saved their lives.

The more perverse the villain or *rudo* is, the more people hate him and the more tickets are sold in Mexico. Freedman observed in the responses of those Canadian fans that the more they hated the villain, the more “heat was drawn”. He explains that the

Wildman well understood the necessity of story telling:

“The wrestling tales were tales of woe; they made you sad, made fans rise to despair and if the night was right, to rage. I would see the show as a fan again, this rage and this despair, and perhaps this time see it better than before” (1988: 159).

Lucha Libre Mexicana functions in a similar way. Monsiváis (1998) tells us about El Santo in his early matches when he was a rudo:

“At that time, El Santo was still a villain, the Bad Guy who boasts of being a swine, and gives eye pokes or sharp kicks to the Fallen Hero, while the referee asks for moderation, and those present at the circus of Aztec Roma howl with indignant pleasure. Their perversity makes for record ticket sales, furies in the ring, instant poetry...” (2005: 90).²²



Fig. 45. El Hijo del Santo during his performance, Roundhouse, London, U.K., 2008. Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Levi, in *Mexican wrestling* (2008), like Freeman, in *Canadian wrestling* (1988), sees the connection between wrestling and the political and socio-economic aspect of a society. The Mexican fans are part of a political system that contradicts itself by claiming to be a democracy when in reality there is no true freedom of speech, there are human rights violations, corruption, extreme violence and no rule of law in Mexico. There is a discrepancy between the rights granted and written in the Mexican Constitution and the reality of what the common citizen receives. The Mexican economist, Pardinás (2011) says that democracy in Mexico is like a green dog. He

compares Mexican democracy in Mexico to a green dog because he says that democracy is like a rare, an exotic and mythological animal that nobody has seen. Pardinás tells us that Mexico is the only democracy in the world that stops its citizens from the possibility of re-electing or punishing its authorities.²³

From its inception in Mexico, television has had a great impact on the masses. According to Levi (2001),²⁴ *Lucha Libre Mexicana* was on TV from 1948 to 1954 and in this period it transcended class divisions. But this lasted only a short time and it was stopped due to government censorship.²⁵ Televisión studios (part of Emilio Azcarraga's network that later became Televisa) televised *Lucha Libre* matches reaching all sorts of public (ibid: 336). Levi found evidence in photographs of the audience who attended Televisión studios and testimonies in interviews she conducted with middle and upper class audiences who used to watch matches when they were children (ibid: 336 -337). This has been the only time in which elite members of the Mexican society attended these matches because some of them were held in television studios where they felt safe and even took their children. After this short period, the ban stopped *Lucha Libre* from being transmitted on television. During the time *Lucha Libre* was not transmitted it lost most of its middle and upper class Mexican supporters. *Lucha Libre* finally returned to television in 1991 and since then it has gradually gained adherents of all kinds.

As reported by Levi, in the 1970s *Lucha Libre* began to figure in a project of reconceptualization of "lo mexicano" (the Mexican) by a generation of avant-garde artists (2008: 193). They wanted a subject that the institutionalized system had not co-opted and saw that it was representative of popular urban culture. In 1973 Felipe Ehrenberg²⁶ produced a performance piece in which several men, dressed as masked wrestlers, walked around the Bellas Artes Palace with flashlights (ibid: 193-194). Levi points out that, by the 1980s, for a group of Mexican artists and writers, *Lucha Libre*

represented a cultural project in opposition to both the official nationalism of the Mexican state and the elitism of the arts community in the aftermath of 1968²⁷ (ibid: 194). She explains that Mexican artists including Lourdes Grobet, Marisa Lara, Arturo Guerrero, and Sergio Arau²⁸ have used *Lucha Libre* imagery in their work. She also includes the Mexican writers Carlos Monsiváis, José Joaquín Blanco, José Buil, and Paco Ignacio Tabo II²⁹ who, from the 1980s onwards, have written about *Lucha Libre*, celebrating it in essays or using it thematically in works of drama and fiction (ibid: 194).

When *Lucha Libre* imagery appeared in other contexts associated with high culture in Mexico City such as museums, galleries, paintings (with artworks by Marisa Lara, Arturo Guerrero, Sergio Arau, and Francisco Toledo to name a few) and theatres (films by José Buil), the perception of it changed and it began to be embraced by the middle class, intellectuals and artists. Levi notes that the neo-pop group also began resignifying it. An example is Sergio Arau's 1991 painting *Santo Santo* on the cover of Levi's *The World of Lucha Libre*. She explains,

“With its masks and its melodrama, *lucha libre* symbolized a rethinking of national identity. The emergence of Superbarrio thus made sense for two reasons. First, through the intervention of the neo-pop group, *lucha libre* had come to be interpreted as a master symbol of urban Mexican cultural authenticity. Second, wrestling performance was full of elements that could be read as a parody of the post-revolutionary political system. Superbarrio was implicitly present in every *lucha libre* match” (2008: 220).

As stated by Levi, *Lucha Libre* was resignified by this artistic and political avant-garde group and organizers who considered it a source of imagery and a non-alienated ritual of lived urban reality. Having gained respectability *Lucha Libre* returned to television in the 1990s (ibid: 213). The 1990s also saw the appearance of artists wanting to represent something distinct from the Neo-Mexicanist movement and of a more conceptual nature. According to Gallo (2004),³⁰ in 1993, a new generation of

foreign artists arrived in Mexico, amongst them Francis Alÿs and Melanie Smith. They influenced a group of Mexican art students in their early twenties who opened an exhibition space in a dilapidated mansion they called it *Temistocles* (ibid: 7). These artists were Eduardo Abaroa, Pablo Vargas Lugo, Abrahm Cruzillegas, Daniela Rossell, Sofia Taboas and others. Gallo says,

“Firstly, they rejected painting in favor of alternative media like installation, video, ready-mades, and performance. Second, they dispensed with the use of nationalist symbols and adopted a visual vocabulary taken from the globalized mass media (including references to television, film, comic books, and other products of American popular culture)” (2004: 7).

Some Mexican artists who had gone to study and work abroad, started exhibiting at international galleries and participating in biennials and art fairs without first having recognition or support in Mexico (2007: 25). Olivier Debroise and Cuauhtémoc Medina explain,

‘Ruben Ortiz Torres, for example, who had gone to Los Angeles to study in 1990, showed in New York in “Trade Routes”, a 1993 show at the New Museum for Contemporary Art. At the same time, Gabriel Orozco, who had been living in New York since 1990, was invited by Lynn Zelevansky to produce work for the Museum of Modern Art’s *Projects* program, which featured emerging artists. Also in 1993, he showed the Citroën *DS* at the Chantal Crousel Gallery in Paris, and the *Empty Shoebox* at the Venice Biennale’ (2007).³¹

The Mexican artist Carlos Amorales,³² completed his arts training in Amsterdam in 1992 and exhibited in 1997 at the Yvon Lambert Gallery in New York City his piece: *Lucha Libre or Professional Mexican Wrestling*. He continued developing and exhibiting this performance artwork outside Mexico: *Interim Performance* (1997), *Amorales Table Dance* (1997), *In Conversation with Superbarrio* (1997), *Amorales vs. Amorales in Peace* (1999), *For the First Time in Paris* (2000), *Evil Wins in Paris* (2000), and *My Way* (2001, Tijuana and San Diego, U.S.A.). In 2003 Amorales exhibited at Tate Modern gallery in London his *Flames Maquiladora* installation which portrays the making of wrestler’s trainers in a sweatshop production line.

The artist Demián Flores Cortés was born in Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico, and has participated in various residencies abroad. At a very early age he was influenced by Francisco Toledo's cultural and social projects and became determined to promote social change through art and artistic projects.³³ When he was still young, he and his family moved to Mexico City where he studied and later graduated from UNAM (Universidad Autónoma de México) in 1995. He founded *La Curtiduría* (The Tannery) and the *Taller Gráfica Actual* that are projects for artists' workshops and residencies in Oaxaca, Mexico and he has been working in a similar project in Xochimilco, Mexico in La Cebada neighbourhood. He took part in the following residencies: in 2000 at Vermont Studio Centre in the United States, in 2002 in the Cité Internationales des Arts in Paris, France and in 2004 at University of Essex and the London Print Studio in the United Kingdom. In the year 2000 he presented the exhibition *Arena Mexico* in the Museo de la Ciudad de México and in the Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca. This exhibition was shown at the University of Essex Gallery³⁴ in 2004 and it included two live *Lucha Libre* matches where the *luchadores* El Hijo del Santo and Blue Panther and the referee Orlando Jiménez Ruiz took part. The ESCALA collection (Essex Collection of Art from Latin America) online catalogue at the University of Essex explains the following about his work,

“The thematic focus of Demián Flores' works is found in popular culture, and more specifically in the world of Mexican free wrestling or *lucha libre*, a veritable universe governed by its own ethic and aesthetic laws within the context of Mexican society.”³⁵

This century has brought new interpretations of the theme *Lucha Libre* by foreign and national artists who have been working on visual representations that include traditional artistic practices and new digital media, technologies, and web based art and design. These include: video, film, documentary, photography, printing techniques, animation, comics, painting, drawing, sculpture, and performance. Examples are: Shaun El C. Leonardo's 2008 Performance,³⁶ *El Conquistador vs. The Invisible Man*, done during

his *La Curtiduría* residency in Oaxaca, Mexico; Michael Ramos Araiza's 2009 documentary, *Cassandra, El Exótico*,³⁷ Demián Flores, Orlando Jiménez and Guiduri Arroyo's 2011 short film with the wrestler Sangre Azteca: *Sangre vs. Sangre*,³⁸ Cayetano H. Ríos photographs of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and Katinka Herbert's photographs of Mexican wrestlers included in her book *Slam*.³⁹

From December 2012 to March 2013 the exhibition *Lucha Libre! Miradas al Fabuloso Mundo de la Lucha Libre Mexicana* took place at the *Palais de Glace, Palacio Nacional de las Artes*,⁴⁰ in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This has been the first multidisciplinary international collective exhibition with the theme of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*.

Lucha Libre is a subject that has been embraced not only in visual art practices but also by other creative areas and industries such as visual communication, product design, fashion, advertising, music and media broadcasting and entertainment (television series: cartoons for children, sports competitions, talent shows, docu-soaps, and documentaries). In 2006 Andy Ward and Bob Jaroc directed the animation *The Return of Super Barrio* with the soundtrack by the band Plaid. Jean Paul Gaultier's 2014 farewell collection in Paris included Mexican wrestling costumes and masks of Miss *Lucha Libre*.

3.1.2 From the Ring to the Street – Emergence of Activist Groups in Lucha Libre Mexicana. Politics and Contemporary Activism in Mexico

As Levi says, the late 1980s saw the emergence of social and political activist figures who were non-wrestlers but dressed as *luchadores* and wore masks such as Superbarrio⁴¹ and Ecologista Universal⁴² who campaigned for the rights of people in the city and the awareness of environmental issues. They attended *Lucha Libre* matches as well as political meetings and represented the interests of common citizens mediating with the authorities to solve everyday problems in urban areas (Levi, 2008: 127-135).

Advances in technology and globalization in the twenty-first century have had an effect on the way some sectors of Mexican society communicate and are informed and a new virtual hero emerged in 2011 that served as icon for freedom, justice and democracy. This was the Mexican blogger and character of *El 5anto*⁴³ who, wearing a blue *luchador* mask, was a social and political activist whose objective was to provide news by using internet social media to avoid the censorship of the state. He became extremely popular but was ultimately threatened and silenced in 2012. He is currently in exile in an unknown location. *El 5anto* has never been a *Lucha Libre* wrestler.



Fig.46. El 5anto, image from hoyloleo.com (2012).
“El bloguero más seguido en México, hasta el momento de su despedida” (The most followed blogger in Mexico until his farewell.) (Hoy Lo Leo, 2012).

El 5anto or Ruy Salgado (another alias) used social media channels from 2011 to 2013 and reported political, social and economic information and data otherwise censored in Mexico. *5anto* communicated through the social media channels of youtube, twitter, facebook, ustream and his blog El5antuario.org. For him the “5” of *5anto* represents the fifth power and freedom of communication that the world wide web has given the common man in the world.



Fig. 47. Icon of el 5anto, image from: twitter.com

Fernández Reyes is of the opinion that the hero is a moral symbol that refers reflexively to the society from which it originates. The hero maintains the collective memory of ways of behaving politically and socially, and the values, codes of personal conduct, and the ethical motive that triggers him into action and into being (2004: 221). He goes on to say that the mythic quality of the figure of the *Lucha Libre* wrestler “EL Santo”⁴⁴ resides in a tradition and in the transmission of those symbols from generation to generation; in the social sphere it is embodied as Superbarrio⁴⁵ and Fray Tormenta⁴⁶ (ibid: 221). For Fernández Reyes,

“The power of the mask has transcended *luchador* cinema and comics. This symbolic power of the mask has currently been diminished in *lucha libre*, even as it has been integrated into the broader culture. The true strong masked characters are those outside the ring” (2004).⁴⁷

The appearance on the web in 2011 of the masked character and activist of *El 5anto* and his *5antuaristas*⁴⁸ followers is central to the understanding of the power of the mask in political and social discourse and the hero as moral icon for the Mexican virtual collective members who demand justice and freedom of expression. This social media activist adopted the symbol of the mask of the *luchador* as a Mexican popular icon while trying to keep anonymous his true identity while re-contextualising both.

El 5anto became the voice of millions of Mexicans who are frustrated and threatened by the current scenario of organized crime⁴⁹ backed and in compliance with the Mexican political, judicial, and military agencies. *El 5anto* became a social media hero who coordinated and united the Mexican people oppressed by the elites in power. Even though he is no longer in Mexico and his online accounts were stopped⁵⁰ the *5antuaristas* have continued his activism and have created other social networks. Their matches are largely played out in a virtual ring and of course the “rudos” are the political elites and the cartel barons and the “tecnicos” are the Mexican people who fight to live in a lawful and just country.

El Santo linked with other *Santuaristas* members and other movements that fought for media and communication democracy and freedom of expression in Mexico. Through his blog and website I learned about other Mexican activist groups, such as *#Yosoy132*,⁵¹ a Mexican student protest movement, and *Anonymous Mexico*,⁵² a hackers collective. They have emerged in response to censorship concerns, closures of newspapers and websites, and the murder of journalists who contradicted state messages or reported on the drug cartels. The Mexican media promote the political and hegemonic discourse of the power elite, effectively eliminating freedom of expression in television, radio, and the popular press.

"La sensibilidad de un pueblo es su fuerza, una fuerza que constituye en todo el mundo un serio peligro para los poderosos." (Maria Lluïsa Borràs)

Tàpies (1969) reminds us of Maria Lluïsa Borràs⁵³ words in *Destino*⁵⁴ "...a people's sensitivity is their strength, a strength that all over the world becomes a serious threat to those in power." He goes on to say, "It is not surprising that the media, which ought to be at the service of all, are in the hands of those who think it their duty to put them exclusively at the service of a few" (2011: 64).

All of this indicates that the signifying practice of critical political action continues being part of the spectacle of *Lucha Libre*. Real life masked super heroes such as Superbarrio,⁵⁵ Super Sme and Fray Tormenta⁵⁶ continue their social and political activism against corruption, poverty, injustice, and impunity in Mexico. The Mexican and the Chicano community in the United States follow *Lucha Libre* and have created their own heroes, such as the *Exótico luchador* and activist Cassandro⁵⁷ and the wrestler Rey Mysterio,⁵⁸ with their own mythology. In Mexico new heroes have emerged such as the *luchador Místico*.⁵⁹

Lucha Libre matches continue in small arenas and makeshift spaces in Mexican cities and towns. The *luchadores* perform in big arenas as well as in various ad hoc spaces and all sorts of public are able to attend these matches. All of this demonstrates that *Lucha Libre* is culturally vigorous and responsive to the historical moment and the needs, fears and desires of the nation.

3.1.3 Categories of Luchadores

The evolution of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* has brought transformations to wrestling styles in Mexico as well as a division of kinds of *luchadores*. In its early beginnings the typical profile of the Mexican *luchador* was of belonging to a specific socio-economic group of the populous urban areas scattered all over Mexico City. Urbanisation, industrialisation, massive migration to cities throughout the 1920s to the 1950s in Mexico, and socio-economic changes brought opportunities to more sectors of the population and the *luchador* benefited from them (Fernández Reyes, 2004).

Today there are huge socio-economic differences between most known successful *luchadores* and those beginning or whose careers have not been successful. Mexico continues being a country of great contradictions, differences and inequalities reflected in the divisions between groups of people that constitute society. On the one hand some members of the Mexican society have entered the digital era and participate and belong to the online community, netizens who use social networks to communicate, while others are illiterate and live in poverty. The division between “Mexico profundo and imaginary Mexico” (Bonfil Batalla⁶⁰: 44-48)⁶¹ may be even greater.



Fig. 48. Luchadores in London, 2008. Image by Cayetano H. Rios.

For this study I have focused on *luchadores* (male wrestlers), *luchadoras* (female wrestlers), *exoticos* (gay wrestlers), *minis* (dwarfs), *mini companions* (mascots or companions that do not compete), *social activists* (wrestler, ex-wrestlers or non-wrestlers), and *extreme violence luchadores*. I will divide the Mexican wrestlers into seven categories to understand the socio-economic changes and their roles as *luchadores* and/or activists in Mexican society. The types of wrestlers mentioned above belong to one or more of these seven categories:

Those who are brand names (mask and image are registered and they own copyright).⁶² The two most important and successful are El Hijo del Santo and Blue Demon Jr. who understand how to market their legacy and commercialized their mask and image. They own stores and gallery-cafeteria-boutique combination shops where they sell their products. Their image, products and careers are promoted and managed making use of their websites, social media networks and mass media. They have worked hard to change the image of the Mexican *luchador* from the 1990s and even more in the twenty-first century, by associating with celebrity establishment members and intellectuals, attending cultural and political events and promoting an educated image of the *luchador* through the media. El Hijo del Santo has exhibited *Lucha Libre* collections of El Santo and/or his own paintings in museums and galleries. He is now promoting a documentary in honour of his father “*El Hombre Detrás de la Máscara*”.⁶³

El Santo Junior⁶⁴ is a young *luchador* and the third generation being promoted to continue the legacy and business. A lot of the *luchadores* understand the importance of owning their brand name in order to protect their copyright but not all of them are able to pay the fees to own their signature mask and costume. Market vendors reproduce cheap copies of the *luchadores* masks and memorabilia. El Hijo del Santo and Blue Demon Jr. have the money and the legal advice to follow up copyright court cases and issues but most *luchadores* are unable.



Fig. 49. Copies of *luchador* masks sold outside the Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, 2009. Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill.

Those that are part of the establishment and have celebrity status. They work for and are part of “Empresas” (wrestling corporations: CMLL, AAA, Independent Mexican, IWRG) and are benefited and promoted through hype of matches, TV competitions,⁶⁵ TV programs, and internet websites and social networks. The corporation and promoters decide the *luchador* career, promotions, moves, and matches. They are not in control of deals between promoters and corporations most of the time.

Those that have opted out of “Empresas” (wrestling corporations) and are working independently. They negotiate their participation in matches in Mexico and other countries. They take part in other events, TV programs, documentaries, films, and own their mask and image. Sometimes they are promoters of other *luchadores* and/or train other wrestlers, have gymnasiums or *Lucha Libre* Schools. Examples are El Hijo

del Santo, Blue Demon Jr., and Cassandro.

Those that practice extreme violence wrestling. This kind of wrestling began in Philadelphia, in the United States, in 1999 with the creation of Combat Zone Wrestling (CZW) by John Zendig showing an extreme ultra-violent style of professional wrestling. It was exported to Mexico at the end of the 1990's but organized arenas and wrestling promotions showing this hardcore wrestling style in Mexico have only become popular in the last six years. The hardcore wrestlers hurt their opponents with tables, chairs, neon lamps, bats with barbed wire, and tacks and blood prevails. Hardcore wrestling is combined with *Lucha Libre Mexicana* style. One of the promoting companies is *Desastre Total Ultraviolento* (DTU, Ultra-violent Total Disaster) funded in 2007.⁶⁶

Those that belong to Spanish speaking diasporas – mainly the Mexican *luchadores* that are living in the U.S. or that belong to a second or third generation of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. They take part in Lucha VaVoom matches, against American wrestlers in WWE matches and championships and they participate in Mexican wrestling matches and promotions in Latin America, U.K., Europe and Japan.

Those using internet sites and/or are social activists. Some of them are *luchadores* like Cassandro and Fray Tormenta. Cassandro is an Exótico and a promoter who helps Mexican wrestlers who arrive in the United States sort out their immigration papers and who promotes equal opportunities for Exóticos. Fray Tormenta supported his orphanage for many years with the proceedings from *Lucha Libre* matches. Some of this group used to be *luchadores* and left *Lucha Libre* to dedicate their efforts to social activism as in the case of Superbarrio and Super Sme. There are also those who are social activists and non-wrestlers, wear *luchador* masks and sometimes costumes and mask like *El 5anto* and Super Gay.

Those that are poor, just starting, are out of shape or have other jobs to support themselves and their families and work in smaller arenas or impermanent structures in poor “barrios” (neighbourhoods).

Even though top-level wrestlers compete in matches in the most important arenas in Mexico and go abroad, they still have to perform in smaller arenas in cities and towns to increase their popularity, maintain their community of fans, and make ends meet. For this reason fans are able to meet and watch all sorts of wrestlers in small accessible arenas all over Mexico City, other cities, towns and villages all over the Mexican Republic.

3.1.4 Media, Fans and Collections.

While post-revolutionary urbanisation and modernization maintained the extreme class difference between the elite and poor, new forms of mass expression, as well as mass persuasion, arose (Fernández Reyes, 2010). According to Fernández Reyes (ibid: 58), the year 1930, with the first Mexican radio broadcast (station XEW),⁶⁷ marks the beginning of the binary interrelationship between government and the mass media (ibid: 60). The owner of XEW-AM radio company, Emilio Azcárraga Villaurreta later funded the first Mexican Television Company and Media Empire that became Televisa. Today Televisa is owned by his grandson Emilio Azcárraga Jean and together with TV Azteca, owned by Ricardo Salinas Pliego, form a duopoly that controls mass media. Telmex, the Mexican telecommunications corporation, is owned and controlled by Carlos Slim, the richest man in the world. The relationship between government and these mass media and telecommunications corporations has continued and expanded ever since. Most Mexicans get their news and information through television. Dresser says,

“In an era in which 90% of the population receives political information through television, the politicians are forced to position themselves in the screen. It is an era when nothing is real until it appears on television, he who aspires to power must tame it” (2011: 179).⁶⁸

Radio, cinema, and television (Fernández Reyes, 2004), have played a central role in creating, manipulating and reinforcing attitudes to promulgate an image of an “imaginary Mexico” (Bonfil Batalla, 2007) while promoting the creation of a consumer society. Mexican cinema’s golden age (1936-1969) saw the creation of expensive productions and great movie stars, also instrumental in the construction and reinforcement of national culture and identity (2004: 65-71).

In parallel developments within the “vecindades” (poor neighbourhoods) new iconic characters emerged from humble venues such as “los teatros de maroma,”⁶⁹ the small circuses, “los teatros de carpas” (tent theatres) and cabaret, to later progress to cinema and television (films and programs in which Cantinflas, Tin-Tan, Resortes, Capulina, Tongolele, etc... appeared). These grassroots icons were *el pelado* (poor urban man like Cantinflas), *el pachuco* (Resortes), the comic (Capulina), *el cinturita* (gigolo), exotic dancers and singers of cabaret (Tongolele), the boxer and the wrestler (El Santo) (ibid: 65-71). In the 1950s they became the new stars that appeared in comics, cinema and popular television programmes. The comic Cantinflas and the wrestler El Santo became new mythical figures and popular urban heroes for the masses (ibid: 65-72).

Underlying all of the above was the culture of poverty (ibid: 73). The comics of *Santo El Enmascarado de Plata* (Santo the Silver Masked) were an important medium in the circulation of stories of implicit national identity discourse and images of the popular characters that would capture the public imagination.⁷⁰ Within their pages the urban and the rural, the modern and the traditional, the scientific and the religious, the sacred and the profane were all intertwined (Levi, 2008). The development of the “photomontage”⁷¹ technique with its combination of drawing and photography, by José G. Cruz,⁷² made the production of the comics quicker and increased the number of copies reaching more and more people in Mexico and Latin America. Based upon the

actual wrestler calling himself, “El Santo”, Cruz created the comic book character, “Santo El Enmascarado de Plata”, a defining moment in the creation of *Lucha Libre* (Fernández Reyes, 2004). Cruz also included other, already existing, real life wrestlers in his stories as well as inventing cartoon characters that later became real wrestling characters in real matches.⁷³

In the 1950s people could attend *Lucha Libre* matches in their neighbourhoods or city arenas read stories about *luchadores* in comics and attend cinemas to watch El Santo and other wrestlers tell them stories in *luchador* films. The wrestler became an iconic image of Mexicanness and “El Santo” became a myth and a hero. Fernández Reyes says that from 1953, helped by televised matches and special publications, the *luchador* stopped being a “paria” to become a celebrity (2004: 86). *Luchador* cinema, comics of El Santo and *Lucha Libre* matches contributed to the creation of many myths and stories that have helped the common man in Mexico survive the injustices of the political system.

It has always been the case that the audience and its participation are very important elements of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. This is what Monsiváis says about the fans,

‘Perhaps the most profound of *Lucha Libre* scenarios is located within the scream zone, the most elevated of diabolical sports. It describes the event, shores up the idol, allows the spectator to vent, and reinvent the Flowery Wars.⁷⁴ “We want blood! Bust him open! Crush him! Screw Him! The quebradora,⁷⁵ you sonofabitch! Don’t let him go! Don’t just stand there!”...’ (Grobet, 2003: 10).

Even though *Lucha Libre* was very popular with many fans, there were few serious collectors and until recently nothing was being archived or properly recorded. Christian Cymet López Suárez⁷⁶ an important Mexican *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and mask collector, told me during an interview in 2009 in Mexico, that for many years *Lucha Libre* and anything around it was considered something “ugly” (feo) and in “bad taste”

(mal visto), consequently no one collected material associated with *Lucha Libre*. All sorts of memorabilia were thrown away because they were not considered of cultural value. Originally, it was very difficult for Christian Cymet to start his collection or to obtain masks, programs, newspaper articles and photos. He started his collection when he was a young boy of seven going to flea markets in Mexico City and by chance he got to know a vendor who sold old sports memorabilia and introduced him to *Lucha Libre*. From then on he started following *Lucha Libre* and acquiring masks from *luchadores* at matches he attended. Today he has the most important collection of “máscaras profesionales luchadas” (professional played masks) which are those masks lost by *luchadores* in important matches and are usually torn and bloody. On one occasion he showed me some of these masks that he keeps stored in boxes. It is his desire to be able to create a *Lucha Libre* museum and research centre in Mexico. In the late 1990s he acquired the collection of Doña Virginia Aguilera,⁷⁷ a devoted fan of *Lucha Libre* for many years and had consistently collected *luchador* memorabilia such as masks, newspaper clippings and pieces of hair from “máscara contra cabellera” (mask vs. hair) matches. Following her death and after some years of negotiations, he bought the collection from her son for a substantial sum of money.



Fig. 50. Interview with Christian Cymet, 2009, Mexico City.

In March 2013 the exhibition *Lucha Libre. Una Historia Jamás Contada*⁷⁸ (*Lucha Libre. A Story Never Told*) curated by Christian Cymet and Orlando Jiménez with the guidance of the museographer Sergio Rodríguez took place at *El Museo del Noreste* or

MUNE⁷⁹ (Northeast Museum), Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. This exhibition was based on Jiménez's historical account of *Lucha Libre* in collaboration with Christian Cymet whose extensive collection amounting to more than a thousand objects, was on display. Other collections, photographs, *Lucha Libre* books, and film scripts were also exhibited. This major exhibition included conferences, events, *Lucha Libre* cinema, interactive activities for adults and children and *Lucha Libre* practical demonstrations and the participation of well-known *luchadores*.

New media technologies and ways of re-branding and advertising *Lucha Libre* performances, wrestlers and related products are reaching new national and foreign markets in this century's age of globalization. They are bringing further changes in the *luchador's* social status as well as in some *Lucha Libre* fans. Re-conceptualising *Lucha Libre Mexicana* by re-branding its image to appeal to other types of public, exporting it, and marketing it like any other product is creating new consumers. Mass mediation is increasingly influential including programs such as "En Búsqueda de Un Idolo", "El Luchador series 1 & 2", "Experiencias con El Hijo del Santo", "Mira Quien Baila",⁸⁰

To categorize *Lucha Libre Mexicana* fans, I followed Sam Ford's (2007) categorization⁸¹ or "fan types" model and have adapted his expertise in "ethnography of wrestling fandom" to *Lucha Libre* fans dividing them into ten categories. Ford not only looks at fans engaging in events but also he looks at internet culture. *Lucha Libre Mexicana* fans belong to one or many of these categories. Fans who are:

Participants and consumers. These fans have been important from the beginning in shaping matches and the *luchadores* who listen to their demands. They actively engage with the spectacle by shouting at the *luchadores*, cheering or booing at them. They support the *luchadores* and keep the spectacle alive. They are consumers of *Lucha Libre* printed material (new and used comics and magazines), cinema, and radio

and TV programmes, memorabilia, both official and unofficial, (masks, figurines, t-shirts, photographs, etc.).

Performers. These fans are spontaneous participants during the *Lucha Libre* matches. They stand out from the rest of the audience. They are louder, bolder and their peculiarities become part of the spectacle. Sometimes they fight with the *luchadores* that have fallen out of the ring or their insults become part of the fight. The case of Doña Virginia Aguilera, called *Abuelita de la Lucha Libre Mexicana* (*Lucha Libre Mexicana's* grandmother), is unique. She would challenge the referees and the *luchadores* and even sometimes unmasked them. She attended matches from 1934 till just before she died in 1997 at the age of ninety-seven.⁸²

Critics. These fans comment, discuss, argue about the *luchadores*, the masks and costumes, the show, the acting, the refereeing, the holds, the aerial moves and anything else relevant to the spectacle. Ford (2007) argues that, “Most of the discursive activities surrounding a show do not just involve being within the willing suspension of disbelief but commenting on, discussing, arguing about the show, the acting, etc.”

Theorists. These fans write, analyze and discuss *Lucha Libre Mexicana* being themselves “aca-fen” (fans who are academics)⁸³ (H. Jenkins), journalists, writers, artists, curators, researchers, chroniclers, and bloggers. An example is the Mexican collective of artists, writers and researchers that constitute the group *Jinetes Sampleadores de im@genes A.C.* (Riders Samplers of Im@ges Civic Society) whose objective is to research, promote and develop *Lucha Libre*, the arts, urban cycling, and cinema by organizing exhibitions, activities, film events, performances and conferences.



Fig. 51. Interview with Orlando Jiménez, 2009, Mexico City. Images by Cayetano H. Rios.

In November 2011 the exhibition *Lucha Libre Invasion!*⁸⁴ took place in the *Museo de Historia de Tlalpan* in Mexico, City. This exhibition included graphic art, painting, video, and photography inspired by *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. The artists that took part were Carlos Amoraes, Demián Flores, Dr. Lakra, Alejandro Santiago, Shaun Leonardo, Andrés Mendoza, Alfredo Vilchis and sons, Humberto Valdez, Dr. Alderete, Francisco Rangel, Cristian Pineda, Gerardo Montagno, Marcos López, Alejandro Pérez Cruz, Barry Wolfryd, Miranda Anguiano, Nicola Okin F., Zao, Manu Printster, Manuel Bautista, Simona Shaffer, Gabriel Guerra, and Eder Benjamín Huerta. It was organized by and with the participation of *Jinetes Sampleadores de Im@genes* and the *Taller La Imagen del Rinoceronte* (The Group the Image of the Rhinoceros) whose members are Orlando Jiménez, César Flores, Samuel Casal, Yuriko Estévez, Blacksay, Guadalupe Padilla, Sergio Arath, Jors, Jean Sebastien Ruyer, Rosalío Vera Franco, and Carlos Amoraes.

Jinetes Sampleadores de Im@genes have also organized *La Lucha Sigue en Políticas Festivals*⁸⁵ in the *Facultad de Ciencias Politicas y Sociales* (FCPyS) (Social and Political Sciences Faculty) of UNAM in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Their aim is to demonstrate *Lucha Libre* styles and its diversity to university students through a series of events and conferences and an invitation to expand their imagination by questioning and taking part in the dialogue. In 2012 the theme was the *Exóticos y Universitarios* (Gay wrestlers and University students).

Collectors.⁸⁶ Some of these fans have been extremely important because their collections contain unique printed and recorded data, information and memorabilia of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, *luchadores* and *Luchador* cinema that have been crucial for researchers, writers, and film festivals to reconstruct its history. Some of the most important are Roberto Shimizu,⁸⁷ Christian Cymet López Suárez,⁸⁸ and Rogelio Agrasánchez.⁸⁹

Part of a community. Fans who have been part of a wider community or communities from the beginning, the 1930s, and experience an important social cohesion as group members.

In a diaspora. Fans outside Mexico who follow *Lucha Libre* and who maintain their links to Mexico and/or that follow *Lucha Libre* in Mexican communities with *luchadores* participating in wrestling matches mainly in the United States.

Outside Mexico belonging to other cultures. These are fans that are not Mexicans and live in other countries but are following *Lucha Libre Mexicana* through virtual spaces and websites and television networks.

Online.⁹⁰ Fans that follow *Lucha Libre* through digital networks and participate by creating their blogs, websites and interact with other fans, commentators, programs or *luchadores* through Facebook, Twitter or Youtube. Some of these fans share and upload *Lucha Libre* videos and maintain it in a virtual space. Javier Pereda's⁹¹ research takes *Lucha Libre Mexicana* analysis into the digital age by applying new technologies of communication methods, anthropology, social theory and design. He calls what he has created "Wrestling Visualizations".⁹² He investigates "how the visual elements within the masks are created and how they have evolved through time" (2012).⁹³ *TrinkerMedia* is his alias and webpage to present his work. In his *TrinkerMedia*

Wrestling Project he regards wrestling as a form of cultural Mexican expression. With his research on *Lucha Libre* and a hundred and twenty masks, Pereda created a typography of wrestling masks by applying digital visualization methods in a variety of ways. By using multimedia and a variety of technologies he feeds data of wrestlers, bets, teams of wrestlers and the matches to specific programmes resulting in data visualization charts. Pereda has developed an interface that “allows the user to interact with information” for instance, “the user can click the name of the wrestler, redirecting him to the database in *LuchaWiki* that gives the user more information about anything related to *Lucha Libre*” (2012: 271).⁹⁴

Indi-analog.⁹⁵ The digital age and economic structures in Mexico have brought another division in society. Apart from digital natives and digital immigrants (Marc Prensky),⁹⁶ a third category may be added – the “Indi-analog” group that are oblivious and/or do not have access to computers (or even electricity in some cases). This group located in rural areas and in very poor neighbourhoods of cities, still enjoy *Lucha Libre* matches as in its earliest venues. Those that have access to new technologies and participate through social media generally belong to the dominant culture and the urban mass culture of the big cities and are generally better off.

Part 2. Practice-Based Inquiries *Hues of the Passions*⁹⁷

Through practical explorations and bodies of work under the theme *Hues of the Passions* I investigate social and political activism, racism, tortured surface/body concepts and the containment of final traces and memory. The works are titled: *Time for Justice, Strategy of Fear, Cassandra, Mythologies, and Tortured*.

Four of the five pieces in *Hues of the Passions* were created in 2012 and 2013, three of them being sustained drawings. An absence of colour predominates. In the last one, *Tortured*, there is a complete absence of formerly recognizable matter, the transformative process having reduced all to ashes. The painting *Cassandra* has colour having been done in 2009 at a time I was investigating colour composition in other paintings. It reflects another mood and time frame and is incorporated in this thesis with the other four since it is about the activism of the main character portrayed.

3.2.1 Time for Justice: 60,000 Assassinated and 10,000 Disappeared or Silenced⁹⁸ (Montoya-Turnill: 2012) Process of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This piece is a charcoal drawing on paper measuring 107cms x 152cms, and made in my studio in Spain in 2012. The paper used is a 400 grams Atlantis giant drawing and watercolour paper.⁹⁹ This sustained drawing was done over many days of long periods of meticulous work. It contains 7,000 skulls engraved on the surface of the paper. Each of them stands for 100 people killed, tortured, disappeared or silenced since 2006 in Mexico due to organized crime, corruption at high levels of government and business and the war on drugs.

A 2013 Amnesty International report¹⁰⁰ documents the number of missing or disappeared people since 2006, the testimony of their families, the circumstances in

some cases and the failure of the system to find the victims and solve the crimes:

Mexico: Confronting a Nightmare: Disappearances in Mexico,

“More than 26,000 people were reported missing or disappeared in Mexico between 2006 and 2012. It is unclear how many remain unaccounted for. Some are the victims of enforced disappearances in which public officials are implicated. Others have been abducted by private individuals or criminal gangs. Still others may simply have left home without telling anyone” (Amnesty International, 2013: 1).

Amongst these people are many journalists and social activists who have paid the price with their lives or exile for being critical of the political system and for reporting the atrocities of both the elite in power and the criminal groups in Mexico. The government, the judicial system and the police fail to acknowledge, investigate, report or solve crimes committed against Mexican citizens. To even report a crime or injustice puts one at risk of being silenced, kidnapped or murdered. There is no freedom of press in Mexico only an impersonation of it by a mass media monopoly in the service of political power and elite groups to maintain their hegemony. Serious journalism transmits the truth to recover democracy in a country. The truth resides in reporting and writing about the stories of the citizens, their problems, hopes, desires and needs. The courageous journalists, writers and activists who through their work and risking their lives, strive to bring the truth to the people. As Fernández Reyes says, “The true strong masked characters are those outside the ring” (2004: 221).

The artist seeks after and conveys the truth through his/her work as well. Tàpies (2011: 46) explains that he can not see the artist as subservient to a program or ideology that does not respond to circumstances. As an independent thinker he believes he must contribute to an awakening. He argues,

“...I see the artist’s task as not purely receptive, it is not, as some say, the mere reflection of a time. I believe his role is rather one of action and together with the efforts of many others, he holds in his hands the power to modify experience” (2011: 46).¹⁰¹

The process for this piece, as well as for *Strategy of Fear* (2012), started when I came across *El Santo's* blog at the beginning of 2012. His information led me to other sites and encouraged me to question the Mexican media. By this time I had already become aware of other political activists, writers, academics and journalists who had been critically engaged in telling the true story of what was happening in Mexico through other social media channels. I periodically followed this charismatic activist and the collective participating in *El Santuario* and other sites during many months until he suddenly stopped transmitting.

The heads of *el Santo* and *Anonymous* can be found amongst the engraved skulls. The blogger *Santo* who wears a light blue *Lucha Libre* mask was silenced on 9th of September 2012. His site reached the highest number of hits in 2012 surpassing Televisa's websites even though this Mexican media corporation has invested great quantities of money in its own digital sites. People feared the worst but fortunately he was not killed and eventually surfaced to apologize and to tell the public through social media channels that he and his family had been threatened, intimidated and all his internet accounts stopped and for these reasons he could no longer continue transmitting.



Fig. 52. Online poster looking for *el Santo*, image from *el5antuario.org* posted: 14th September 2012. It reads: “Where is Ruy Salgado? Inform: contacto@el5antuario.org”

The surface of the paper on which the drawing was made became a metaphor for tortured skin and tortured spirit. A grid was drawn with graphite containing 7,000 squares in which the skulls were engraved. The lengthy process of engraving 7,000 mask-like skulls onto the paper, of applying pressure with every one of them, erasing the grid, and then applying a series of layers of charcoal of different textures and quality onto the surface is meant to reflect the victims' violent ordeal as well as their political engagement and journey.

During the process this thick texture paper resisted the harsh processes I was applying to the surface. The paper also registered the movements and marks resulting from the grid's severe erasure creating interesting tonalities of greys, dark greys and blacks when the charcoal was applied to its surface. The strategy was to make the creation a very long process, therefore, every time the drawing was near completion, I would take it back by applying another layer of graphite, charcoal or simply erasing areas. The paper reacted something like the human skin that records torture, time and struggle. Paper resists and records the actions of human interventions. Paper like skin, can provide to its history and the processes that have affected it. There is a memory recorded on the paper and the human skin, and finally all that remains at the end of a lengthy process is the signs, the testimony and the memory.



Fig. 53. Detail of Time for Justice, 2012. Image by Ellen Turnill

3.2.2 Strategy of Fear and Emergence of Black Swans (Montoya-Turnill: 2012)

Process of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This piece is a drawing in the medium of charcoal on paper measuring 86cms x 61cms. It was done in 2012, in the studio in Southern Spain. The choice of charcoal produced a monochrome drawing aiming to reflect a sombre tone. In this drawing the viewer can see 135 figures that represent #YoSoy132,¹⁰² *Anonymous*, *El Santo*, and a “Black Swan”. A hundred and thirty-five figures are etched into the surface of the paper before the drawing is worked to bring out a layered atmosphere. The silhouettes represent the facebook icons or profiles found in social networks.



Fig. 54. Detail of *Strategies of Fear*, 2012. Image by Ellen Turnill

This drawing was done over five days, an extended period of time. The strategy behind sustained drawing entails bringing the drawing back from completion every time it begins to reach a conclusion and I deliberately performed actions forcing me to restart and find different processes and outcomes. As mentioned before paper is like the skin that records the processes of the artist's actions. During the process of applying pressure to the surface and building it up, a series of layers was created. Layers of graphite lines and charcoal were added and others were erased as well. This drawing was not conceived in advance but was allowed to evolve intuitively something like the organic way the activist group evolved. It was not pre-conceived but came about freely and unexpectedly as did my drawing. #Yosoy132¹⁰³ movement and the events it has created are a historical first for Mexico since the young people who comprise the movement are children of the Mexican elite and middle class. Their indignation at

President Peña Nieto has caused some to call the movement his creation. The movement has also been able to influence the media which has in fact been accurate in its reportage regarding #Yosoy132. It has fostered critical thought and awareness of civil rights. Students have created many blogs, pages, accounts and videos uploaded on the World Wide Web.¹⁰⁴ People are awakening from their apathy and individualism and demanding change. These are the “Frodo” Dresser (2011) refers to, taking responsibility and the burden of the ring to change the democracy of simulacra. For the Ibero student activist and organizer Rodrigo Serrano, “*La Democracia es tener un voto informado y dar la cara. En un país aplanado por las formas, romper las formas a favor de la verdad.*” “Democracy is to have an informed vote and stand up. In a country flattened by the conventions, we have to break the conventions in favour of the truth.”¹⁰⁵

For Alfredo Jalife Rahme¹⁰⁶ the #Yosoy132 movement represents “A Black Swan” or highly improbable event (Nassim Nicholas Taleb),¹⁰⁷ nobody was expecting and that it can be compared to the case of the Arab world. The Arab Revolution started in the most peaceful and improbable part of the Arab world, Tunisia,¹⁰⁸ with a solitary act by a poor fruit vendor. This isolated, individual act of despair of self-immolation brought tremendous consequences that have challenged entrenched systems in twenty-two Arab countries.¹⁰⁹

Jalife Rahme is of the opinion that, in the same way, when the young students of the Ibero University fight against the giant Televisa corporation their actions have great and unforeseen consequences since this private university is an enclave of the middle and upper Mexican classes. He argues that it is the least probable and expected place to start a series of political and social actions. Jalife Rahme explains that the #Yosoy132 movement has the potential to start a revolution in Mexico. By revolution he does not mean a political one; Mexico is constitutionally an electoral democracy—he is referring to the overthrow of the totalitarian media system of Televisa. He says that this

revolution is peaceful, anonymous, intelligent, with direction, by well informed students defying manipulation and, significantly, belonging to the middle and upper classes.¹¹⁰

El Santo and the *Santuaristas* reported on and supported the *#Yosoy132* movement. All these web-activists and others are in touch and have united forces coordinating, communicating, informing, and organizing events and meetings. Superbarrio and Super Sme are using alternative channels of information as well by uploading videos of events and meetings in which they have participated. It may be said that the twenty-first century, along with globalization and new technologies, has brought a new awareness to sections of Mexican society that were before apathetic and unchallenging of government policy and media manipulation. The new Mexican urban generation is following the global trend of change and is better informed. The *#Yosoy132* movement continues to be active and to play its part in pressuring the government and elite groups in Mexico. The protests have been global and groups of students have joined them around the world. . They have even inspired the *#Yosoy301* movement in Spain¹¹¹ where a group of journalists, writers, bloggers, activists, students, academics, and intellectuals have denounced the government's policies and corruption, and defend the right to manifest peacefully without being sanctioned. *La Jornada* on-line newspaper and *#Yosoy132* movement takes part in global issues and connect to key world players such as Julian Assange and Wikileaks to foster the right to be informed and promote transparency among governments, the media and institutions. *La Jornada* has been instrumental in publishing the cables that Wikileaks discovered in Mexico to reveal "part of the suppressed history in Mexico".¹¹²

3.2.3 **Cassandro, “*Bendita Lucha Libre nunca te acabes*” (“Blessed *Lucha Libre* never end”) (Montoya-Turnill: 2009). Process of Making and Formulation of Meaning:**

This piece is a painting using oil and graphite on linen measuring 1.10m x 1.10m. It

was done in 2009 in the Wimbledon studio in London, U.K. This artwork was made along with others in 2009 when I was exploring colour and was taken by the colourful outfits of the *luchadores*. The painting combines the techniques of oil painting and drawing with graphite. The process started with a series of drawings of the *Exótico luchador* Cassandro¹¹³ after witnessing his London performance at the Roundhouse in 2008 and an interview with him in Mexico City in 2009.



Fig. 55. Cassandro assessing the situation. Image by Cayetano H. Rios (2008).



Fig. 56. Sketches for Cassandro (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K., 24cms x 25cms, technique: graphite on paper.

The drawings of Cassandro slowly transformed into a being inside a cocoon, waiting to transform. After these drawings some small prototypes were made on a wooden surface using sand and oil and graphite.



Fig. 57. Prototypes for *Cassandra* (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K., 30cms x 30cms. Paintings using mixed media: oil, graphite and sand on a wooden support. Exhibited at the Miguel Angel Art Gallery in 2011 in Spain.

The final painting of *Cassandra* “*Bendita Lucha Libre nunca te acabes*” became two figures in the artwork: one of a strong *luchador* and another one of a presence or spirit in constant transformation or re-invention inside a cocoon. Colour represents the gentleness of his persona and the bold charcoal marks show his strong determination, courage and strength. “*Bendita Lucha Libre nunca te acabes*” (“Blessed Lucha Libre never end”) is a phrase that *Cassandra* uses when he refers to *Lucha Libre* to recognize how much it has given him as well as the struggle it has also meant for him.¹¹⁴

This charismatic *luchador* took his name from a strong, high-level prostitute called *Cassandra* operating along the Mexican-American border, in honour of her charitable work and fight in helping victims of gender-based violence. *Cassandra* himself is a social activist who helps many Mexican *luchadores* with immigration issues, legal paper work and assistance in the United States. He is also an activist that fights for the rights of the gay community both in the U.S.A and in Mexico.



Fig. 58. Cayetano photographs *Cassandra*, 2009, Mexico City. Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill. *Cassandra* displays his make-up.

As a young person, Cassandro suffered abuse by family members and later the rejection of his father because of his sexuality. When he started wrestling, he had to confront the verbal and physical ill treatment of many wrestlers who were intolerant and homophobic. Since I met him he has suffered many injuries due to wrestling, as well as a serious car accident, but he has always come back, demonstrating great will and strength. Cassandro has become an icon for many Exótico *luchadores* and gay fans who feel empowered by his charisma, success, and strength and a celebrity for many all over the world. He is in constant re-invention and has a great will to succeed.

In London Cassandro has had a great reception and success with all fans. He has captured the British public's imagination. No female wrestlers came to the London performances, there was an absence of *luchadoras*. In Mexico the *luchadoras* create the role of the strong and independent woman that women in Mexico relate to. This absence, in my view, created female fans for Cassandro. I observed that in general British women and young girls both children and teenagers backed Cassandro during the matches. Little girls usually bought the soft pink Cassandro t-shirts with eyelashes motif that were on sale. They felt empowered by his performance, persona, clothes and the Gloria Gaynor entrance song: "I Will Survive!"

3.2.4 Mythologies – Smash ‘N Slam Wrestlers (Montoya-Turnill: 2012). Process of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This piece is a drawing done with charcoal and pencil on paper measuring 152cms x 123cms. The paper used is a 400 grams Atlantis giant drawing and watercolour paper.¹¹⁵ It was done in Spain in 2012. It is a sustained drawing done over an extended period of time. The title refers to Barthes's 1957 essay *Toys*, in *Mythologies*¹¹⁶ where he reflects on the effect toys have on children. The drawing has Barthes essay written from top to bottom. The bigger figure represents the American wrestlers and the smaller defaced figure is the Mexican-American wrestler. Barthes explains in his essay,

“All the toys one commonly sees are essentially a microcosm of the adult world; they are all reduced copies of human objects, as if in the eyes of the public the child was, all told, nothing but a small man, a homunculus to whom must be supplied objects of his own size” (2000: 53).

The American toy company Toy Biz produced limited edition collectible WCW Wrestling Smash ‘N Slam Wrestlers figures in 1999 and of particular interest to this Study are the kits of Giant w/Rey Mysterio Jr. Bonus Figure and Goldberg vs. Masked Wrestler who are American wrestlers. Rey Mysterio Jr. is a Mexican-American wrestler. The figure of the dog looking through a window in the background of the drawing represents the “green dog” of Mexican Democracy (Pardinas, 2011) who looks at the inequality and atrocities committed on the boarder with the United States and the ongoing racist stereotypes. When children are encouraged to play with these toy figures it perpetuates racist stereotypes showing the child that the white American wrestler has supremacy and advantage over the tiny Mexican-American wrestler. He also learns in the game that the purpose is to get rid of the tiny wrestler by grabbing him by the neck and throwing him and ultimately disposing of him. The tiny figure must receive abuse and the child sees this abuse repeated when he attends or watches the wrestling matches in the United States.

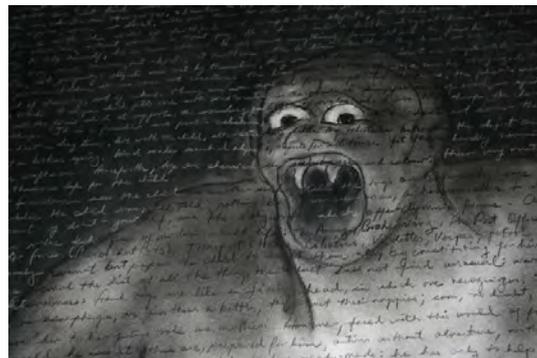


Fig. 59. Detail from Mythologies, 2012. Image by Ellen Turnill

According to Phillip Serrato (2005) the two figures are grossly disproportionate to

emphasize the Giant's physical superiority and power. He then states,

“As the instructions on the packaging explain that for fun one can slip Mysterio's tiny neck into the grip of the Giant's enormous right hand and then squeeze the larger figure's legs together to see him sadistically lift, lower, and strangle the hapless Mexican”(2005: 233).¹¹⁷

Serrato argues that the meaning of an idealized masculinity in professional wrestling in the United States has come to be equated with the brute force and excessive violence of huge, white superstars. The monolithic whiteness refers both to an increased emphasis in size and power, and to the positioning of Latino masculinity as inherently inferior (ibid: 235).

The American child learns these attitudes through promotion in the media and packaging, role-playing with his figures and television broadcasting of these matches which emphasize racial stereotypes. These in turn become implicit biases deeply embedded in the unconscious with consequent negative reactions or prejudices against Mexican-American community members or Latin American immigrants.

3.2.5 Tortured (Montoya-Turnill 2013) Process of Making and Formulation of Meaning

This piece consists of a small tin box containing ashes. It measures: 6.3cms x 3.4cms x 2.4cms. It began with the poster advertising the debut in London of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. It read:

**THE MYTHICAL, DANGEROUS,
ACROBATIC AND HEROIC WORLD OF
MEXICO'S MASKED MEN
LUCHA LIBRE LONDON
IN LONDON FOR THE FIRST TIME,
DIRECT FROM MEXICO!
THE FULL LUCHA LIBRE EXPERIENCE!
16 TOP WRESTLERS,**

DJS AND MEXICAN FOOD
4-6 JULY
0844 4828008
WWW.ROUNDHOUSE.ORG.UK
WWW.LUCHALIBRELONDON.COM
ROUNDHOUSE
£20 STANDING. £30-£60 seated
£75 RINGSIDE SUPERSEATS

This poster, designed by the promotion company *ComoNo*, differs from the flyers and posters designed and printed in Mexico to promote such events, in being of better quality paper and printing. The background is covered with different shades of blue ink forming lines that radiate from the centre surrounded by stars forming an outer frame. It is a beautiful poster displaying British artistic expertise. The typeface used for *Lucha Libre London* are of a circus, carnival style printed in bright yellow surrounded by orange and red lines. There are three *luchadores*: El Hijo del Santo with his silver mask and outfit in mid-air in an aerial move, Blue Demon Jr. wearing his blue cape and mask in a challenging pose, and behind him El Rayo de Jalisco with his signature *charro* outfit. It conveys what they promise: a mythical, dangerous, acrobatic and heroic Mexican spectacle. However ticket prices were too high and sales were poor. The following year the prices were lowered. Andy Wood, *ComoNo's* director and founder, during an interview in London in 2008 explained to me that the advertising was directed at the British majority. He was not interested in attracting people of Latin American minorities, for numerical reason, also stating that he wanted to introduce the concept to a new audience.



Fig. 60. Poster of Lucha Libre London, 2008. Image © ComoNo.

The A2 size paper poster went through a process of violent transformation. The aim was to test how many processes of destruction the paper poster could endure, its resistance, and how much would remain. I began by erasing the data through sanding the ink out. I gathered the dust that this erasure was producing and kept it in the small tin box. Most of the colour surface faded. Then I began to scratch and poke the surface of the paper, subjecting it to increasing hardship leaving scratches and holes. Then the paper was submerged in water and treated with bleach. It got wet, fragile and flimsy and started to tear in places. I put it to dry on a wooden surface under the intense heat of the sun for some hours. It dried and became brittle with some pieces already torn away. I then tore it up and put the pieces into a clay container outdoors, and set them on fire. It resisted and I had to light it several times until it became mostly ashes. One small torn piece remained from the process. In faint letters you can still read: MYTHICAL...OBATI... This remaining debris became a component of the artwork: *Mythical Acrobatics* described in Chapter Two, part 2b: 2.2b.1. The ashes were placed in a small tin box becoming the artwork: *Tortured*.



Fig. 61. Burning the tortured poster. Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill.

On completing *Tortured*, I reflected on the process and the outcome. I believe the systematic acts of the creation itself help reveal the deeper meaning in what I intended to convey, namely the suffering inflicted upon the Indian people. Even though millions of Indians were murdered, thousands of codexes (native books) burnt, and many works of art destroyed, pieces of the culture, religion, art and language remain. Some people have survived to carry the Indian heritage forward to new generations.

Gordon Brotherston tells us about the fate of most of the painted books from Mexico,

“Everything that the Christian invaders sought to impose was threatened by the existence of these native books, and consequently they burned them by the hundreds, ransacking library after library, often burning their owners as well. As many of the native historians pointed out, the actions of the Christian invaders destroyed not only pagan belief but also the historical detail of a major civilization” (1995: 11).¹¹⁸

The Canadian ethnobotanist Wade Davis tells us,

“Ritual practices such as these [taking hallucinogenic plants rituals such as peyote or mushrooms] appalled the Spaniards. Shortly after the Conquest, and in a gesture indicative of the times, Juan de Zumarraga, the first archbishop of Mexico, combed the land for any manuscripts or artefacts that contained information about the vanquished civilizations, any heretics who still practiced the ancient religions. Then in a final orgy of destruction, on a pyre fuelled both by human beings and thousands of religious texts, he attempted to eradicate the memory of all that had gone before. Such violent acts were common after the introduction of the Inquisition to Mexico in 1571, and Indians who used peyote were among those who suffered. By 1620 the plant was officially declared the work of the devil” (1996: 73).

I also reflect on how *Lucha Libre Mexicana* has evolved and survived periods of censorship and official disdain, and how the efforts of all sorts of people from historians and academics to journalists and fans have helped preserved its culture.

Finally I have wished to convey the following: However much the institutionalized regime of the power elite and privileged in Mexico would silence, destroy, undermine, and censor the truth—some remnant of the power of the word will not perish. There is hope therein, and with the memories and traces of the writers and journalists who have been silenced.

- ¹ Levi 2008, *The World of Lucha Libre, Secrets, Revelations, and Mexican National Identity*.
- ² Fernández Reyes 2004, *Santo, El Enmascarado de Plata: Mito y Realidad de un Héroe Mexicano Moderno* and Fernández Reyes 2004, MA thesis: *Santo, El Enmascarado de Plata: Mito y Realidad de un Héroe Mexicano Moderno*.
- ³ Bartra 2007, *La Jaula de la Melancolía: Identidad y Metamorfosis del Mexicano*.
- ⁴ Dresser 2011, *El País De Uno, Reflexiones para entender y cambiar a México*. Denis Dresser (1963-) is a Mexican political analyst and activist, writer and university professor. She holds a PhD in Politics from Princeton University.
- ⁵ John Mill Ackerman Rose is a Mexican academic, researcher and professor at the Institute of Legal Research at UNAM and vice president of the International Association of Administrative Law. He holds a PhD on Political Sociology. He has written for different journals and publications on the topics of corruption control, elections, transparency, accountability, autonomous institutions and citizen participation. He has analyzed and criticized the Mexican political, judicial and electoral systems. See John Ackerman's *Autenticidad y Realidad – Por un derecho electoral al servicio de la democracia – 2012 Continuidad del 2006 – fraude electoral*. See online link in Bibliography.
- ⁶ Juan Pardinás is a Mexican economist that holds a PhD from London School of Economics and is the General Director of *Instituto Mexicana para la Competitividad* IMCO (Mexican Institute for Competitivity). Juan Pardinás explains why democracy in Mexico is a green dog, see online link in Bibliography.
- ⁷ Freedman 1988, *Drawing Heat*. Jim Freedman is a Canadian consultant and writer who holds a degree in International Politics and Economics and a PhD in Anthropology from Princeton University. He has been a consultant on international development for the United Nations, CIDA, and international NGOs.
- ⁸ Sharon Mazer in her analysis states, “While Jim Freedman announces himself as an academic, he almost immediately enters into the wrestling world as an active participant, so that the narrative he produces in *Drawing Heat* is almost entirely personal as he describes his journey from his first awkward venture into the offices of the promoters to his travels with the Wildman Dave McKigney and the wrestling bear” in Mazer (1998), p. 7, *Professional Wrestling, Sport and Spectacle*.
- ⁹ Doña Virginia Aguilera: see Appendix 1.
- ¹⁰ Dan Madigan is an American television producer, author and screenwriter. He has worked in the professional wrestling industry as well as working and producing for WWE Smackdown. His *Lucha* name is “Baron.” Madigan 2007, *Mondo Lucha A Go-Go*.
- ¹¹ El Santo and Blue Demon were two of the most famous Mexican wrestlers that received popularity and fame from the 1940s. In *Lucha Libre Mexicana's* golden age (1940-1970) they appeared in films and were represented in stories in comics. Today they are considered popular Mexican icons and their sons: El Hijo del Santo and El Hijo de Blue Demon continue with their wrestling tradition and wearing their masks.
- ¹² Panathenaic prize ampora, Greek, made in Athens about 367-366 BC Found at Teucheira, Cyrenaica (modern Libya) part of the British Museum Collections. © The Trustees of the British Museum 00034629001.
- ¹³ INEGI – Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (National Institute of Statistics and Geography). According to the 1996 census: Total of people attending a football match in 1994: 3,345,107 and of people attending *Lucha Libre* match: 804,123, as in Möbius, 2007, p. 27, *Y Detrás de la Máscara... El Pueblo*.
- ¹⁴ Barthes 1993, p. 19, *Mythologies, The World of Wrestling*.
- ¹⁵ Sammond (ed.) 2005, p. 15, *Steel Chair to the Head, The Pleasure and Pain of Professional Wrestling*.
- ¹⁶ Monsiváis 1998, p. 132, *Los Rituales del Caos*.
- ¹⁷ Translation by Levi of Carlos Monsiváis's *The Hour of the Mask as Protagonist: El Santo versus the Skeptics on the Subject of Myth*, in Sammond (ed.) 2005, pp. 88-96, *Steel Chair to the Head*.
- ¹⁸ Juan Villoro (1956-) is a Mexican writer, sociologist and journalist.
- ¹⁹ Reference to Giacomo Puccini's Opera *Tosca* where the character of Floria Tosca dramatically launches herself from the top of the great wall of the castle.
- ²⁰ My translation of Juan Villoro's *Haz El Bien Sin Mirar a la Rubia* in Criollo, Nívar and Aviña 2011, pp. 14-16, *¡Quiero Ver Sangre! Historia Ilustrada del Cine de Luchadores*, prologue.

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- ²¹ Translation by Levi in Sammond 2005.
- ²² Translation by Levi in Sammond 2005.
- ²³ Ibid, Pardinás defines Mexican democracy of the twenty-first century.
- ²⁴ Levi (2001) *Masked Media: The Adventures of Lucha Libre on the Small Screen*. This essay is in Joseph, Rubenstein, and Zolov 2004, pp. 330-372, *Fragments of a Golden Age*.
- ²⁵ The government censored transmission of *Lucha Libre* matches. They argued *televised Lucha Libre* matches were a bad example for children and could cause children to copy the violent actions and have accidents. During this period women's *Lucha Libre* matches were banned all together in the major cities arenas and children couldn't attend *Lucha Libre* matches in Mexican arenas.
- ²⁶ Felipe Ehrenberg (1943-) is a Mexican artist.
- ²⁷ In 1968 there was a movement led by university students, artists, academics, writers, journalists and intellectual activists that manifested against the government injustices, repression and corruption. As a result the government sent the troops to deal with this revolt. There was a massacre in Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco, Mexico City where many died, disappeared or were tortured and imprisoned.
- ²⁸ Lourdes Grobet is a Mexican photographer. The Mexican artists Marisa Lara and Arturo Guerrero form the collective: "Siameses Company" always exhibits in dual exhibitions. Sergio Arau is a Mexican filmmaker, musician and neo pop painter. He produced in 2004 the film "A Day without a Mexican".
- ²⁹ Carlos Monsiváis (1938-2010) is a Mexican writer, critic, political activist and journalist. José Joaquín Blanco (1951-) is a Mexican, writer, poet, translator, scriptwriter and journalist. José Buil (1953-) is a Mexican writer, critic, director and filmmaker: "Adiós, Adiós Idolo Mío" and "La Leyenda de una Máscara" both with the theme of *Lucha Libre*. Paco Ignacio Taibo II (1949-) was born in Asturias, Spain but has lived in Mexico since he was ten years old when his father Paco Ignacio Taibo I and his family fled Spanish fascism. He is a historian, intellectual, writer, journalist union organizer and social and political activist.
- ³⁰ Gallo 2004, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art*.
- ³¹ In Debroise O. (ed.), Medina C. and Teratoma A.C. 2007). p. 25, *Genealogy of an Exhibition*.
- ³² Carlos Amorales (1970-) Mexican artist. Arrived in Amsterdam in 1992 and studied at the Gerit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, Holland. According to Bethany L. Marrier (2006), Amorales began his *Lucha Libre* explorations as a student in Amsterdam. She says, "The initial stages of the artist's use of the subject [Lucha Libre] was more art student investigation than Yves Klein rapture; having not yet arrived at the lucha libre theme and after graduating in 1995, Amorales began experiencing with masks and their potential to obstruct one's identity from the outside world. He first staged Anonymous Group Party in 1996 in Amsterdam... a work that involved various people wearing white fabric disguises that vaguely took the shape of masks worn by Mexican wrestlers." (2006: 6) in Marrier 2006, MA thesis: *The Ring and I: What appears as the work of Carlos Amorales*.
- ³³ Demián Flores Cortés (1971-) Interview for Portavoz (2012). See also *Arena Mexico* series in online links in Bibliography.
- ³⁴ Essex Gallery and the Essex Collection of Art from Latin America of the University of Essex, United Kingdom, ESCALA. Joanne Harwood is the Director.
- ³⁵ Cited in Demián Flores' biography of the ESCALA Collection, Essex Collection of Art from Latin America. See online link in Bibliography.
- ³⁶ Shaun El C. Leonardo is a painter and performance artist based in New York. Of his performance piece he says: "El Conquistador vs. The Invisible Man is a reoccurring wrestling event in which I portray a Mexican wrestling luchador in order to fight invisibility both metaphorically and literally... In Mexico, however, where lucha libre wrestling originates, the concept of fighting invisibility will carry much more meaning" (2008).
- ³⁷ Ramos Araiza, M. (2009) *Cassandra, El Exótico*, documentary, Tloque org. mx, UCLA film, television and digital media department. This film was exhibited at the Frontera Pride Film Festival in 2010, at the Festival Mix Mexico in 2010 and at Short Shorts Film Festival Mexico 2010, "The film chronicles moments of Cassandra's life as a luchador and as a different human being..."(inside the jacket cover).
- ³⁸ *Sangre vs. Sangre* was in the Talmart Galerie, Paris in 2011. Flores, D., Jiménez, O., Arroyo, G., (2011) *Sangre vs. Sangre*, short film with Sangre Azteca, see online link in Bibliography.
- ³⁹ Herbert 2010, *Slam*.

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- ⁴⁰ Palais de Glace, Palacio Nacional de las Artes, Buenos Aires Argentina and *¡Lucha Libre! Miradas al Fabuloso Mundo de la Lucha Libre Mexicana* exhibition.
- ⁴¹ Superbarrio: see Appendix 1.
- ⁴² Ecologista Universal: see Appendix 1.
- ⁴³ El Santo: see Appendix 1.
- ⁴⁴ El Santo: see Appendix 1.
- ⁴⁵ Superbarrio: see Appendix 1.
- ⁴⁶ Fray Tormenta: see Appendix 1.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 221 – my translation.
- ⁴⁸ Santuaristas and El Santo: see Appendix 1.
- ⁴⁹ See Edgardo Buscaglia's studies and reports on organized crime in Mexico that verify and confirm how organized crime has infiltrated all the different political institutions, the judicial system, the police, the military and the private sector in Mexico. He argues that all the political parties have been bought (to different degrees) and that private corporations and elites collaborate and participate in this organized crime. He gives data and statistics of studies that have been made since 1999 in 109 countries in the world, see online links in Bibliography.
- ⁵⁰ *El Santo* has been sending online messages from Japan. On 2nd of April 2013 he posted this video from Tokyo Japan [Online] Available: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vou8Idb4Bdg>> and @*elSanto tomando a Hachiko de ejemplo...* (2013) [Online] Available: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJCG7hPxBc>> [10 March 2014].
- ⁵¹ #*Yosoy132* (I am 132) is a Mexican student protest movement centered on democratization of Mexico and its media. It began against the imposition of the PRI's candidate (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) Enrique Peña Nieto and the media coverage of the 2012 elections for president, see online links in Bibliography.
- ⁵² Anonymous is a hacktivist group created in 2003 that consists of an online and offline anarchic collective of web users and part of a digitized world brain. They wear the Guy Fawkes' mask from the film *V for Vendetta*. The communications are done by one member wearing this mask and through social media. Anonymous Mexico is a hacker collective formed in 2011 that denounces drug cartels criminality and the corruption in the Mexican political system and the 2012 electoral fraud in Mexico. They usually end their communications with this statement: "Knowledge is free. We are Anonymous. We are Legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us." See online links in Bibliography.
- ⁵³ Maria Lluïsa Borràs (1931-2010) was a Catalan art historian, art critic, writer and a personal friend of Antoni Tàpies and other artists and intellectuals. She held a PhD in art history from the University of Barcelona.
- ⁵⁴ *Semanario Destino* (1937-1980) was a Spanish publication founded in 1937 that became an expression and referent for Catalan liberal intellectual, artists and writers fighting for freedom of expression and democracy and against "Franquismo" (Franco years).
- ⁵⁵ Superbarrio Gómez came back in 2011 and in 2012 he has supported the movement against the PRI presidential candidate and backing Andrés Manuel López Obrador. In June 2012 talking in a manifestation in Zocalo, Mexico City. See online link in Bibliography.
- ⁵⁶ Super Sme is a social and political activist who wears a *luchador* mask and who used to be a *lucha libre* wrestler. Sme stands for Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (Mexican Electricians Union). He belongs to "Los Indignados Movimiento" (The Indignants Movement) that defends workers rights. He has been campaigning lately against impunity and the imposition of the PRI candidate of the last 2012 Presidential elections in Mexico. Fray Tormenta (Fr. Sergio Gutierrez Benitez) (1945-) continues his activism against poverty helping the many children he supports in his orphanage "Casa Hogar Cachorros". He has helped and housed 250 children throughout the 30 years he has had his orphanage. He retired from wrestling in 2011. *Fray Tormenta la Mayor de sus victorias* 1 and 2: see online link in Bibliography.
- ⁵⁷ Cassandro: see Appendix 1.
- ⁵⁸ Rey Mysterio Jr.: see Appendix 1.
- ⁵⁹ Mistico: see Appendix 1.
- ⁶⁰ Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1935-1991) was a Mexican ethnologist and anthropologist who was the Director of Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia and General Director of Culturas Populares. He founded the Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares. He was the Coordinator of Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y la Artes (CONACULTA).
- ⁶¹ Bonfil Batalla 2007, *Mexico Profundo, Reclaiming a Civilization*. According to Bonfil Batalla *Mexico profundo* is formed by the Indian communities that speak Indian languages, the de-

Indianized rural communities and by large sectors of the poor urban immigrants to the cities. *Imaginary Mexico* is formed by the creoles, the mestizos and the Europeans that follow imitations of European or American models that have subordinated and discriminated *Mexico profundo*. He states, “The colonial origin of Mexico has meant that the dominant groups and classes are also those who foment the project of westernization, the creators of imaginary Mexico” (2007: xvi).

⁶² See Verónica Díaz Rodríguez’s article *Santo y Blue Demons vs. la piratería?* containing interviews to Raul Criollo, Blue Demon Junior and El Hijo del Santo that give us more insight into copyright issues concerning masks and image and disagreement with street and market handmade luchador masks. In Islas Reyes (ed.) 2009, pp. 40-43, Etcetera, *La Lucha en la Arena de los Medios*. See also dispute between El Hijo del Santo and Axel who is one of El Santo’s grandson, *Axel – El Nieto del Santo* (2012) and in Cazadores de Historias Reportaje *Hijo del Santo vs. Nieto del Santo*, see online links in Bibliography.

⁶³ Obregón, G. (director) 2013, *El Hombre Detrás de la Máscara*, documentary, in Milenio (2013) *Prepara El Hijo del Santo documental en honor a su padre*. This film will be translated to English, French and Japanese and will be entered to International Film festivals. It was presented in the 2012 “Festival Internacional de Cine Acapulco” (FICA). See Milenio, online link in Bibliography.

⁶⁴ El Santo Junior has now been registered as a character and brand. *Bajo Las Capuchas* (2012) *New third generation – El Santo Junior*, see online link in Bibliography.

⁶⁵ An example is *El Torneo del Consejo Mundial de Lucha Libre “En Busca de Un Idolo”* which is a reality show and competition (similar to U.K. or American reality shows and competitions seeking for the best actor, singer, dancer, etc. of a country) where members of a panel judge, advice and choose the best wrestler amongst many during a number of matches. The final competition is held at Arena Mexico and *Titan* was the 2012 winner.

⁶⁶ Extreme violence (2010) *The promoter DTU Desastre Total Ultraviolento*, see online link in Bibliography. DTU was funded in 2007 and its members are young Luchadores that perform high-risk moves and use violence against their opponents during matches. See also online link to *KGB wrestling* in Bibliography.

⁶⁷ XEW-AM a radio company funded by the Mexican telecommunications tycoon Emilio Azcarraga Vidaurreta (1895-1972) who later funded the first Mexican television company and telecommunications empire that will later become Televisa.

⁶⁸ My translation of: “En una era en la cual 90 por ciento de la población obtiene información política a través de la televisión, los políticos se ven obligados a posicionarse en la pantalla. En una era en la que nada es real hasta que aparece en la televisión, quien aspira al poder tiene que domesticarla.” (Dresser, 2011:179).

⁶⁹ *Teatros de maroma* derived from the early exhibitions of “maromas” that were manifestations of physical abilities displayed in streets, squares of cities of the courtyards, neighbourhoods and bullrings (Revolledo Cárdenas, 2010: 14).

⁷⁰ Fernández Reyes (2004: 115) argues that although *Santo El Enmascarado de Plata* comics created its own characters, these characters already existed because they formed part of the culture’s iconography that had been constructed by mass media; they came from the radio, the cinema and sports. My translation.

⁷¹ Photomontage – see Appendix 1.

⁷² José G. Cruz: see Appendix 1.

⁷³ See Fernández Reyes 2004, pp. 107-122, *El Héroe de Papel*, where he extends on the analysis of José G. Cruz, *El Santo, El Enmascarado de Plata* comics and mass media.

⁷⁴ Flowery Wars: warfare to capture prisoners for sacrificial rituals.

⁷⁵ The quebradora is one of the holds in *Lucha Libre*.

⁷⁶ Christian Cymet López Suárez (1975-) is a Mexican lawyer who has been collecting played *Lucha Libre* masks since childhood. His collection is the biggest in Mexico and most complete. He lives and works in Mexico City. His dream is to someday fund the *Museum of Lucha Libre* in Mexico.

⁷⁷ Doña Virginia Aguilera: see Appendix 1.

⁷⁸ *Lucha Libre. Una Historia Jamás Contada* Exhibition, see online link to Museo del Noreste in Bibliography.

⁷⁹ Museo del Noreste or MUNE is part of three museums that dedicate their exhibition spaces to Mexican History. The other two are Museo del Palacio and Museo de Historia Mexicana. All three are in Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico.

⁸⁰ Mira Quien Baila – In 2011 Blue Demon Junior participated in these TV dancing competition programme similar to “Come Dancing in U.K.” where he was disqualified at the end, see online link in Bibliography.

⁸¹ Ford 2007, *Fan Behaviours: Five Ways of Understanding Modes of Fan Engagement with Media Texts* in FoE Future of Entertainment (2007) Weblog Archives.

⁸² See Grobet 2006, pp. 124-127, *Espectacular De La Lucha Libre*, Fotografías de Lourdes Grobet, 2nd edition, Mexico: Trilce Oceano. See online link to: *Espectacular Lucha Libre/Lourdes Grobet* interview in *Museo y Diseño Contemporáneo de San Jose, Costa Rica* (2013).

⁸³ Aca-fen is the plural of aca-fan and refers to fans that are also academics. This term was coined by Henry Jenkins when referring to people like himself that are insiders, fans and also scholars. See Jenkins 2006, pp. 3-4, *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers, Exploring Participatory Culture*.

⁸⁴ Lucha Libre Invasión! Exhibition (2012) see Jinetes Sampleadores de Im@genes A.C.

⁸⁵ *La Lucha Sigue en Políticas* Festival, Exóticos y Universitarios, third festival (2012), see online link to Jinetes Sampleadores de Im@genes, A.C.

⁸⁶ *Universidad Autonoma de Mexico's* film archive (UNAM - Autonomous University of Mexico) may be added as an institution that has kept Mexican historical film records that contain *Luchador* cinema.

⁸⁷ Roberto Shimizu, according to Fernández Reyes, is the main collector of objects related to El Santo mounting to 40 000. Amongst these objects there are personal letters of El Santo, masks and objects, books, magazines, comics and Lucha Libre programs, in Fernández Reyes, A. A. (2004) *Santo, El Enmascarado De Plata: Mito Y Realidad De Un Héroe Mexicano Moderno*, p. 21. Mexico: El Colegio de Michoacán & CONACULTA (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes).

⁸⁸ Christian Cymet López Suárez's collection not only has the biggest number of luchador played-masks and bundles of *luchador* hair lost in matches but also posters and “fotomontajes”, some which are included in Criollo, R., Nívar, J. X. and Aviña, R. (2011) *¡Quiero Ver Sangre! Historia Ilustrada del Cine de Luchadores*, Mexico: Dirección General de Publicaciones de la UNAM and Ediciones 8.

⁸⁹ Agrasánchez Film Archive is located in Harlingen, Texas, U.S.A.

⁹⁰ Sam Ford classify these fans as performers because he argues that through their online engagement (critical and theoretical discussions) their behaviour is participatory and the performative aspect of the online fan community is noticeable (2007). This is true of the American wrestling community of fans but not so marked in the Mexican fan community, however, it may become more participatory and performative in the future, see online link in Bibliography.

⁹¹ The Mexican researcher Javier Pereda is currently a WebScience Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) PhD student at University of Southampton, U.K. Pereda's research project focuses on the anthropological and sociological aspects of design as he describes it, “The internet of things, where everything connects and everything interacts” in Visual Communication, Media and the Web (web-profile), see online link to WebScience Doctoral Training Centre.

⁹² Wrestling Data Visualizations or data visualization projects can be seen online and explanation on how he has combined “data visualization with several graphic design processes” resulting in ways to communicate with audiences through charts and applications: “information graphics, information visualization, scientific visualization and static analysis graphics”, see online link in Bibliography.

⁹³ In Pereda's paper *Lucha Libre. Society, Mexicanity and Digital Visualisations*, 2012 WAIS seminar at CAA, University of Southampton, U.K., see online link.

⁹⁴ Cited in Pereda 2011, *Lucha Libre: Visualising behind the Mask, Electronic Visualisation and the Arts*, see online link. LuchaWicki: see online link. This website contains information of 4736 Mexican and foreign wrestlers, promoters, referees, officials, families, rosters, articles, definition of *Lucha Libre* terms, Lucha TV shows and matches, promotions, championships, tournaments, and moves (holds and aerial moves).

⁹⁵ *Indi-analog* is my own invention

⁹⁶ Marc Prensky in 2001 coined the terms digital immigrants (born before the digital area, learned at a later point in life and have an “accent” when they use technology) and digital natives (born in the digital area who are also referred as N-gen or D-gen). In Prensky 2001, *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*.

⁹⁷ This title was inspired by Monsiváis' quote; see chapter three, part 1, 3.1.1. *The Act of Wrestling in Lucha Libre Mexicana*, p. 132.

⁹⁸ In 2012 the Mexican poet, journalist and writer Javier Sicilia gave these numbers. Sicilia stated that the “war on drugs” (declared by the U.S. and Felipe Calderón’s government in 2006) against crime and the cartel gangs in Mexico had been responsible for 60,000 dead people, 10,000 disappeared, 8,000 orphans and 160,000 displaced Mexicans from their homes of the last six years at that time. Sicilia emerged as a leader of the “Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity” (MPJD) after his son Juan Francisco, age twenty-four, was killed as a victim of organized crime in Cuernavaca, Mexico in 2011. Since his son’s death, Sicilia has undertaken caravans across Mexico to collect stories of the destruction caused by the war against drugs and organized crime and in 2012 he took a month long peace caravan to the United States. With this anti-violence protest he wants to create awareness and help to bring a stop to the “war on drugs” and drug prohibition and their consequences. Amy Goodman and Juan González’s interview to Javier Sicilia in *Democracy Now* (2012): *Stop The Drug War, Mexican Poet Javier Sicilia Condemns U.. Role in Widening Drug Violence*, [Online] Available: <http://www.democracynow.org/2012/5/11/stop_the_drug_war_mexican_poet> [15 May 2012]. Kristen Gwynne gives same statistics in her article *Shocking Stories of Loss Motivate Mourners of Mexico's Drug War Victims to Hold the U.S. Responsible*, *Alternet*, 25 September 2012, [Online] Available: <<http://www.alternet.org/shocking-stories-loss-motivate-mourners-mexicos-drug-war-victims-hold-us-responsible>> [28 September 2012]. An even higher number of 80,000 of dead people (at the end of Calderon's presidency and so far 13,000 of dead in Enrique Peña Nieto's presidency) is mentioned in Dr. Edgardo Buscaglia's 2013 book *Vacíos de Poder en México: El camino de México hacia la seguridad humana*, Edgardo Buscaglia and Carmen Aristegui (2014) *Vacíos de Poder en Mexico*: [Online] Available: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEqEnp2meTE>> [15 December 2014].

⁹⁹ See Appendix 1 - Atlantis Giant Drawing and Watercolour Paper.

¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International 2013 report: *Mexico: Confronting the Nightmare: Disappearances in Mexico*, see online link in Bibliography. “This briefing looks at the scale and nature of different types of disappearances in Mexico, the steps taken so far to address these crimes, and the further urgent measures that the authorities must adopt to end these human rights abuses” Amnesty International.

¹⁰¹ The Spanish quote in Tàpies 1971, p. 23, *La Práctica del Arte, II La Vocación y La Forma*: “El artista será siempre algo vivo y cambiante, como la misma realidad de la cual decimos que es expresión, y que no es fija, sino que constituye el concepto variable que nosotros mismos construimos de ella. Considero por lo tanto su tarea como no puramente receptiva; no es, como algunos dice, el reflejo de una época; más bien creo que su papel puede ser también actuante y que, en convergencia con la tarea de muchos otros, tiene en sus manos el poder de modificar aquel concepto.” According to Pere Gimferrer (1986: 59), “La Práctica de l’art [The Practice of Art, 1970] was principally a manifesto; Tàpies’ later writings were to be its development in theory.” He states, “La Práctica de l’art has two central themes: the freedom of art and its subversive purpose... The freedom of art is, first and foremost, its inner freedom, its necessary capacity of obeying certain laws of evolution, interruption and re-stating. But it is also external; not only objective—concerning the freedom of the artist in the face of state authoritarianism, the indirect pressures of society or the arbitrariness of critical fashions—but also subjective: the freedom of ‘interpretation’, the unrenounceable right of the viewer to have free access to works of art” (ibid., p. 73).

¹⁰² #YoSoy132 video, [Online] Available: < <http://yosoy132.mx/> > [5 June 2012].

¹⁰³ #YoSoy132 This is how it all happened: On 11th of May 2012, Enrique Peña Nieto went to speak at the Ibero University where he was received with negative spontaneous shouts from the students who rejected him and demanded answers. Peña Nieto spent approximately 30 minutes trying to speak while being evasive and avoiding answering specific questions or addressing students demands. Some showed critical posters and many recorded the visit in their iphones and cellphones. They shouted “!Fuera, Fuera!” (Out, Out!) “!Asesino, Asesino!” (Killer, Killer!) “!Atenco no se olvida!” (Atenco is not forgotten!) “!La Ibero no te quiere!” (Ibero doesn’t want you!). As he left in a hurry he said that he thought that the response of the students was not genuine, “No son genuinas” and suggested that they had been infiltrated by “porros” who are negative elements from other political parties and had also trained students to harm his campaign. Afterwards that same day the media reported this same distorted version of events to the general public. The following day the newspaper’s headline was “Exito de Peña en la Ibero,

pese a intento orquestrado de boicot” (Success of Peña at the Ibero in spite of the orchestrated intention to boycott it). The students reacted and rejected this official version by telling the truth. They produced a video where 131 students who were present at Peña Nieto’s university visit name themselves and show their student numbers, their student cards, and declare they are not “porros”: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKXdwMiSL1c>>- This video appeared on Monday 14th and in 15 minutes went viral in Mexico and globally. Mexico knew the truth of the event and the manipulation by the mass media. On Friday 18th 2012 there was the march, “Marcha hacia Televisa”, in Mexico city in which public and private university students participated and united. They were from Ibero, UNAM, ITAM, Anahuac, UAM and La Salle amongst others. They shouted: “Queremos escuelas no telenovelas” (We want schools not soap-operas). Following this march and manifestation the movement #YoSoy132 was formed and since then many more university students have joined them to protest the control of communication by the media, a government that is not transparent, and the fact that students are largely excluded in this political and social system. #YoSoy132 is an internal organization of the Ibero University group. On 23rd of May 2012 another march was called for at the “Estela de Luz” monument in Paseo de la Reforma. Young people in Mexico said that they wanted to stop the social barriers and prejudices that the system had imposed upon them to divide them. In this historical event young Mexican people from private and public universities have united and on the 30th of May there was a general assembly of universities at UNAM.

¹⁰⁴ They have created web pages, facebook, twitter and other online accounts, as well as a Manifesto. Many more videos have been uploaded in youtube and other blogs and accounts from others of #YoSoy132. The role that social networks have had on the way they are is reflected in these online accounts, blogs and documentaries such as: *131 mas uno, el origen del movimiento #YoSoy132*, No somos porros somos estudiantes, see all these online links in Bibliography.

¹⁰⁵ My translation of Rodrigo Serrano’s interview in Documental *131 mas uno, el origen del movimiento #YoSoy132*, Parte 2, see online link in Bibliography.

¹⁰⁶ Alfredo Jalife-Rahme Goldman – Mexican academic, professor, political analyst and writer that specializes in International Affairs, Geopolitics and Globalization. He belongs to the IPPNW - International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and is the winner of the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize.

¹⁰⁷ Taleb quoted by Jalife-Rahme in the interview for Siempre TV! A Black Swan is the term used by Nassim Nicholas Taleb when he talks about the huge impact that highly improbable events have in the world. “It is a highly improbable event with three principal characteristics: It is unpredictable; it carries a massive impact; and, after the fact, we concoct an explanation that makes it appear less random, and more predictable, than it was.” In Taleb, N. N. 2007, *The Black Swan*, Random House.

¹⁰⁸ Tunisian Revolution started in December 2010 when the Tunisian fruit and vegetable street vendor Tarek al-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi committed self-immolation after becoming desperate when police confiscated his stand and humiliated him. This act became the catalyst for Tunisian Revolution and the Arab Spring.

¹⁰⁹ Alfredo Jalife Rahme interviewed in Siempre TV, see online link in Bibliography.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, Jalife-Rahme interview.

¹¹¹ The *Novecento Colectivo* or #YoSoy301, was formed to denounce the political and economic situation in Spain and the right to manifest peacefully without being sanctioned. This movement emerged after 300 people who, on the 27th of October of 2012 demonstrated against the Spanish Congress and the social and economic policies of president Mariano Rajoy Brey. They were detained, charged and fined between 300 to 6000 Euros. A step backwards concerning the right of citizens to gather and demonstrate peacefully, see online link in Bibliography.

¹¹² See Aristegui Noticias (01 March 2013), *Cables de Wikileaks revelaron “la historia suprimida” de Mexico: Assange* (Cables from Wikileaks revealed “the suppressed story” of Mexico: Assange), see online link in Bibliography.

¹¹³ Cassandro or Saúl Armendáriz (1970-) was born in El Paso, Texas, U.S.A and trained *Lucha Libre* in Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo León, Mexico. He lives in El Paso, Texas. He started wrestling when he was 16 years old. Cassandro is the current NWA World Welterweight Champion. He also takes part in Lucha VaVoom spectacles. In this program *Cassandro en Experiences con el Hijo del Santo*, El Hijo del Santo interviews Cassandro (2011), see online links in Bibliography.

¹¹⁴ The film director Michael Ramos Araiza gives us a portrait of Cassandro in his 2010 documentary, *Cassandro el Exótico*. It is a view of his professional and personal life behind the

scenes and of his performance in the ring and the Mexican-American fan wrestling community in the United States. Cassandro was chained by the neck by his opponent but he managed to win the match. He dances to the cumbia theme “Tu Cucu”. In 2011, Ramos Araiza directed *Los Exóticos*. See online links in Bibliography.

¹¹⁵ See Appendix 1 - Atlantis Giant Drawing and Watercolour Paper.

¹¹⁶ Barthes 2000, pp. 53-55, *Mythologies, Toys*.

¹¹⁷ Serrato 2005, *Not Quite Heroes: Race, Masculinity, and Latino Professional Wrestlers* in Sammond (ed.) 2005, pp. 232-259, *Steel Chair to the Head*.

¹¹⁸ Brotherston 1995, *Painted Books from Mexico, Codices in U.K. collections and the world they represent*.

CONCLUSION

The research that makes up this thesis began with a personal quest to reconnect with my culture and to try to understand its influence on my artistic practice. The journey as an artist scholar brought many encounters and confrontations with new subjects and issues along the way, in turn prompting new questions and avenues of inquiry. Some questions were answered in unexpected ways leading to unforeseen artistic outcomes while others remain for future exploration. Basic issues of culture and identity and the search for authenticity were fundamental and form the foundation of this practice-based study. The artwork and the reflective practice demonstrate how meaning developed and connections were made to create a better understanding of the different themes explored.

This study examines the ways in which the figure of the *luchador* has evolved since its origins in the 1930s, extending the analysis of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and its cultural significance in Mexico in the twenty-first century. The research continues and adds to the dialogue started in relation to *Lucha Libre Mexicana* by academics and authors¹ who coming from a variety of fields, have taken a multidisciplinary approach in order to analyze *Lucha Libre Mexicana*. My research is also multidisciplinary but offers a different interpretation and approach to the study of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* by combining artistic creation and scholarship from the perspective of a diasporic Mexican artist.

The findings contribute to the field of cultural studies in a variety of ways including filling in gaps in the historical timeline of the development of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and in describing heretofore unacknowledged influences.

Although there were limitations due to the fact that the study was mainly conducted in the U.K. and Spain, there were also advantages. Access to Pre-Hispanic pieces displayed in the British Museum and the 2002-2003 “Aztecs” exhibition² at the Royal Academy of Arts in London was important, as well as English publications from the U.K. and U.S.A. Spanish newspapers also helped in understanding the role that early foreign wrestling, jiu-jitsu and catch-as-catch-can had in the development of *Lucha Libre*. My study coincided with the 2008 and 2011 performances of *Lucha Libre* at the Roundhouse in London, U.K. providing my first access and contact with the spectacle and the *luchadores*, promoters, and the researcher and communication theorist Orlando Jiménez. The 2009 field trip to Mexico extended and added to the overall analysis of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and the Pre-Hispanic ritual of Xipe Totec.

The findings trace the origins of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* to the early spectacles of “la maroma” in nineteenth century Mexico described in Revollo Cardena’s study of the circus. I came to the conclusion that today’s circus, popular theatre and *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, all originated in “la maroma” from which they evolved independently. Obviously, future research should broaden our knowledge of the historical development of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and its influences.

This study contributes to the understanding of the contemporary scene of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* by reflecting upon the impact digital technologies have had on its evolution along with the media and in relation to fan typology. Besides the categorization of *Lucha Libre* fans and *luchadores* analysis, it adds to the understanding of new combinations and divisions in *Lucha Libre* resulting from the old and new, national and foreign.

Besides writers and scholars, artists who have taken *Lucha Libre Mexicana* as their subject matter are discussed in the thesis. In this respect my work in some ways may be

similar but the thesis uniquely presents, in addition, analysis of artistic practice and creative process along with my personal reflections. I believe this study also contributes in general to a better understanding of practice-based research towards the Doctorate in Fine Art through its analysis of the process itself.

There has been substantial debate regarding the PhD in Fine Art and how to go about it as James Elkins³ and G. James Daichendt⁴ tell us in their works. The study of Graeme Sullivan⁵ guided my initial questions as I went about making sense of how to structure and organize my research both in written form and in art practice. Basic questions arose during the five years I took to complete the dissertation and art works. Questions about the very nature of the type of research engaged in by an artist scholar and questions of an epistemological nature regarding the means by which knowledge and meaning are produced were prevalent. Addressing such issues was an ongoing process.

Reflective practice adds to the understanding of how the creative process allows the artist to understand, connect, explain and explore a subject, in this case the complexities of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and the use of the mask. My study articulates the manner by which creative processes, that include, “thinking in materials” (Brett, 2004) enable an artist to acquire a profound knowledge and understanding of his/her subject. Daichendt distinguishes between knowledge and understanding⁶ stating:

“During the process of inquiry, artists demonstrate this understanding through the manipulation of materials. This could be a statement or physical response but in the case of an artist, the creation of art product is the result of understanding” (2012: 79).

Art-based research combines a variety of means of inquiry and the more artists enter these programs the more understanding there should be about artistic creative processes. This may ultimately change art and the perception of what constitutes the creation of knowledge and thought processes in studio practice.

Underlying all my work are the processes of creation by which artistic practice is, in and of itself, a means of research and inquiry. This is largely personal; each artist will approach his/her research and practice individually. Some will argue that artistic practice is not research, however I am of the opinion that reflective artistic practice can be considered as research and contributes to the understanding of concepts and ideas. Daichendt (2012: 11) argues that research is generally understood as a type of investigation and explains:

“It is a process involving the collection of information and eventual discovery of new or revised knowledge. Using this definition, research is a search for knowledge. It involves questions, discovery, interpreting, and organizing data. A description that sounds a lot like art making” (2012: 11).

The practice of reflective scholarship⁷ creates inquiry and questioning that prompts interpretation, discovery, understanding and ultimately the creation of knowledge.⁸ Daichendt considers that artist scholars adopt methods that reflect on their art and highlight the deep and meaningful thinking that takes place (ibid: 85).

The development of a conceptual framework establishing relationships between theory and artistic practice was essential in my work. As Graeme Sullivan explains,

“...theorizing visual arts practice embraces a diversity of positions and perspectives. However, to propose a viable way to conceptualize art practice as research requires the construction of robust and defensible frameworks for considering the relationship between the theories and practices that inform how art can assume its potential as a creative and critical form of human inquiry, agency, and productions” (2010).⁹

The complexity of practice-based research required a combination of methodologies and strategies to gather data, uncover structures, make connections and arrive at interpretations (2012: 94).¹⁰ Daichendt explains,

“The reflective process seeks to make the unexplainable available. The thinking that is outside conceptualization, nonverbal, uncognized, tacit, and extralinguistic

requires sources to better understand it. Data sources can be primary, secondary, and tertiary” (2012: 95).

Early in my career I was greatly inspired by the work of Antoni Tàpies and for this thesis I have returned to his writings in depth. For me Tàpies exemplifies the artist scholar able to combine both critical thinking and thinking in materials and the ability to communicate in writing the profound personal experience of the process of creation. Tàpies’s art was undoubtedly ahead of its time and the importance of his work towards the understanding of art and its creation will, I believe, continue to increase for a long time to come.

For Tàpies (1990) the artist is driven by a search for Truth and the freedom to be gained both in its attainment and in the freedom to act autonomously based upon that understanding. He explains,

“Our human story is one of cruelty and tragedy of suffering and sorrow. To search for the true equilibrium, to find a perfect balance between what he knows and what he does, seems to me to be one of the most beautiful purposes that one can have, and not only of an artist but of any intellectual, it should be the ambition of anyone with a minimum of conscience.”¹¹

The artist scholar has always existed but has only recently been incorporated into a structure within the University. I believe, like Tàpies, that ultimately this kind of research represents a search for knowledge and for the truth about the human condition.

The identification and assimilation of relevant literature, leading to theory construction, argument, and critical reflection, played a major role in this study. As I have explained, the general methodology I employed applied theory to practice in a number of ways, among them, the use of artistic creation as research inquiry enabling exploration directly through the making. At every stage critical analysis of the artistic outcomes led to further study and deeper understanding while moving arguments forward and beginning

the cycle again. Combined with strategies and methodologies discussed in the first part of this thesis, new patterns and perspectives became manifest, including between artistic practice and theory. In the following I expand upon how this came together and unfolded through specific explorations and strategies.

For me, the most genuine representation of the popular urban culture of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* was the small, outdoor spectacle I attended during a fieldtrip to Mexico. That experience set the scene for much of what was to come.

The first artwork, *Shattered Identity*, reflects on the hypothetical scenario of a “Montoya” from the region of Almería, Southern Spain, emigrating to Mexico and starting the European part of my family. This artwork should be reviewed, perhaps, and brought up to date in view of the present, ongoing economic and social problems in Spain. Particularly affected are the young (56% are unemployed) who have joined a new Spanish diaspora in search of a better life and future.

As the study progressed a pattern appeared; the research was informing the practice and the practice in turn was informing the research (Sullivan, 2010: 99).¹² It became a two-way process, a dialogue between formal research (reading and writing) and visual representation of ideas. The interaction between abstract and reflective thought and visual representation and the act of making has led to learning, knowledge and understanding.

The artistic practice served to practically examine issues concerning the construction of Mexicanness, *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, cultural identity and diaspora while research in texts added historical background and context, archival information, and academic input from other scholars and sources. This understanding combined with critical reflection in turn brought creative interpretation and written analysis. There is also an interactive

relationship between the making of art and the writing about art. The necessity of quickly recording fleeting ideas and associations became apparent especially at key moments when groups of work were displayed together, such as the 2011 *Through the Mask* exhibition, or arranged as groups in the studio. It was important to see the artworks together in order to appreciate the patterns that were being formed as the research progressed.

An objective of this research was to question how the visual representations of my practice are central to learning and understanding and it was very important to maintain my art practice while carrying out the textual research. Restarting artistic execution, even a drawing, will always bring new possibilities and refuel the research. The final outcome took the form of artworks grouped according to fundamental elements, technical or practical, which they shared. Only three pieces fall outside these thematic groups and are connected to the overall research uniquely. They are *Shattered Identity*, *That Same Scream Again!*, and *Ius Soli*.

What became increasingly evident through “the research methods, contexts and outputs that are not text-based” (Sullivan, 2010: 78) is how the way in which focusing on the processes of the making of artwork is a way of thinking directly through materials and their manipulation. This route to comprehension also favours the allowing of intuitive processes in the determination of results and connections and is a distinct alternative to the intellectual in the generation of knowledge and understanding.

Along these lines, my most original contribution is the artwork developed from my investigations and analyses of the themes and issues I have discussed. It is my sincere belief and hope that they may, in some small way at least, increase awareness and understanding. The outcome of the creative practice takes the form in many cases of artworks that “embody the questions, ideas and images” (Ibid: 184). Hence this

research is also a proposal for future work.

Being open to and confronting the reality of Mexico in the twenty-first century I add my own expression to the many dissident voices crying out for change in the political, social and economic system oppressing most Mexicans. Mexico is a plurality of people including not only the minorities of foreign background but both the mestizo and the Indian peoples. The power of the Mexican elite must be challenged and people everywhere made aware of the systemic injustice and exploitation, the discrimination and corruption that have for so long subjugated the people of Mexico.

The work allowed me to discover and clarify ideas, actions and outcomes as the research progressed and enabled a way of thinking through materials and the action of creating the artwork. As David Thomas (2007), quoted by Graeme Sullivan (Ibid: 78), explains,

“Art practice is a way of researching through the practice of making art. Such making is not just doing, but is a complex informed physical, theoretical and intellectual activity where private and public worlds meet. Art practice is the outcome of intertwined objective, subjective, rational and intuitive processes. Considered in this way, art is a discipline, informed by the conceptual and linguistic conventions of its culture and history” (2007: 81).¹³

Key processes and strategies to develop understanding or simply help to explore fundamental human emotions are various. One process relies on a diversity of drawing strategies, from quick sketches to sustained drawings. For Tàpies, “...drawing would be a more radical way of stressing the process again and rediscovering a form of expression which is not spectacular, but more to do with experience” (2006: 134). According to this strategy, it was important to find and develop alternative drawing possibilities. The surface of the paper became a laboratory for conceptual experimentation. The manipulation of paper and printed material to form three-dimensional works and/or assemblages is another strategy that helped me think through

materials. The gathering of found objects and a collection of boxes was important to contain the components of the artworks that in turn became repositories of ideas. The critical analysis of the processes themselves helped the research to move forward into the next stage of creation or area of textual research.

Some of the artworks are more successful than others, but all of them, being explorations, have been necessary to move the inquiry forward, establish connections, and develop understanding.

The first artworks, described in chapter one, began with the exploration of the use of the mask in Mexico. Combined with information in the Markmans' study (1989) these works gave rise to the understanding of the mask as the link that may connect *Lucha Libre* to Pre-Hispanic rituals. This research tests and extends the Markmans' analysis of the mask and its perceived link to rituals and its continuity in Mexican popular culture. Intuition and instinct led the way toward many of the artworks of this section. At this time I also seemed serendipitously guided to arrange an interview with Blue Demon Junior. During the interview, with no prompting from myself and to my surprise, he stated that he believed there was a direct connection between his performance in *Lucha Libre* and the Meso-American ritual of Xipe Totec. As I said, I believe that the *luchadores* wear their masks in the same way our ancestors wore masks or the skins of sacrificed victims when impersonating the Xipe Totec god during rituals and festivals. Despite the interruption by the Conquest, the continuity of the spirit of the mask was never vanquished. When the mask was re-introduced in 1933 to *Lucha Libre*, it thrived again as though ancient seeds had suddenly received rain water.

In *Wall of Masks*, a sense of working through materials and a feeling of healing through the making guided the process. I believe this piece is successful in that it offers the display of the aftermath of a transformative event. Drawing always accompanied these

explorations as a way of thinking directly through the action of drawing itself, a means of getting nearer to and better understanding the subject or the object. The work demonstrates the iconic meaning of the mask. Other symbols such as the skulls, decapitated heads and *tzompantlis* were used as icons in the artwork linking Mexican culture and the Xipe Totec ritual and spectacle past and present.

As I explored the work of the Mexican painter María Izquierdo and her connection to the circus I came across Julio Revollo Cárdenas's study (2011). Being an artist and looking into the work of another artist, helped me find the link to the circus and the understanding that the origin of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*, like the circus and popular theatre, lies in the early *maroma* spectacles.

My art-based explorations enable an engagement with realities largely unspoken or hidden from view in everyday life. Through my research I have become more aware of issues of my own constructed Mexicanness and realize that ultimately what I embrace culturally to help make sense of my world may be little more than a mirage based upon fantasy.

Deeply felt nostalgia for a mythical land is conveyed in the piece *Diaspora: Earth, Seeds and Blood*. When a person leaves the country of birth, he/she carries within a personal cultural representation and love for their land, that like seeds extend and scatter with time. Certain of the pieces imply a confrontation with death, violence and the process of mourning the dead. The notion of honouring and remembering the dead, emblematic of Mexican culture, comes across in many of the artworks as well as the subtleties of Mexican culture, whether constructed or not.

I have also come to the understanding that being part of a diaspora can also mean being part of several interlocking homes and cultures and I consider the reality of having and

belonging to a diversity of customs and traditions (Hall, 1990: 310). This idea is expressed in *Ius Soli*. The Mexican, the British, and the Spanish cultures have all influenced my work and the way I approach it.

The artwork engages contemporary Mexican culture through the explorations of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* from many angles including the categories of *luchadores* and fans. These investigations gave me a basis from which to examine contemporary social and political activism and the emergence of activist groups, particularly among Mexican youth. Of great importance is the extent to which recent technology and the social media have fostered the proliferation and evolution of protest, criticism and resistance. These artworks emphasize awareness of the injustices perpetrated by the Mexican government, the elite groups it serves, and the criminal gangs and drug cartels. The powerful impact and symbolic importance of the *luchador* mask in Mexican society was repeatedly manifest, especially in the ways its iconography has been drawn upon by those fighting against societal injustice. The works are metaphorical of cultural struggle, the perpetual reenactment of the battle between good and evil.



Fig. 62. Detail of *Angel of Liberty I*, (2011). Image by Marcela Montoya-Turnill.

This research continues and extends Fernández Reyes’s argument: “The true strong masked characters are those outside the ring” (2004: 221). This thesis demonstrates how the traditional icons of the Mexican *luchador* and the mask acquire an even

stronger iconic and symbolic value, emblematic of justice, outside the *Lucha Libre* ring. The traditional icon of the *luchador* mask evolves as the society changes and it has become even more potent, not less, with time. Throughout this thesis I give evidence for the validity of this hypothesis. Moreover, the creation of Congreso Popular¹⁴ in February 2014 continues the struggle for justice in Mexico. The image below appeared in one of the posters displayed in the first Congreso Popular meeting in Mexico City giving further evidence that the use of the *luchador* mask in Mexico continues to be a strong symbol of resistance, fight and hope.

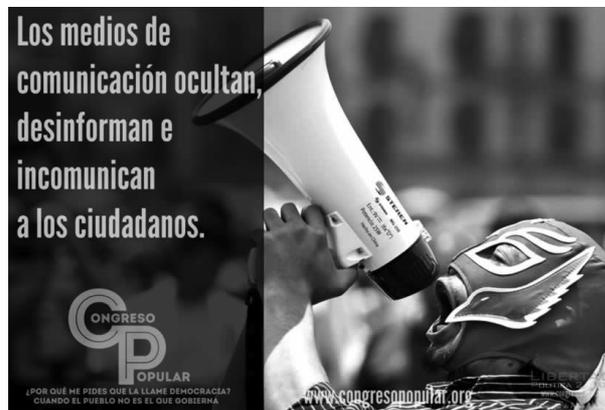


Fig. 63. Congreso Popular poster (2014) Image from www.congresopopular.org

*“Mass Media hide, misinform and deprive
citizens of the means of communication.
Why do you ask me to call it democracy?
When it is not the people who govern.”*

Looking back, it is clear that from the beginning of this research “Death” hovered behind the scenes. The research began by looking into the colourful and exciting world of the Mexican *luchador* and *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and the circus. What was first experienced were feelings of excitement and elation brought on by the explosion of colours of this spectacle-sport, the fantastic masks, the incredible outfits, the adulation

of the screaming fans. To witness the dazzling entrances of the *luchadores*, the spectacular holds and aerial manoeuvres, the sheer drama of the struggle, is simply thrilling. But the deeper I went into the world of *Lucha Libre* the more these reactions came to seem superficial and my feelings began to reshape themselves. Soon the study came to involve an exploration into the primordial confrontation and eternal conflict between good and evil. I came to perceive the ritualistic characteristics of the spectacle and to see it as an allegorical embodiment and never-ending reenactment of human struggle at the most fundamental level. I came to feel and appreciate the intense emotional resonance of the performance for the common men and women of Mexico whose lives are not so colourful and whose constant battles are all too real. Indeed, the meaning of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* can not be in the performance itself, but exists in its apprehension by the people, from whom it originates, and the compelling interaction that manifests itself during the performance.

Nearing the end, the spirit of the art has become sombre, its aura subdued in the final, monochrome sustained drawings. And finally, the last work renders the ultimate absence of the possible perception of materiality, only vestiges and traces remain, ashes as keepsakes to remember and honour, contained in a box.

The viva exhibition *In Memory Of* at the Chelsea Morgue is the culmination of the thesis' research. The chosen artwork and the performance reflect the syncretism inherent in the Mexican cult of the dead and rituals, cultural identity, tradition, and diaspora. The installation actively links the work with contemporary political and social activism.¹⁵

Questions persist and the future of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* is, as ever, uncertain. New technologies, social networks and the media continue to exert transformative influence, the results of which remain to be seen. There may also be a danger that *Lucha Libre* may become a victim of its own success and be taken over by dominant media and

entertainment corporations. That eventually would mean the death of independent *luchadores* and small, autonomous promotions. Also long overdue is the formal recognition of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* as a legitimate representation of popular urban culture, in the form of a dedicated museum and research center—a dream expressed by many people I interviewed.

Fundamental, organic points of issue concerning Mexico's relationship to the United States are present to some degree in virtually any discussion of Mexican substance and outside the scope of the present thesis. Two longstanding and vital questions are worth repeating however. First: Will there ever come a time in the United States when the civil and human rights of Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants are universally recognized and respected? Secondly: Will the United States ever end its so-called “war on drugs” that has caused Mexico so much suffering and death?

In conclusion I would like to relate a brief narrative from *Subcomandante Marcos*¹⁶ who speaks eloquently and courageously in defence of the dignity of all peoples, always and everywhere.¹⁷ In an interview¹⁸ he was asked why he wore two watches. He answered,

“The watch on my right wrist, is the watch of the civic society, of the citizens, the watch on my left wrist is the watch of war, of the National Liberation Zapatista Army. When we wear two watches we want to say that we are in a dichotomy, in a duality, that we are an armed movement, clandestine, but at the same time we are trying to construct a relationship with the citizens, with the civic society, with the rest of the country, in this case, with Mexico. The disparity of the hours is our bet that it is possible to construct one same hour. That it won't be necessary, these two watches that mark this dichotomy, but that we can make only one. We say that, when the two hours unite, then there will be peace for us and for the Indigenous peoples” (Subcomandante Marcos, 2006).¹⁹

And it leaves one with the question, will “the two hours” ever unite?²⁰

IUS SOLI

Ius Soli (Montoya-Turnill 2011) Process of Making and Formulation of Meaning

The process of making *Ius Soli* started in 2008 when I asked my friend, the artist Claude Heath,²¹ to bring me from his trip to Mexico some soil from Frida Kahlo's²² house, now museum, in Coyoacán, Mexico City. I kept this soil in a small jar in my studio in London and when I moved to Spain in 2009 I packed it with the rest of the contents of the studio that I was bringing to my new life. Once in Spain I missed my friends and life in the U.K. where I had lived for twenty years. I asked my friend, the artist and priest Regan O'Callaghan,²³ to send me some soil from the grounds of St. Paul's Cathedral. The day it arrived in Mojácar, Spain, the soil inside the jar was still damp. I then decided to get some soil from the mountain that I often climb in my daily walk. It is in front of an ancient Ibero burial ground and in a protected area of Natural Park. The soil of this mountain has a reddish colour. I decided to place the 3 different types of soil in containers that are very common here in the South of Andalucía. I had some ink stamps made to label the bottles with the three addresses where the soil comes from in Mexico, Spain, and the U.K. The containers are exactly the same but the three different kinds of soil are very different in texture and colour.

A number of photographs that complete *Ius Soli*, were taken in Mojácar, Andalucía, Southern Spain. When I unpacked the Mexican flag I had bought in Mexico City during the 2009 fieldtrip, I decided to place it on a dresser, as if it were an altar. When I saw the eagle on the cactus devouring a snake it made me remember various Mexican myths. It also reminded me of my Mexican passport²⁴ which I have put away for some years, since I now travel exclusively with my British passport that allows me greater freedom of movement within the European Community. A rope was used to tie my wrists and a number of photographs were made of the resulting tableaux in search of

the right image. In some of them I am holding the Mexican soil as if I were making an offering to the flag, to my Mother country. Three of them were selected and the background was modified using Photoshop to blacken it and add the words “ius soli” in a repetitive form. *Ius Soli* was completed in 2011 in my studio in Spain.

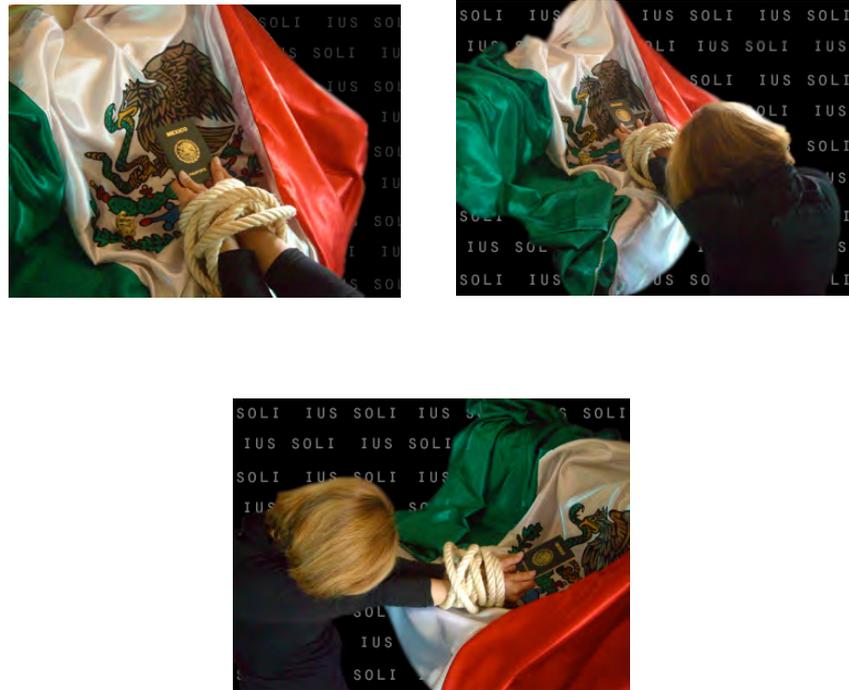


Fig. 64. *Ius Soli explorations* (2011). Images by David Gray and Ellen Turnill

Formulation of Meaning

Ius Soli consists of three photographs measuring 30cms by 45cms each and three bottles, described above, on a shelf measuring 40cms by 45cms. The soil in the bottles is from the three countries where I have lived and that have influenced my life and work. *Ius soli* is the Latin for “right of soil”. It is also known as birthright citizenship by which nationality or citizenship²⁵ can be recognized for any individual born in the territory of the related state. *Ius sanguinis* is the Latin for “right of blood”. It is a social policy by which citizenship is not determined by place of birth, but by having a parent(s) who are citizens of the nation, in contrast to *ius soli*.

Ius soli is an exploration of the right to belong to a country and how when one crosses a border or moves to another country different laws apply. As a Mexican travelling with a Mexican passport I have always encountered restrictions, suspicion and limitations. I would not have been allowed to either live or work in the U.K. or in Spain with a Mexican passport if I had not married a British citizen and later received my British naturalisation and become a British citizen. The rope that is used to tie my wrists represents the restrictions imposed on Mexican citizens travelling or living abroad. It is an altar where I am struggling with and imploring “Mi Madre Patria” (my mother country).

In 2011 *Ius Soli (1)*, consisting of the three bottles containing soil, was displayed on a small wooden shelf mounted on the wall near *Shattered Identity (1)*, and as part of the installation of *Through the Mask* exhibition at the Miguel Angel Gallery in Spain. *Ius Soli (2)*, consisting of the three bottles containing soil, was displayed on the floor, in front of *That Same Screen Again!*, and as part of *In Memory Of* installation in The Morgue, London, U.K. in 2014. (See description and photographs in Volume 2, Catalogue of Work, pp. 33-34).

Mexico, Spain and U.K. have given me opportunities and challenges that have influenced my work as a diasporic artist. Mexico, where I lived my first twenty-six years gave me my mother culture, the U.K. is where I saw my children grow and my work as an artist mature and lately Spain has granted me renewal and the space and peace of mind to continue the development of my work. Therefore, the soil represents the land where I have taken the steps in the development of my practice. These three countries, through the artists I have followed and the interaction with other artists and my studies, have deeply influenced the way I perceive art and art practice. Living and being on foreign soil has given me the advantage of seeing my culture from a distance as well as feelings of nostalgia for homeland. As an immigrant I have gained greater

freedom in some aspects of my life but at the same time there is a sense of loss. The loss of homeland and belonging in one's cultural group is always felt somewhere deep inside.

¹ These are the academics and authors who have taken *Lucha Libre Mexicana* as their theme of study: Sharon Mazer (1998), Janina Möbius (2007), Dan Madigan (2007), Heather Levi (2008) Alvaro A. Fernández Reyes (2004), Orlando Jiménez and Javier Pereda (2011).

² See Royal Academy of Arts, Moctezuma Matos, Solís Olguín, and Locke, A. 2002, *Aztecs*, exhibition catalogue.

³ Elkins 2009, *Artists with PhDs, On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*.

⁴ Daichendt 2012, *Artist Scholar, Reflections on Writing and Research*.

⁵ Sullivan 2010, *Art Practice as Research, Inquiry in Visual Arts*.

⁶ According to Daichendt (2012: 79) "...understanding is much more akin to the artistic process from the bird's eye level than knowledge production". He considers (ibid: 79) that, "The process works from conceptualization to understanding with understanding being a threshold that the artists cross over when they begin to create an actual product."

⁷ G. James Daichendt (2012: 86) argues, "The broad use of the term scholar or scholarship is the most important characteristic to consider because it is inclusive of all types of inquiry in the university. To practice scholarship, individuals utilize their expertise to make claims and inquire about the world. Artists do this in their processes and then share it through exhibitions, performances, digitally on the web, or through printed materials. Scholarship is therefore representative of all artistic activities. Certainly this includes the studio product but also exhibition, writing, lecturing, and even critiques. The Museums then act as the repositories of this collected scholarship and make some of these achievements and contributions in art available for discussion and viewing."

⁸ See Daichendt 2012, chapter 6, pp. 85-107, *Practicing Reflective Scholarship*.

⁹ Sullivan 2010, p. 99, *Art Practice as Research, Inquiry in Visual Arts*.

¹⁰ Daichendt is of the opinion that, "Reflecting on the complexity of artistic practice allows the scholar to uncover the structure of an idea." By quoting Johnson (2010) he argues, 'Creative products and good ideas come about through a lengthy process and are often not just a result of "eureka" moment.' Johnson, S. 2010, *Where good ideas come from: The natural history of innovation*, New York: Riverhead.

¹¹ In *Tàpies documentary by Gregory Rood*, BBC 1990 and *Tàpies – Document people+art BBC 1990*, see online links in Bibliography.

¹² Sullivan 2010, p. 99. Sullivan states, "...as new visual arts research is undertaken, it can be located and critiqued within dimensions of theory and domains of inquiry so as to ascertain how practice informs theory and theory informs practice."

¹³ David Thomas quoted in Sullivan 2010, p. 78. Sullivan tells us that how Thomas describes the process of his PhD research dissertation project that included painting and installations, in Thomas, D. 2007, *Composites, multiplicities, complexities and duration*, in L.Duxbury, E.M. Grierson, & D. Waite (Eds.), pp. 81-91, *Thinking through practice*, Melbourne, Vic., Australia: RMIT Publishing (published on Infomit e-library, <http://search.infomit.com.au>).

¹⁴ Congreso Popular is a Mexican political activist social movement formed on 5th of February 2014 when 2652 citizens registered to manifest their opposition to the "reforma energética" (fuel reform) published on 20th of December 2013. Congreso Popular gathered on the 18th of March 2014 at "Monumento a la Revolución" (Revolution Monument), Mexico City, to protest against president Enrique Peña Nieto's government's "reforma energética" and other structural reforms. Many other activist groups converge in Congreso Popular including artists, intellectuals, leaders, students and workers because it responds to the need to communicate social discontent and organize the various Mexican political and social activist movements that have been created in the last years demanding justice. Congreso Popular includes all the "luchas" (fighting movements) that have similar goals and ideals. [Online] Available: <www.congresopopular.org> [20 March 2014]. The web coordinator is John Ackerman.

¹⁵ On the 26th of September 2014, forty-three students of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College, in the state of Guerrero, disappeared. This single event has detonated social and political debate and protest inside and outside Mexico and many including myself have been profoundly affected. The land of Mexico is drenched in blood and violence. The viva exhibition, *In Memory Of*, and performance were dedicated to the forty-three Ayotzinapa students. It is a memorial to honour all the dead, the silenced and the disappeared. The intention is that the creative process will serve to help cleanse and heal and in the promotion of justice. *That Same Scream Again!*¹⁵ is the central piece of both the installation and the performance. The Mexican flag becomes a potent symbol embracing the disappeared students, something like the Mayan World Tree¹⁵ central to the blood sacrifices which fed the ancient gods. The hemp fiber roots growing from the word Ayotzinapa,

sewn to the flag, metaphorically collect the spilled blood and symbolically transport the victims to a safer place. The Morgue, being a place of sadness and death, became spiritual and shrine-like through art and performance. For some time it was a place of release, catharsis and healing for the living among the spirits.

¹⁶ Subcomandante Marcos who wears a balaclava, is the nom de guerre of the Mexican Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente. He is one of the main leaders and the spokesman for the Indian Mexican resistance movement *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* or EZNL (National Liberation Zapatista Army). Based in Chiapas in the Lacandon jungle, the *Zapatistas* first publicly appeared in 1994 demanding “democracia, libertad, tierra, pan y justicia para el pueblo indígena de Mexico” (democracy, freedom, land, bread and justice for all Indian people in Mexico). The black balaclava has become a distinct symbol of resistance and of the *Zapatista* movement. See online links to EZNL in Bibliography.

¹⁷ Subcomandante Marcos, an interview with a spokesperson for the EZLN, Interview 1/3: He states, “The system of power reproduces the contempt and persecution that exists against the sectors excluded by the government” (my translation). He goes on to say that these sectors in Mexico are: Indigenous peoples, workers, farmers, teachers, students, women, homosexuals and the youth. See *Subcomandante Marcos an Interview with a spokesperson for the EZLN*: online link in Bibliography.

¹⁸ Jesús Quintero called *El Loco de la Colina* (The Fool on the Hill) a Spanish and radio presenter. He interviewed Subcomandante Marcos via satellite in 2006.

¹⁹ My translation, *Jesús Quintero “El Loco de la Colina” interviews Subcomandante Marcos for Spanish television TVE 1*, 14 July 2006. See online link in Bibliography.

²⁰ In an online article, *We All Must Become Zapatistas*, dated June 1st 2014, Chris Hedges reports on the end of Subcomandante Marcos. Marcos, quoted by Hedges, speaking before some 1, 000 people at a May 24 memorial for the Zapatista teacher, José Luis Solís López “Galeano”, murdered by Mexican paramilitary said, “This figure was created, and now its creators, the Zapatistas, are destroying it. And we saw that now, the full-size puppet outfit, the character, the hologram, was no longer necessary. Time and time again we waited for the right moment—the right calendar and geography to show what we really are to those who truly are.” See Hedges’s complete article: Truthdig [Online] Available:

<http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/we_all_must_become_zapatistas_20140601> [4 June 2014].

²¹ Claude Heath - British artist based in London (1964-). Claude made a trip to Mexico in 2008. He brought me this soil from Frida Kahlo’s garden in her house now Museo Frida Kahlo and Casa Azul. See online link in Bibliography.

²² Frida Kahlo – Mexican painter (1907-1954). Her house is also known as *La Casa Azul* (The Blue House).

²³ Regan O’Callaghan is a New Zealander-British artist, priest and iconographer (1968-). He used to have a studio in St. Paul’s Cathedral.

²⁴ The Mexican passport is in dark green and it has in the middle in gold the Mexican emblem of the eagle on a cactus devouring a snake.

²⁵ Mexican citizenship is granted through *ius soli* and/or *ius sanguinis* or if any individual is born on board any kind of Mexican naval or aerial transportation. According to Home Office’s U.K. Border Agency, British citizenship can be acquired in the following ways: “1) *Lex soli*: by birth in the U.K. to a parent who is a British citizen at the time of the birth, or to a parent who is settled in the United Kingdom. 2) *Lex sanguinis*: by birth abroad, which constitutes “by descent” if one of the parents is British otherwise than by descent (for example by birth, adoption, registration or naturalisation in the United Kingdom).

APPENDIX 1

BIOGRAPHIES OF SOME WRESTLERS AND OTHER LUCHA LIBRE

PERSONALITIES

Blue Demon or Alejandro Muñoz (1922-2000) Mexican wrestler and actor. He was a “rudo”. He was born in García, Nuevo León, Mexico. When Blue Demon was a child his family moved to Monterrey City, Mexico. As a young adult he worked for the National Railways. He was El Santo’s main rival. He became a popular wrestler and *Lucha Libre* cinema actor in the 1950s. His signature outfit is made of an electric blue colour fabric. His mask is all blue with white motifs around the eyes, nose and mouth. He adopted Blue Demon Jr. when he was a child.

El Santo and Blue Demon were two of the most famous Mexican wrestlers that achieved popularity and fame from the 1940s. In *Lucha Libre Mexicana*’s golden age (1940-1970) they appeared in films and were represented in stories in comics. Today they are considered popular Mexican icons and their sons: El Hijo del Santo and Blue Demon Jr. continue with their wrestling tradition and wearing their masks.

Blue Demon Jr., the adopted son of Blue Demon. He is a “rudo” and wears a blue mask with white motifs and costume. Abroad he has added a feather headpiece for his entrances.

Blue Panther or Genaro Vázquez Nevarez (1960-), also known as “Maestro Lagunero”, is a Mexican wrestler born in Durango. He is part of *the Consejo Mundial de Lucha Libre* (CMLL). His mask and costume used to be made of an electric blue colour fabric with a white and blue panther motif. In 2008 he lost his mask to the wrestler Villano V in a “mask vs. mask” combat at Arena Mexico, Mexico City. He now competes without a mask.

Cassandro or Saúl Armendáriz (1970-) is an Exótico or gay wrestler. Cassandro was born in El Paso, Texas, U.S.A and trained *Lucha Libre* in Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo León, Mexico. He lives in El Paso, Texas. He is an activist who defends the rights of gay community members. He started wrestling when he was 16 years old. Cassandro is the current NWA World Welterweight Champion. He also takes part in Lucha VaVoom spectacles.

Christian Cymet or Christian Cymet López Suárez is a Mexican lawyer who has been collecting played *Lucha Libre* masks since childhood. His collection is the biggest and most complete in Mexico. He lives and works in Mexico City. His dream is to someday fund the Museum of Lucha Libre in Mexico.

Doña Virginia Aguilera is also called *Abuelita de la Lucha Libre Mexicana*. She became a wrestling fan in 1934 and continued supporting *Lucha Libre* until she died at the age of 97. Her collection of *Lucha Libre* memorabilia included wrestlers’ shorn locks that were lost in battles called “cabellera contra cabellera” (hair vs. hair) Lourdes Grobet photographed her in the arenas, with the luchadores and in her home with her collection of memorabilia. See essay and photographs of Doña Virginia in Grobet, L. (2006: 124-127), *Espectacular de Lucha Libre, Fotografías de Lourdes Grobet*.

El Hijo del Santo is the son of El Santo and wears a silver mask and outfit. He is a “tecnico”. He has inherited his father’s mask and *luchador* name. El Santo and el Hijo del Santo are registered characters and brands. He owns the rights to his father mask and legacy.

El Rayo de Jalisco wears a black mask with zigzag white line in the middle. His signature entrance charro outfit consists of a black sombrero, jacket and trousers with golden details. His entrance music is *El Jarabe Tapatio* a typical song from the area of Jalisco, Mexico.

El Santo or Rodolfo Guzmán Huerta (1917-1984) was a Mexican masked wrestler and film actor who in the 1950s became a popular iconic figure and a national and international hero.

El Santo Junior is the son of El Hijo del Santo, the third generation to inherit the El Santo mask and legacy. El Santo Junior has now also been registered as a character and brand.

El Santos is the main character of a comic strip created by Jis y Trino who are José Ignacio Solorzano (Jis) and José Trinidad Camacho (Trino). They began in the 1980s as artists doing illustrations and comics for many Mexican publications. In the 1990s La Jornada newspaper published their comic strip. One of their most popular characters is *El Santos* who, in their words, “parodies and pays homage to the beloved wrestler and movie star El Santo” (2001: 325). They explain, “Jis y Trino use this comic reversal to record and comment on what lies beneath the surface of Mexico’s most cherished national myths” (2001: 225). In 2012 the film *El Santo vs. La Tetona Mendoza*¹ was premiered in Mexican cinemas. It is an animated film with vulgar language and black humour and is not suitable for children. It is a parody and a critique of Mexicans, Mexican society, corruption and the political system with references to drug culture and other films such as Rocky and the film directors Steven Spielberg, Quentin Tarantino and Stanley Kubrick.

El 5anto is a social and political activist and blogger who defends freedom of information in Mexican media. He wears a blue mask. “5” represents the fifth power of electronic media –social networks. He first appeared on line in 2011 and was silenced in 2012.

El Santuario are the followers and collaborators of El 5anto who made possible the spread of information through social networks. They are still online.

El Hijo de Solar is the son of Solar. Even though he has a University degree he has chosen to become a luchador and follow his father’s steps.

Fray Tormenta or Fr. Sergio Gutierrez Benitez (1945-) is a Catholic priest who became a *Lucha Libre* wrestler in order to support his orphanage. He wears a red, gold and yellow mask and outfit. He became a successful wrestler and has helped and housed 250 children throughout the 30 years he has had his orphanage. He continues his activism against poverty helping the many children he supports in his orphanage “Casa Hogar Cachorros”. He retired from wrestling in 2011. Fray Tormenta la Mayor de sus victorias 1 de 2, [Online] Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANwaWMnMByE> [10 March 2013].

José G. Cruz (1917-1989) was a comic book author, scriptwriter, and editor who used the technique of fotomontaje/ photomontage and created many film and comic book characters. In 1952 he funded Editorial José G. Cruz in Mexico. *Historietas* de José G.

Cruz mixes graphic novel and comic styles. It was a fast way of producing magazine issues mixing photos taken on sets, graphics and cartoon characters and backgrounds. David Wilt (2007)² in his essay, *El Santo, The Case of a Mexican Multimedia Hero*, quotes the Mexican comic historians Juan Manuel Aurrecochea and Armando Bartra:

“*Fotomontaje* is something else. It substitutes photos for drawings, maintaining the language of the comic, which signifies overlaying balloons...drawing ‘force line,’ drawing [sound effects] and, if necessary, cutting and pasting different photos, retouching them and, frequently, adding the missing elements with the pen” (2007: 209).

Lourdes Grobet (1940-) is a Mexican photographer who started recording *Lucha Libre* towards the end of the 1970s. At that time she was working against the aesthetic canon of Mexicanness and of folkloric portraits. She is well known for her extensive oeuvre of *Lucha Libre* photographs, portraits of *luchadores*, their fans, the arenas, the collectors, etc... *Espectacular de Lucha Libre, Fotografías de Lourdes Grobet*, published in 2006, is a historiography of *Lucha Libre* recording it through Grobet’s photography and Carlos Monsiváis’s and Gabriel Rodríguez’s essays.

Magno (1984-) is a Mexican wrestler born in El Paso, Texas. He is an independent El Paso, Texas/Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo León *luchador*. He competes in *Lucha Libre* matches in the United States having taken part in Total Nonstop Action Wrestling (TNA) matches. He has represented Mexico during the *Lucha Libre* performances in the United Kingdom. His signature mask and costume have red and black flames motif with black or silver backgrounds

Místico (silver and gold mask) or Luis Ignacio Uribe Alvirde (1982-) Mexican wrestler who was part of Consejo Mexicano de Lucha Libre (CMLL) until 2011 when he signed a contract with World Championship Wrestling (WWE) and started wrestling in the United States with his new character *Sin Cara* (without a face). His new mask is a variation of his Místico mask but he has added some small horns and sometimes it is blue with yellow motifs and other times red with silver and white motifs. He is a very acrobatic wrestler and known for high-flyer style (aerial moves). He is the son of Dr. Karonte another Mexican wrestler. Early in 2014 he signed a contract with World Wrestling League (WWL).

Orlando Jiménez Ruiz “El Furioso” (1976-) is a Mexican researcher and communication theorist and as a referee wears a black and white shirt and black trousers when refereeing a match. He is part of the Mexican collective *Jinetes Sampleadores de Im@genes* (JSI).

Rey Mysterio Jr. or Oscar Gutiérrez Rubio (1974-) is a Mexican-American wrestler born in California. He was trained by his uncle Rey Misterio. He started wrestling in Tijuana, Mexico and in 1995 he moved to the United States to join World Championship Wrestling (WCW) and later Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW). His signature mask has a cross motif in the centre and an elongated winged eagle head at each side of the cheeks and eyes. Even though Rey Mysterio lost his mask in 1999, he sometimes wears a mask during some American wrestling matches.

Sangre Azteca is a *Lucha Libre* wrestler. His mask is mainly red with black and gold motifs displaying Aztec symbols in both his mask and outfit. When abroad he wears a futuristic/Aztec helmet.

Shocker is a *Lucha Libre* wrestler who fights without a mask since he lost it in combat. His hair is short and dyed yellow. He considers himself 1000% guapo (handsome) -

which is his motto as well. He is very popular and successful due to his skills not only in the ring but also in the “El Luchador” programme– a docu-soap series transmitted on TV and online.

Solar is a *Lucha Libre* wrestler originally from Guadalajara City but is based in Mexico City. He is a “rudo”. His family helps him in his *Lucha Libre* shop where they sell all sorts of memorabilia and meet his fans on the weekends. He has a red, gold and yellow mask and outfit.

Super Animal is a social and political activist who defends the rights of animals in Mexico.

Super Ecologista Universal is an activist and ecologist who defends the rights of Mother Earth and the environment. He wears a mask and outfit in two shades of green.

Super Gay is an activist that works for the rights of gay and lesbians in Mexico. He wears a mask and outfit that represents a rainbow.

Superbarrio Gómez or Marco Rascón Córdova is an ex *Lucha Libre* wrestler who decided to fight for the rights of Mexican citizens who face eviction from their properties by landlords. He became a political and social activist after the 1986 earthquake that devastated Mexico City and people began facing unjust evictions. His costume and mask are red and yellow. Super Barrio came back in 2011 and in 2012 he has supported the movement against the PRI presidential candidate and backed Andres Manuel López Obrador. In June 2012 talking at a demonstration in Zocalo, Mexico City, [Online] Available: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcOMR6aLJUQ>> [10 April 2013]. See also BB video (2009): *The Return of Superbarrio* (“La Vuelta del Super Barrio”) – this is an animated short by Bob Jaroc and Andy Ward with music by Plaid, the voice of the main character is of Super Barrio himself, [Online] Available: <<http://vimeo.com/21291292>> [12 January 2013].

Super Sme is a social and political activist who wears a *luchador* mask and who used to be a *lucha libre* wrestler. Sme stands for Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (Mexican Electricians Union). He belongs to “Los Indignados Movimiento” (The Indignant Movement) that defends workers rights. He has been campaigning lately against impunity and the imposition of the PRI candidate at the last 2012 Presidential elections in Mexico.

INTERVIEW WITH BLUE DEMON JUNIOR

This is the interview³ I had with Blue Demon Junior in September 2009 in Mexico City, Mexico. This is a transcript of our encounter (BD J– Blue Demon Junior and M – Marcela):

BDJ: *“It is the essence that I am trying to retake. This comes from our culture. The tiger warrior, the Mexica warrior, the cougars, the jaguars... If you go back even more in time, to our Mexican mythology of the Xipe Totec – the one that puts on the skin of the dead. Someone once gave me a Xipe Totec [figurine].”*

BDJ: *“If you see the face of Xipe Totec and my face, just take this away. You take away this and it is me [pointing to a motif in his mask]. It is my face. I represent him in another way and besides I am a demon. In a way the Xipe Totec ritual is to put on, rebirth, imitate the dead one and to be reborn in the one who is alive.”*

M: *“Is it your father’s costume that you put on?”*

BDJ: *“No, it is not the costume [my father’s]. What I say is that: it is his essence because one leaves everything for this [pointing to his mask]. One impregnates it with the essence.*

BDJ: *[pointing at his father’s photograph as Blue Demon in his mobile phone] “You see his photo and you like it. You don’t want to know who is underneath it...It is perfect, just like this. It is the essence that I try to retake.”*

GLOSSARY

Assemblage is a form of sculpture comprised of found objects or objects that are put together to create an artwork. It has a three-dimensional quality.

Atlantis Giant Drawing and Watercolour Paper, grams 400, 60” x 48” - “...large surface format. Made from 70% highly refined wood free pulp and 30% cotton fibre. Acid free. Buffered with calcium carbonate, pH 8.5 (hot extract). The paper is gelatine sized, un-watermarked. NOT surface. Two deckle edges. Available in white only.” (Atlantis catalogue, [Online] Available: <<http://www.atlantisart.co.uk/cat.html>> [12 July 2013].

Collage (French – coller: to glue) a technique that consists of pasting and juxtaposing materials and objects over a surface of an artwork such as paper, cardboard, cloth and other objects. It has a two-dimensional quality.

Containers and Boxes were used as part of the artwork and to keep some of the elements. They are made of a variety of materials: silver, tin (metal), wood and paper.

Copal or Copalli (nahuatl) is a traditional medical and religious aromatic resin from the tree Copalquihuitl used in ritual ceremonies in Latin America. It is believed that the smoke when it burns reaches deities helping cure physical and spiritual ailments.

Found Objects are any artifacts that are found by chance or sought out and re-used to create an artwork that changes its original purpose.

Graphite (or lead) comes from the ancient Greek word *γράφω* (*graphō*): to draw or to write. It is a mineral (allotrope of carbon) and has many uses. For this study I refer to graphite that is used in the production of a variety of pencils.

Incense is an aromatic substance obtained from two trees: *Boswellia sacra* and *Boswellia papyrifera*. It's perfume and ascending smoke when burned is used in religious worship in Christian ceremonies.

Installation –a two or three-dimensional artwork usually constructed out of a number of elements and displayed with the purpose of influencing the way that an audience perceives and encounters the space and its relationship to objects. It includes painting, drawing, sculpture, film, performance, audio, audio-visual, computers, happenings, video, photography or any other combination of media. It can be displayed indoors in a physical space such as a gallery or museum, café, etc...or outdoors or on the web, through digital or electronic media. It can be static, exhibit in another location or moving from place to place or in constant movement (within the streets of a city as an example).

Khadi Handmade Paper— Indian paper made by recycling rags. “Khadi 100% Cotton Rag Deckled Edged Papers (On Four Sides). Khadi cotton rag papers are made in a new paper mill in a rural area of Karnataka, South India. ...Recycling is in fact the essence of papermaking: a material transformed through the medium of water”, Atlantis, U.K. Catalogue, [Online] Available: < <http://www.atlantisart.co.uk/cat.html>> [10 July 2013].

Printed Papers – any paper material that has gone through a printing process such as newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets, posters, tickets, programmes, cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, photographs, photocopies, prints, etc.

Site Specific Piece - To define it I refer to Nick Kaye's definition:

“...a ‘site specific work’ might articulate and define itself through properties, qualities or meanings produced in specific relationships between an ‘object’ or ‘event’ and a position it occupies. After the ‘substantive’ [the place or position occupied by some specific thing. Frequently implying original or fixed position] notion of site, such site-specific work might even assert a ‘proper’ relationship with its location, claiming and ‘original and fixed position’ associated with what it is” (Kaye, 2000: 1).⁴

Surface or a material layer or support that constitutes a boundary (living space) of an artwork. For this study the surfaces used to contained artworks ranged from linen and wool canvases, wooden supports and paper supports all varying in size and weight.

Strategies to Analyse and Develop Artwork:

Bill Prosser's approach to drawing⁵. **Drawing in – Drawing out** was the title of Prosser's master class I attended that took place in April 2006 while studying my Masters *Drawing as Process* at Kingston University. I have used this approach for some of the drawings. **Drawing in**—the act and experience of seeing an object and **drawing out**—the act of drawing this experience itself to the external world onto a surface firstly objectively as close to reality and then subjectively expressing and depicting inner feelings. Prosser (2006) explained:

“Drawing is its etymology; dragging or tracing. Taken as a verb, it has active associations such as drawing in and drawing out—respiring, one draws of breath that connects the internal and the external, self and world. As a noun it is associated with certain kinds of marks; simple tools that leave direct traces.”⁶

This approach includes three stages (Prosser, 2006). First—**Objectification**: The subject or object is represented through some form of observational drawing as close to reality as possible. Secondly—**Imagination**: A more subjective response to the space and its inhabitants (both animate and inanimate) is sought after and explored through medium, scale and mode of expression. And thirdly—**Synthesis**: In line with central tenets of phenomenology, images are produced that combined ‘internal’ and ‘external’ experience into an entwined and harmonious whole: a visual acknowledgement that each position is not autonomous but interdependent with the other.

Drawings – There was a variety of strategies employed with the use of drawing:

- **Sustained Drawings** are done over a long period of time ranging from hours to days and months. The purpose is to force a longer response to the process of the making and in this process challenges appear and new ways of perceiving a piece of work that takes the artist into another stage of development.

- **Sketches** are fast drawings done to capture quickly the subject or object of artistic attention. This kind of drawings was helpful to capture movement and feeling while watching *Lucha Libre* matches.
- **A Third Category of Drawing** is the one determined by the time felt that is necessary during the process. It can be short or long but in the dialogue between the artwork and the artist this becomes apparent.

Manipulation of Materials has been a way of thinking through materials. In the process of the making new connections appear letting the material speak and guide the creative moment. The tactile has always been important in my practice. The selection of materials is also important because different materials bring different qualities to the artwork and different artistic and intellectual connections.

Mind Maps in the form of diagrams, graphics, drawings and words, etc... They helped clarify ideas especially in times of confusion or inquiry.

My sketchbook became another tool as an artist's creative journal where I could write down my ideas as they developed and go back to them to reflect or remember.

Recording of Work and Events through photography, video, audio recorder, sketchbooks and computer files. Something is added when the material is review afterwards. New connections appear.

The Triadic Analytic Guide or T.A.G. developed by Paul Ryan, "A guide to semiotically analyse any object be it emotional, material or conceptual. At the same time uncover position of interpretation, form research question, and move towards some answers." From Ryan's lecture notes adapted from PhD appendix, Chelsea College of Art (2012). Following this guide notes and lists were made in sketchbook for some artworks in May and June 2012 as part of research data and development of meaning.⁷

¹ Jis y Trino (2012) *El Santos VS La Tetona Mendoza* film, Alejandro Lozano (director) and Andres Couturier (animation) premiered 30/11/2012 in Mexico. Trailer [Online] Available: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJi2rLbzsNg>> [03 June 2013]. See also: Jis y Trinos's essay, *El Santos and the Return of the Killer Aztecs!* pp. 325-329 in Joseph, G., Rubenstein, A., and Zolov, E. (2001) *Fragments of a Golden Age*.

² David Wilt's essay, *El Santo, The Case of a Mexican Multimedia Hero*, pp. 199-220, in Gordon, I., Jancovich M., and McAllister M. P. (eds.) (2007) *Film and Comic Books*.

³ I made this translation from the Spanish original transcript which is included in one of the recordings that is contained in a memory card part of the work: *Black Mask, White Thoughts*, see Chapter One, part 2, 1.2.5.

⁴ Kaye 2000, *Site-specific Art, Performance, Place and Documentation*.

⁵ In 2007, Bill Prosser's art work was inspired by Samuel Beckett's own doodles in the manuscript of his draft play *Human Wishes*, exhibited in Capital Centre, Milburn House at the University of Warwick. His research project is *Beckett and the Phenomenology of Doodles: A Visual and Theoretical Analysis* (University of Reading). "Bill's work is informed by the phenomenology of perception, an understanding of moment-by-moment experience which does not look for casual relations—an approach absolutely appropriate to the unmotivated activity of doodling. A common concern with phenomenology and the role of bodily experience in philosophical thought underpinned the investigations made in the day as a whole" in *Beckett and Visual Culture—A Review*, The Capital Centre, Creativity and Performance in Teaching and Learning, Warwick (2007), [Online] Available: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/capital/teaching_and_learning/learning_events/conferences/beckett/review/> [10 January 2014].

⁶ In Marmex Blogspot, *Drawing as Process: Bill Prosser's master class* (11 April 2006), [Online] Available: <<http://marmex.blogspot.com.es/2006/04/bill-prossers-masterclass.html>> [10 January 2014].

⁷ Ryan (2012), *T.A.G. or Triadic Proforma* [Online] Available: <www.pauljonathanryan.webspace.virginmedia.com/stand_alone_TAG_25.3.2012.doc> [08 January 2014].

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Resituating the Cultural Meanings of *Lucha Libre Mexicana*:

A Practice-Based Exploration of Diasporic Mexicanness

Marcela Montoya Ortega

Volume II

CATALOGUE OF WORK

Introduction

Shattered Identity (1)	3
Shattered Identity (2)	5

Chapter 1

Part 2. Practice-Based Inquiries Through the Mask	6
1.2.1 Xipe Totec and Tzompantli	7
1.2.2 Blue Demon Jr.	9
1.2.3 Wall of Masks	10
1.2.4 Flower and Song	12
1.2.5 Black Mask, White Thoughts	13

Chapter 2

Part 2a. Practice-Based Inquiries Echoes of La Maroma	15
2.2a.1 Angel of Liberty I and Angel of Liberty II	16
2.2a.2 Circo, Maroma y Teatro	18
2.2a.3 The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box	19
2.2a.4 Holds and Aerial Moves	20
Part 2b. Practice-Based Inquiries Contained Inside a Box	21
2.2b.1 Mythical Acrobatics	22
2.2b.2 Lucha Libre Seeds	23
2.2b.3 Buried	24
2.2b.4 Diaspora: Earth, Seeds and Blood	25

2.2b.5 Frankincense and Copal	26
Chapter 3	
Part 2. Practice-Based Inquiries Hues of the Passions	27
3.2.1 Time for Justice	28
3.2.2 Strategy of Fear	29
3.2.3 Cassandra	30
3.2.4 Mythologies	31
3.2.5 Tortured	32
Conclusion	
Ius Soli (1)	33
Ius Soli (2)	34
That Same Scream Again!	35
My Journey-Remembering the Dead-Chapel	36
DVD photographs of work 2008-2014	39
Appendix 2	40
Documentation of Through the Mask Exhibition	41
DVD Through the Mask Exhibition 2011	47
Documentation of In Memory Of Exhibition	48
DVD In Memory Of Viva Exhibition and Performance 2014	55

Introduction

Shattered Identity (1) (Montoya-Turnill) 2011, Spain. 4.83m x 2.38m

A site-specific piece created for Mojácar, Almería, Andalucía. It consists of a number of found sherds forming a face in the process of breaking. They are placed on a wooden surface covered with sand.



Shattered Identity (1), 2011 Image by David Gray



Shattered Identity (1), 2011 Image by David Gray

Shattered Identity (1) was exhibited in 2011 at the entrance of the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery, Mojácar. It was accompanied by two photographs taken by the English engineer and photographer, Gustavo Gillman, dating 1889 and 1900. They reflect the living conditions and poverty of farmers in Almería, Andalucía, which caused them to migrate to the Americas and elsewhere. The Spanish historian, Juan Grima, corroborated the historical setting for this installation by lending these photos and providing information about Mojácar's past. The surname "Montoya" is a very common one in the area of Mojácar being one of the founding families that arrived in the fifteenth century. The artist wonders when it was that her ancestor may have left the region to start a new life in the Americas.



Shattered Identity (2), 2014 Image by Sam Putera

Shattered Identity (2) was exhibited in 2014 in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London, as part of the viva exhibition *In Memory Of*. It was no longer the central piece of the exhibit but served as background to the problem of immigration by Mexicans caused by the “War on Drugs,” criminality, and lack of opportunity in the present day. It is in comparison to the immigration in the early 1900s of many Spaniards to the Americas.

Chapter 1

Part 2. Practice-Based Inquiries *Through the Mask*

1.2.1 Xipe Totec (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K. 1m x 1m
Painting – mixed media: oil, graphite, and sand on a wooden support.
Exhibited in 2009 at the open day studio at Wimbledon Art Studios, Wimbledon,
Greater London, U.K., and in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel
Art Gallery, Spain.



Xipe Totec, 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill

1.2.1 Tzompantli (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K. 1m x 1m
Painting – mixed media: oil and graphite on a wooden support. Exhibited in 2009 at the open day studios at Wimbledon Art Studios, Wimbledon, Greater London, U.K., and in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery, Spain.



Tzompantli, 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill

1.2.2 Blue Demon Jr. (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K. 1.10m x 1.10m
Painting – oil on linen. Exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Gallery in Spain.



Blue Demon Jr., 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill

1.2.3 Wall of Masks (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K. Measurement of each mask varies but the general surface for display should be 3m x 2m. It is an installation consisting of five masks that are inside out. Cords come from their eyes and mouths. They are placed on wooden supports. The masks and cords are of different materials. Exhibited in 2009 in the exhibition *Uncharted Stories* at the Triangle Space, Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, U.K. and in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery, Spain.



Wall of Masks, 2009 Image by Daniela Shephard



Wall of Masks, 2014 Image by Sam Putera

In 2014 **Wall of Masks** was exhibited at The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London, as part of the viva exhibition *In Memory Of*.

1.2.4 Flower and Song (Montoya-Turnill) 2011, Spain. 1.20m x 1.20m

It is a 3D piece – mixed media: nine lambskin masks mounted on a wooden support with a flowery background pattern painted in oil. The masks are interconnected by a number of different mobile phone cables that come in and out the orifices on the heads and mouths. It was exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery, Spain.



Flower and Song, 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill

1.2.5 Black Mask, White Thoughts (Montoya-Turnill) 2011, Spain, 72.5cms x 2m. A 3D interactive piece that consists of a central black leather mask on a wooden support painted with a flowery motif in red oil. From the head a number of cables come from various orifices and hold memory cards with recordings of the interviews with the Mexican wrestlers made in Mexico City during the 2009 fieldtrip.



Black Mask, White Thoughts, 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill



2011 Images by Ellen Turnill

There is an MP3 player with a set of headphones to listen to the recordings. It was exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Spain.

Chapter 2

Part 2a. Practice-Based Inquiries *Echoes of La Maroma*

2.2a.1 Angel of Liberty I (Montoya-Turnill) 2010, Spain. 1.10m x 1.30m
Painting – oil on linen. Exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Spain.



Angel of Liberty I, 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill

2.2a.1 Angel of Liberty II (Montoya-Turnill) 2010, Spain. 1.10m x 1.30m
Painting –oil and graphite on linen. Exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Spain.



Angel of Liberty II, 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill

2.2a.2 Circo, Maroma y Teatro (Montoya-Turnill) 2013, Spain. Diptych contained inside a silver box. Its lower surface measures: 24cms x 16cms x 6.5cms and the upper surface measures: 22.5cms x 14.5cms x 6.5cms. The paintings inside the box are in oil on wooden surfaces. It was exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



Circo, Maroma y Teatro, 2013 Images by David Gray

2.2a.3 The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box (Montoya-Turnill) 2013, Spain
Painting—mixed media, marble dust, gold leaf, white amate paper, khadi paper, and acrylic on a wooden support. It measures 30cms x 30cms. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box, 2013 Image by David Gray

2.2a.4 Holds and Aerial Moves (Montoya-Turnill) 2011, Spain. 30cms x 30cms
Painting—oil on a wooden support. Exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Spain.



Holds and Aerial Moves, 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill

Part 2b. Practice-Based Inquiries *Contained Inside a Box*

2.2b.1 Mythical Acrobatics (Montoya-Turnill) 2013, Spain. This piece consists of nine paper seeds inside a box and one paper seed outside this box. A wooden cigar box measuring: 19.7cms x 8cms x 7.7cms has been painted black and within are nine seeds. Inside the lid there is a small torn paper, part of the debris from the piece *Tortured*. In this piece one can make out the still visible words reading: Mythical acrobatics. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



Mythical Acrobatics, 2013 Image by David Gray

2.2b.2 Lucha Libre Seeds (Montoya-Turnill) 2013, Spain. This piece consists of six seeds and 2 lotus flower pods inside a wooden box that measures 28cms x17.5cms x 13.5cms. The pods have small round seeds made from printed material with images conveying symbols of Mexican identity including: *Frida Kahlo*, *Emiliano Zapata*, *The Virgin of Guadalupe*, *Subcomandante Marcos*, *The Day of the Dead*, and some *luchadores*. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



Lucha Libre Seeds, 2013 Image by David Gray

2.2b.3 Buried (Montoya-Turnill) July 2013, Sierra Cabrera Mountains, Southern Spain. Buried is a performative act that includes an assemblage, the act of climbing a mountain and the act of burying a box. The assemblage is a collection of *Lucha Libre* memorabilia and data gathered and placed inside a black tin box measuring 23.5cms x 22cms x 6.5cms. It contains: an unofficial *Lucha Libre* mask, a poster of *Lucha Libre London* that advertised the first performance of the luchadores in London, U.K., two unofficial plastic toy figures of *Cassandro* and *Blue Demon Jr.*, a *luchador* badge, and a small glass jar with message about *Lucha Libre Mexicana* and its performance in London in 2008.



Buried, 2013 Images by Maryce Moss-Montoya

2.2b.4 Diaspora: Earth, Seeds and Blood (Montoya-Turnill) 2013, Spain.
This artwork consist of a box measuring 7.3cms x 6cms x 2.6cms. It contains chilli seeds on the upper lid with some drops of my blood and soil from Frida Kahlo's museum and house in Coyoacán, Mexico in the lower lid. The box, made from olive wood, was found in a Spanish hardware store. The seeds, like the soil, come from Mexico. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London. It was also part of the 2014 Performance: *My Journey-Remembering the Dead-Chapel*, on that same day.



Diaspora: Earth, Seeds and Blood, 2013 Image by David Gray

2.2b.5 Frankincense and Copal (Montoya-Turnill) 2013. This assemblage is within a wooden box measuring: 18cms x 11cms x12cms. It is divided into two equal individual compartments with corresponding lids. Inside one of the compartments there is frankincense and a photocopy of a photograph of my mother when she was a girl. This printed-paper has gone through a process of transformation by scrunching it and tying it with paper string. It has become a seed. The second compartment has an amount of Mexican copal and the printed material is a portrait of *Emiliano Zapata*. It has also been transformed in the same way, becoming a seed. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



Frankincense and Copal, 2013 Image by David Gray

Chapter 3

Part 2. Practice-Based Inquiries *Hues of the Passions*

3.2.1 Time for Justice: 60,000 assassinated and 10,000 disappeared or silenced (Montoya-Turnill) 2012, Spain. This piece is a charcoal drawing on paper measuring 107cms x 152cms. This sustained drawing was done over many days of long periods of meticulous work. It contains 7,000 skulls engraved on the surface of the paper. Each of them stands for 100 people killed, tortured, disappeared or silenced since 2006 in Mexico due to organized crime, corruption at high levels of government, criminal groups and gangs, and the “War on Drugs”. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



Time for Justice, 2012 Image by Ellen Turnill

3.2.2 Strategy of Fear (Montoya-Turnill) 2012, Spain. This piece is a sustained drawing in the medium of charcoal on paper measuring 86cms x 61cms. In the drawing there are 135 figures that represent the social and political activists: #YoSoy132, *Anonymous*, *El Santo*, and a black swan. A hundred and thirty-five figures are etched into the surface of the paper before the drawing is worked to bring out a layered atmosphere. The silhouettes represent the facebook icons or profiles found in social networks. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



Strategy of Fear, 2012 Image by Ellen Turnill

3.2.3 **Cassandro** “*Bendita Lucha Libre nunca te acabes*” (“Blessed Lucha Libre never end”), (Montoya-Turnill) 2009, London, U.K. 1.10m x 1.10m. Painting – oil and graphite on linen. Exhibited in 2011 in the exhibition *Through the Mask* at Miguel Angel Art Gallery in Spain.



Cassandro, 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill

3.2.4 Mythologies— Smash 'N Slam Wrestlers (Montoya-Turnill) 2012, Spain. This piece is a sustained drawing done with charcoal and pencil on paper measuring 152cms x 123cms. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



Mythologies—Smash 'N Slam Wrestlers, 2012 Image by Ellen Turnill

3.2.5 Tortured (Montoya-Turnill) 2013, Spain. This piece consists of a small tin box containing ashes. It measures: 6.3cms x 3.4cms x 2.4cms. It is the result of a series of violent processes by which an A2 *Lucha Libre London* poster was transformed to become ashes. The repository for these ashes is a small Mexican tin box. Exhibited in 2014 in the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.



Tortured, 2013 Image by David Gray

Conclusion

Ius Soli (1) (Montoya-Turnill) 2011, Spain. Three bottles on a shelf (40cms x 45cms) containing: soil from Saint Paul's Cathedral in London, U.K., soil from Frida Kahlo's museum and house in Coyoacán, Mexico City, Mexico and soil from a mountain in Mojácar, Almería, in Andalucía, Southern Spain. This piece was exhibited at the exhibition *Through the Mask* in 2011 in Spain. This soil is from the three countries where Montoya-Turnill has lived and that have influenced her life and work.



Ius Soli (1), 2011 Image by Ellen Turnill



Ius Soli (2), 2014 Image by Cayetano H. Ríos

In 2014 **Ius Soli (2)** formed part of the installation and performance of the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London.

That Same Scream Again! (Montoya-Turnill) 2014, Mojácar, Spain. This artwork consists of the Mexican flag (143cms x 232cms) with forty-three prints of skulls and the word Ayotzinapa sewn at the bottom. Hemp fiber roots grow from each letter and fall to the floor. There are three containers underneath the flag with small flickering candles. It was the central piece of the viva exhibition *In Memory Of* in The Morgue of Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London that took place on 17th of November 2014. The area in which it hung was at the end of The Morgue, in shadow, and became an altar. It was also the central piece of the 2014 performance piece: *My Journey-Remembering the Dead-Chapel*.



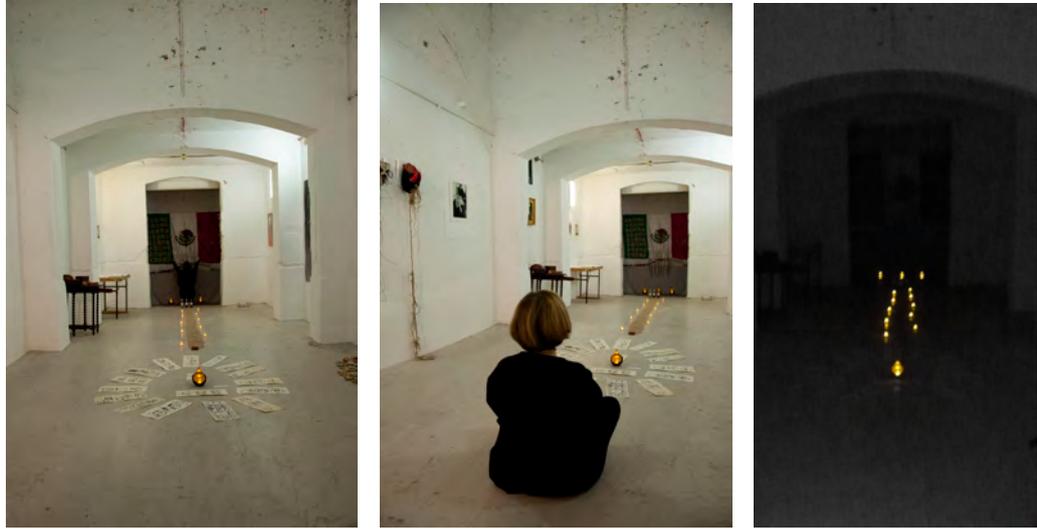
That Same Scream Again!, 2014 Image by Sam Putera

My Journey-Remembering the Dead-Chapel, 2014 Performance at The Morgue of Chelsea School of Arts, London, U.K.



My Journey, The Morgue, 2014 Images by Cayetano H. Ríos

The central piece was *That Same Scream Again!* Light diffusers and electric candles were used to create a subtle and spiritual atmosphere. At the beginning of the performance a blessing was given by the artist and priest, Regan O'Callaghan, to Montoya-Turnill. She knelt down in front of *La Dolorosa*, one of four photographs that constitute "How to Make a Paranoid Smile" (2007), from her MA dissertation exhibit and marking the beginning of the PhD project. The artist then took out *Diaspora* from the drawer of the table that had *Contained Inside a Box* artwork. She opened *Diaspora*, paused for a minute and reflected before beginning her journey. She placed *Diaspora* at the beginning of the narrow sand-path lit by flickering lights. The artist started her journey remembering the many people who have helped her and the terrible reality of the many people assassinated, tortured and silenced in Mexico. With every step taken, she remembered the dead and their suffering families and joined in their sadness with empathy and compassion. She knelt down in front of *Ius Soli*, remembering the three countries where she has lived and matured.



Remembering the Dead, 2014 Images by Cayetano H. Ríos

Chapel, 2014 Image by Keith Shephard

She arrived at the end of her journey to find the Mexican flag, symbol of Mexican nationhood. The Ayotzinapa students were represented by forty-three prints of skulls sewn on the flag. She knelt down, prayed for all the deceased and their families and kissed the symbolic roots nourished by their blood. She walked away from the area and sat at the entrance of the installation of the Chelsea Morgue space. Towards the end of the performance the lights were turned off leaving the small candles to light the pathway to the altarpiece of the Chapel.



Chapel, The Morgue, 2014 Image by Cayetano H. Ríos

This space, known as The Morgue, in Chelsea College of Arts was, in fact the morgue of the Royal Army Medical College (RAMC) from 1907 to 1999. During these years the College's most important role was research for medical advancement and scientific understanding. The morgue was the place used for the storage and preparation of the bodies for autopsies and final disposal.

During the exhibition *In Memory Of* and the performance, The Morgue was transformed and became a spiritual place to mourn, honour and remember the dead. This space, formerly dedicated to keeping the dead for scientific and material reasons, became spiritual and shrine-like through art and performance. For some time it was a place of release, catharsis and healing for the living among the spirits.

DVD Photographs of Work 2007-2014

VLC – VTS_01_1.VOB – 627.7MB

Music: ¡Echupalante! (2011), Sinuhé Padilla-Isunza, Jarana Beat

Photographs and Images: Cayetano H. Ríos, Trustees of the British Museum, David Gray, Ellen Turnill, Regan O’Callaghan, Daniela Shephard, and Marcela Montoya-Turnill, @eñ5anto (twitter.com), @el5antuario org (auctor.tv and hoylolo.com), and @congresopopular.org

Production: Marcela Montoya-Turnill (2014)

APPENDIX 2

Through the Mask Exhibition Invitation 2011



University of the Arts London

miguel ángel
GALERÍA DE ARTE

TRAFALGAR

**A TRAVÉS DE LA MÁSCARA
THROUGH THE MASK**

Marcela Montoya-Turnill
Inauguración: 18 de Noviembre, 19h
Del 19 de Noviembre al 31 de Diciembre de 2011

Caroline Menezes
Comisaria de la exposición

Y la participación de
Juan Grima y Cayetano H. Ríos

Pepe Tortosa – móvil: 625 125 728
Paseo del Mediterráneo, 469 Bajo
04638 Mojácar Playa, Almería, España
tlf: 950 399 575 e-mail: jotritoro@hotmail.com
Horario: Martes – Sábado de 10 a 14h y de 17 a 21h

Design (2011) by Fabrizio Poltronieri

A TRAVÉS DE LA MÁSCARA THROUGH THE MASK

Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Artist's Statement

Looking for better opportunities as an artist, I became an émigrée twenty-five years ago when I left my homeland, Mexico. The experience of becoming an immigrant was going to have great impact on me personally and as an artist. It has meant an experience of change, transformation and hybridity. The body of work in this exhibition is the result of my doctoral research that began in 2008 in London, U.K. A fundamental concern underlying this study is my attempt to reconnect with my culture and understand its influence on my work from the perspective of an artist of a diaspora. It is in large part of a search for authenticity reflecting on my experience of cultural translation and interaction that has resulted in my diasporic Mexican identity research. It is also a search for home: Where is home for me?

This practice-led interdisciplinary research project combines a variety of fields: anthropology, history, ethnography, theatre studies, cultural studies and fine art. For this exhibition a number of pieces have been selected to illustrate the interpretation of the selected icons of Mexicanness: the mask of the Mexican wrestler and the mask used in the pre-Columbian ritual to the god Xipe Totec. I also reflect on the experience of being an immigrant in the pieces: *Ius soli* and *Shattered Identity*. Being a "Montoya" these two pieces connect me with my Spanish heritage wondering when it was that my ancestor left Spain to begin a new life in the Americas.

The mask is the impetus of my research and work because for me it represents a threshold, a "liminal" object that helps me bridge the gap between the visible and the invisible and the present and the past. The mask marks the liminal state of transition between consciousness and the unconscious that is opened in the moment of creation or creative performance.

Jonathan Rutherford in his essay: *A Place Called Home*¹, recalls an interview with the American singer and actress Eartha Kitt (1927-2008). Rutherford says that in the interview she recounted her desperate historical predicament of being confronted by white racism as well as the rejection of the black community in which she grew up due to her own hybrid background. When asked where her home was she replied "Home is within me". (Rutherford, J.: 1990, p.24) As for Eartha Kitt, I believe that for me home is where I am, within me. As a diasporic artist I now find my home and belonging within a greater community called Humanity.

Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Artist researcher

¹ Rutherford, J. 1990 essay for Lawrence & Wishart 1989 "Changing Identities" event in London: A Place Called Home: Identity and Cultural Politics of Difference, p.24, in Rutherford, J. (ed.) (1990) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, London: Lawrence & Wishart. Rutherford heard this interview to Eartha Kitt on Radio 4, U.K.

Declaración del Artista

Buscando mejores oportunidades como artista, hace veinticinco años emigré dejando mi patria, México. La experiencia de convertirme en una inmigrante iba a dejar en mí una gran huella tanto como persona que como artista. Esto ha significado una experiencia de cambio, transformación e hibridismo. El trabajo presentado en esta exposición ha sido el resultado de mi investigación doctoral que empezó en el año 2008 en Londres, Reino Unido. Una fundamental preocupación de este estudio ha sido mi deseo de volver a conectarme con mi cultura y de esa forma entender la influencia que esto ha tenido en mi trabajo desde la perspectiva de una artista de la diáspora. En gran parte es una búsqueda de autenticidad reflexionando en mi experiencia de interpretación cultural y la interacción que ha habido como resultado de este proyecto de identidad y exilio cultural mexicano.

Este proyecto interdisciplinario de investigación basado en la práctica, combina varios campos como son: la antropología, la historia, la etnografía, los estudios de teatro, los estudios de cultura y las bellas artes. Para esta exposición un número de piezas ha sido seleccionado para mostrar la interpretación que se les ha dado a los signos de mexicanidad, que son: la máscara del luchador mexicano y la máscara que se usaba en el ritual pre-colombino del dios Xipe Tótec. Se reflexiona sobre la experiencia de ser inmigrante en las obras: *Ius soli* e *Identidad Destrozada*. Siendo de apellido "Montoya", estas dos piezas me conectan con mi herencia española y me pregunto: cuándo mi antepasado dejó España para empezar de nuevo su vida en el continente americano.

La máscara es el impetus de mi investigación porque para mí ella representa un umbral, un objeto liminal que ayuda a cruzar el portal que existe entre lo visible y lo invisible y el presente y el pasado. La máscara marca el estado liminal de transición entre la consciencia y el inconsciente que se abre en el momento de creación.

Jonathan Rutherford en su ensayo: *Un Lugar Llamado Hogar*², se acuerda de una entrevista que se le hizo a la cantante y actriz norteamericana Eartha Kitt (1927-2008). Rutherford dice que en la entrevista la cantante cuenta el desesperado predicamento que en su vida ella tuvo al ser víctima del racismo del blanco pero también la repulsión que le tuvieron en la comunidad negra donde ella creció, dado que ella era una mezcla de razas. Cuándo él le pregunta ¿en dónde consideraba que se encontraba su casa? Ella responde, "Mi hogar está donde yo me encuentre, dentro de mí." Al igual que Eartha Kitt, pienso que para mí, mi hogar está donde yo estoy, en mi interior. Como artista e inmigrante considero que ahora mi mundo se sitúa en una gran comunidad que se llama 'Humanidad'.

Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Artista investigadora

² Rutherford, J. 1990 escrito para Lawrence & Wishart 1989 "Identidades Cambiantes" evento que se llevó a cabo en Londres: Un Lugar Llamado Hogar: Identidad y Política Cultural y Diferencia, p. 24, en el libro de Rutherford, J. (ed.) (1990): *Identidad: Comunidad, Cultura y Diferencia*, Londres: Lawrence & Wishart. Rutherford escuchó esta entrevista en la Radio 4 en Inglaterra.

A TRAVÉS DE LA MÁSCARA THROUGH THE MASK

Marcela Montoya-Turnill

A mask reveals rather than disguises

Marcela Montoya-Turnill is an artist whose creativeness is related to her inner understanding of the world, her culture and personal trajectory and who is furthermore inspired by her environment. For this exhibition the mask's domain was chosen as its foremost subject. Marcela's investigation concerning the meanings behind the mask has lately played an important role in her artistic career. This curiosity to understand the significance, throughout ancient times to now-a-days, of this artifact designed to cover the human face has been carried through to her doctoral research. The mask also holds great importance in the Mexican culture that is Marcela's background.

During her studies, a theoretical statement proved to be an incontestable truth for Marcela: "A mask reveals rather than disguises". At its final destination, a mask can say much more about a character than could be perceived with the naked eyes.

Marcela's artworks, having the mask as an icon, explore this range of significations and bring fragments of Marcela's own experience and her multifaceted identity as a diasporic artist.

Drawing encounters

The origin of Marcela's practice resides in the primary traces that she draws on paper. She is an artist who understands that drawings are an immediate response to a thought. The lines give contours to the forms which dance in her mind. Marcela explains that when she is drawing, she is not only making marks on paper but also manipulating and exploring her artistic conceptions.

Marcela's drawings are as sophisticated as her entire artistic production. Although they are fast movements, as they were made to capture a moment or floating ideas, their lines and compositions are very precise. Her drawings are not 'studies', but as Marcela says they are a mechanism to understand "the object of study", in this case, the masks of ancient Mexico and the contemporary spectacle of *Lucha Libre Mexicana* (Mexican wrestling). From these, Marcela's first expressions with ink or pencil, derive all other types of medium, such as paintings and installations, artistic languages that Marcela masters to the concretization of her art.

The meetings with the *luchadores* or the search for the representations of the pre-Colombian god Xipe Totec receive a dramatic depiction in Marcela's paintings and sculptural work. They are a combination of an imaginative

gesture and the veracity that the artist grasps beyond, behind and "through the mask". Her paintings, with powerful colours, incorporate encoded symbols and allegorical elements, offering to the viewer the artist's version of reminiscent memories and what she has absorbed from her encounters. Possessing the same personal touch that she uses on canvas, Marcela's innovative three-dimensional pieces are created after experimenting with diverse materials looking to give tactile dimensions to what the mask exposes and conceals.

Furthermore, Marcela's artistic practice involves impressions gathered through conversations where she shares her vision of the world, while at the same time comprehending the world as seen by others. As it has already been mentioned she is a diasporic artist, happy to encounter another cultures and of course, other brilliant minds. This exhibition is strengthened by the collaborations of the photographer Cayetano H Ríos and the professor and historian Juan Grima. The first accompanied Marcela in her peregrination into the *Lucha Libre* circle and made instigating portraits of the fantastic characters that inhabit in the ring/stage. Likewise, Juan Grima corroborates with the historical setting for Marcela's installation *Shattered Identity*, a site specific work created especially for this exhibition. He has kindly lent a selection of photos taken by the English photographer Gustavo Gillman in Almeria between 1889 and 1922 that documents the region placed on display. Additionally, Juan Grima provided substantial information about Mojacar's past complementing with historical evidences what is pursued by Marcela in an artistic way.

Marcela's ancestors were both Spanish and Native American people from Mexico. After moving to Europe in the 1980s and living in England for decades she moved to Mojacar in 2009. Having Mojacar as her new home impelled her to look back to her Spanish roots, which she found are grounded in this part of the country. For this reason, Mojacar has been a place for intense production, where Marcela, who has reinvented her cultural identity by artistic means, extends her art practice to another territory of discovery

Caroline Menezes

Curator and researcher

¹ According to Roberta H. Markman & Peter T. Markman (1989), in *Masks of the Spirit, Image and Metaphor in Mesoamerica*, University of California Press

A TRAVÉS DE LA MÁSCARA THROUGH THE MASK

Marcela Montoya-Turnill

La máscara revela en vez de disfrazar

Marcela Montoya-Turnill es una artista cuya creatividad esta relacionada con el entendimiento de su mundo interno, su cultura y su trayectoria personal, que se inspira aún más del ambiente donde vive. Para esta exposición, el ámbito de la máscara ha sido escogido como el tema principal. La investigación de Marcela, concerniente al significado de lo que existe tras la máscara, ha jugado ultimamente un papel importante dentro de su carrera artística. Esta curiosidad por entender el significado que ha tenido la máscara desde la antigüedad hasta hoy en día, de este artefacto diseñado para cubrir la faz humana, lo ha venido desarrollando a lo largo de su investigación doctoral. Además la máscara tiene una gran importancia en la cultura mexicana que es de donde Marcela proviene.

En sus estudios, un planteamiento teórico llega a ser una verdad indiscutible para Marcela: "La máscara más bien revela que disfraza". En su destino final, la máscara puede decir mucho más del personaje que lo que se puede alcanzar a percibir con los ojos.

El trabajo artístico de Marcela, teniendo como símbolo la máscara, explora toda esta gran variedad de significados que traen fragmentos de las experiencias mismas de Marcela y su multifacética como artista de una diáspora.

Encuentros con el Dibujo

El origen de la práctica artística de Marcela reside en los primeros trazos que ella dibuja sobre el papel. Es una artista que entiende que los dibujos son una respuesta inmediata a un pensamiento. Las líneas dan contorno a las formas que bailan en su mente. Marcela nos da a entender que cuando ella esta dibujando, no solamente se trata de hacer líneas en el papel, sino también de manipularlo y así explorar sus concepciones artísticas.

Los dibujos de Marcela son tan sofisticados como toda su producción artística. Aunque sean trazos muy rápidos, ya que se han hecho para captar un momento o una idea flotante, sus líneas y composiciones son exactas. Sus dibujos nos son solamente "estudios", sino como Marcela dice, son un mecanismo para entender "el objeto que se estudia", que en este caso son las máscaras del Mexico Pre-colombino y el espectáculo contemporáneo de La Lucha Libre Mexicana. A partir de estos dibujos y de las primeras impresiones de Marcela hechas en tinta o lápiz, se derivan todos los demás tipos de medios de expresión, tal como sus pinturas e instalaciones, lenguaje artístico que Marcela domina hasta llegar a la concretización de su arte.

Las entrevistas y encuentros con los luchadores o la búsqueda de representaciones del dios pre-colombino Xipe Tótec reciben una representación dramática en la pintura y en el trabajo escultórico de Marcela. Son la

combinación del gesto imaginario y la veracidad que el artista capta más allá, tras y "a través de la máscara". Sus pinturas, con poderosos colores, símbolos codificados incluidos y elementos alegóricos, ofreciéndole al espectador la versión del artista aludiendo al recuerdo y a lo que ella ha absorbido de sus encuentros. Teniendo el mismo toque personal que usa en sus lienzos, las innovadoras piezas tridimensionales son creadas después de experimentar con diversos materiales, tratando de ofrecer formas táctiles de lo que la máscara significa y esconde.

Más aún, la práctica artística de Marcela contiene impresiones recogidas a través de conversaciones, donde ella comparte su visión del mundo, mientras que al mismo tiempo entiende el mundo visto por otros. Como ya se ha mencionado, ella es una artista de una diáspora, abierta al encuentro de otras culturas y claro, a otras mentes brillantes. Esta exposición se ha fortalecido con las colaboraciones del fotógrafo Cayetano H. Rios y el profesor e historiador Juan Grima. El primero la acompañó en su peregrinación hacia el centro de la lucha Libre y creó retratos instigadores de los fantásticos personajes que habitan en el ring y el escenario. De igual manera, Juan Grima corrobora con el escenario histórico para la instalación de Marcela: *Identidad Destrozada*, un trabajo creado específicamente para el lugar y esta exposición. Él ha prestado una selección de fotografías tomadas por el fotógrafo inglés Gustavo Gillman en Almería entre 1889 y 1922 y que documentan la región aquí expuesta en la obra. Adicionalmente Juan Grima ha dado información veraz y amplia sobre el pasado de Mojácar, complementando con evidencia histórica lo que Marcela busca de manera artística.

Los antepasados de Marcela fueron españoles y nativos americanos de México. En 1980, después de haberse trasladado a Europa y de haber vivido en Inglaterra durante dos décadas, se traslada a vivir en Mojácar en 2009. Teniendo en este bonito pueblo mediterráneo como su nuevo hogar, ello la lleva a mirar hacia atrás y buscar sus raíces españolas las cuales ha encontrado en esta parte del país. Por esta razón, Mojácar ha sido un lugar de producción intensa, donde Marcela ha reinventado su identidad cultural a través de medios artísticos, extendiendo su práctica artística hasta este otro territorio creativo.

Caroline Menezes

Comisaria y investigadora

² Según Roberta H. Markman y Peter T. Markman (1989), en *Mascaras del Espíritu, imagen y metáfora en Mesoamérica*, publicado por University of California Press

A TRAVÉS DE LA MÁSCARA THROUGH THE MASK

Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Cortijos and Pottery

Anyone who has walked in our fields and mountains has seen small “cortijos” or farms, with half-fallen walls or completely destroyed that had their living existence between approximately 1870 and 1930. They were constructed by small owners or tenant farmers to work the dry land, conquered with great effort from the mountains using stone embankments to take advantage of the little rain water there was.

This farming economy was not enough in a time when families had between four to twelve children (demographic explosion). The father and the elder sons worked in the Cuevas and Bedar mines for day’s wages in the landowners’ lands, but receiving starvation wages. Other times during periods of many months they would go to the “Andalucías” to harvest or they would embark for the Oranesado of Algeria to work in “las matas” (plantations) or in the mines.

Any small amount of gain and farm of these miserable outcasts had been the product of tremendous family effort, of years of uninterrupted work from sunrise to sunset almost as slave labour. And more.

Nevertheless, the mines ended by shutting down, the temporal migration to Algeria stopped and the prolonged draughts finished bankrupting this social strata of workers and small owners who were left no option but to think of leaving to work in the Americas. The most chosen countries were: Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Cuba and the United States. But to pay for this trip, that lasted almost a month, the head of the family had to support himself and some older son while they found an adequate job on the other side of the ocean. Considerable amounts of money were necessary that they almost never had. Therefore they had to go to the local political boss or money lender whom they knew would deliver the money at a high interest rate (20 or 25% annual interest base), payment that was known as “gabela” or “burden”. Nonetheless, in exchange for this sum of money, the lender demanded as a guarantee their small “cortijo” or the little land the family owned, making a sales deed (privately signed agreement) in case that in the end, they couldn’t settle their debt.

On many occasions, life in America was not as they had hoped it would be, and they couldn’t save enough. Then shame would come, the loss of everything. The lender would judicially evict the family and take control of their property for non-payment of the loan. The family couldn’t take anything out of the “cortijo,” only their personal clothing and little more. For this reason many times they preferred to break or destroy all their household ceramics before the lender took advantage of these things: large jars and pots, glazed earthenware bowls, pitchers, jugs, plates, cups, etc.

And this is what Marcela Montoya has found in her trips to these ghostly “cortijos” and the nearly certain reason that these sherds of domestic pottery appear piled up and shattered in great quantities.

Juan Grima Cervantes

Historian

Cortijos y Cerámica

Cualquier persona que haya andado por nuestros montes y campos habrá visto cortijos de pequeño tamaño, con las paredes a medio caer o completamente derruidos que tuvieron vida propia entre los años 1870 y 1930 aproximadamente. Fueron construidos por pequeños propietarios o por aparceros para trabajar terrenos de secano, conquistados a las montañas con gran esfuerzo, realizando ribazos de piedra para aprovechar la poca agua que llovía.

Esta economía agrícola era insuficiente en un momento en que las familias tenían entre cuatro y doce hijos (explosión demográfica). El padre y los hijos mayores trabajaban en las minas de Cuevas o de Bédar y a jornal en las tierras de los terratenientes, pero con salarios de hambre. Otras veces durante periodos de varios meses se iban a las “Andalucías” a hacer la siega, o se embarcaban hacia el Oranesado de Argelia a trabajar en “las matas” o en las minas.

Cualquier pequeña explotación y cortijo de estos míseros parias había sido fruto de un enorme esfuerzo familiar, de trabajos interrumpidos durante años de sol a sol casi en régimen de esclavitud. Y más.

No obstante, las minas acabaron cerrándose, la emigración temporal a Argelia cesó y las sequías prolongadas acabaron arruinando a esta capa social de jornaleros y pequeños propietarios, a los que no les quedó más remedio que pensar en irse a trabajar a América. Los países más elegidos fueron Argentina, Uruguay, Brasil, Cuba y Estados Unidos. Pero para pagar el viaje, que duraba casi un mes, y para mantenerse el cabeza de familia y algún hijo mayor mientras se encontraba un trabajo adecuado allende del océano se precisaba de un importante capital que casi nunca se tenía. Entonces se dirigían a un cacique local o prestamista al que conocían que les entregaba el dinero a un alto interés (en torno al 20 ó 25 % anual), pago al que se conocía como “gabela”. Sin embargo, a cambio de esa suma el prestamista exigía como garantía el pequeño cortijo o las pocas tierras que poseía la familia, haciendo una escritura de venta (documento privado firmado) para el caso de que, al final, no se pudiera saldar la deuda.

En muchas ocasiones la vida en América no fue como se esperaba y no se pudo ahorrar lo suficiente. Entonces venía la vergüenza, la pérdida de todo. El prestamista desalojaba judicialmente a la familia y se apoderaba de los bienes por incumplimiento del pago del préstamo. La familia no podía sacar nada del cortijo, sólo las ropas personales y poco más. Por eso muchas veces prefirieron romper y destrozarse todo su menaje de cerámica antes de que se aprovechara del mismo el prestamista: tinajas, lebrillos, cántaros, jarras, platos, tazas, etc.

Y eso es lo que ha encontrado Marcela Montoya en sus excursiones por estos cortijos fantasmas y la causa casi segura de que aparezcan amontonadas y fragmentadas grandes cantidades de cerámica doméstica.

Juan Grima Cervantes

Historiador



miguel ángel



A TRAVÉS DE LA MÁSCARA THROUGH THE MASK

Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Marcela Montoya-Turnill (Ocotlan, Jalisco, Mexico). Artist researcher

As a lecturer she has given art master classes to MA students at Kingston University and at The University of the Creative Arts (UCA), London, U.K. She has collaborated in art projects, installations and forums with artists, academics and curators in the U.K.: Art Amen & Silent Space (2008-2010), Uncharted Stories (2009), Hew Locke's The Kingdom of the Blind, INIVA (2008), The Big Draw, Jerwood Space (2007) and Transference, How to Make a Paranoid Smile (2007). As an artist she has participated in group shows in Mexico, Spain and U.K.: The Triangle Space, U.K. (2009), WallSpace, (2009), U.K., The Mall Galleries, (2000 & 2008) London, U.K., Wimbledon Open Art Studios (2007-2009), MA Degree Show (2007), Bargehouse, Oxo Tower, London, U.K., Paolozzi Gallery (2000-2008), U.K., Celadon Gallery (2000), London, U.K., Aragon Gallery (1998), U.K., Riverside Gallery (1997), U.K., Casa Latinoamericana (1996), U.K., Estol Gallery (1987), Barcelona, Spain, Proteus Gallery (1985), Mexico and Dr. Atl Gallery (1983-1985) Mexico.

She has been short listed in the U.K. for: Sue Ryder Care's Art Liberating Lives (2008), London, The National Open Art Competition (2008), Chichester, Jerwood Drawing Prize 2007, U.K. (touring exhibition: Jerwood Space, London, Pitville Gallery, Cheltenham, Mackintosh Gallery, Glasgow School, Scotland, Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, Bay Art, Cardiff and Hatton Gallery, Newcastle), Mono 93, Watermans Arts Centre, and in Mexico: V Encuentro Nacional de Arte Joven, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico city. Solo exhibitions in the U.K.: Fiesta Mexicana '92, Kensington, Aragon Gallery, London (1997), Old Town Hall Exhibition, Richmond (1991).

She got her Art Degree from: Escuela Nacional de Escultura, Pintura y Grabado "La Esmeralda" (1980-1985), Mexico city, Mexico. She holds an MA in Drawing as Practice from Kingston University and is currently studying a Practice-led PhD Research at The University of the Arts London and Transnational Art, Identity and Nation Research Centre (TrAN).

Caroline Menezes (Rio de Janeiro, Brasil). Curator and art critic.

Her articles have been published in Brazil and United Kingdom, including by the British art magazine Studio International for whom she is an art correspondent since 2006. As a curator, in 2008 she was the Assistant Director of the University of Essex Collection of Latin America and curated the exhibition 'Landscapes in Perspective', Gallery 32, London. In 2009, was a Visiting Lecturer at the MA Transnational Art where she coordinated the Graduation Show at Camberwell College of Arts, London. In the same year, she was part of the production team at the VII Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil, and was the assistant curator of 'Neoconcrete Experience' exhibition, at Gallery 32. From 2010 to 2011 she worked as an art writer for the British Council publications regarding the art exchange between Latin America and the UK. She holds a MA in Art History from the University of Sussex and is currently a PhD student at the University of the Arts London, at the Research Centre of Transnational Art, Identity & Nation (TrAN).

Juan Grima Cervantes (Turre, Almería, Spain). Historian, academic and writer.

Professor of geography and history on sabbatical from I.E.S. Alyanub de Vera; coordinator of Axarquía journal, director of Almansura journal; founding member of the Spanish Society of the History of Archaeology (SEHA – Sociedad Española de Historia de la Arqueología) and of publications of the Achaia journal; academican of the Royal Fine Arts Academy of Granada (Real Academia de Bellas Artes); member of the Provincial Diputation's Institute of Almerian Studies. He has coordinated and directed five summer programmes in the Computense University. As a historian he has published about twenty books and more than sixty research articles. He is presently president of Arraez Editorial, and more than 300 titles have been published to date.

Cayetano H. Ríos (Granada, Spain). Photographer.

BA Hons University of West London in Applied Language Studies and ethnography (1992-1996). During the next two years he developed new tourist destinations in South East Asia for different tour operators in the United Kingdom. During this time, he undertook a postgraduate in Secondary Education in King's College, London. In 2005, he was discovered as a photographer for his work in Kew Gardens and his approach to colour and form (The Gender of Flowers), and received his first photographic accolade in 2006 during the photographic competition organized by Richmond Council in association with Kew Botanical Garden. In 2007 he finished a postgraduate degree in photography at the London School of Printing (University of the Arts London).

His work has been selected and awarded in several occasions including the Travel Photographer of the Year (2006) and the Al-Thani Award for Photography (2008). His works include studies on ethno-cultural and identity issues in the Americas, India, Europe and recently in Africa.

Marcela Montoya-Turnill (Ocotlán, Jalisco, México). Artista investigadora.

Como profesora ha dado cursos en arte a alumnos de posgrado en la Universidad de Kingston y en la Universidad de Las Artes Creativas (UCA) en el Reino Unido. Ella ha colaborado en los siguientes proyectos de arte, instalaciones y foros con artistas, académicos y comisarios en el Reino Unido: Arte Amén y Silent Space (Espacio Silencioso) (2008-2010), Uncharted Stories (Historias Inexploradas) (2009), "The Kingdom of the Blind" (El Reino de los Ciegos) del artista Hew Locke, INIVA (2008), The Big Draw (El Gran Dibujo), Jerwood Space (Espacio Jerwood) (2007) y "Transferencia, cómo hacer para que un paranoico sonría." (2007). Como artista ha participado en exposiciones colectivas en Inglaterra en el Triangle Space (2009), WallSpace, (2009), Galerías Mall (2000 & 2008), Wimbledon Open Art Studios (2007-2009), MA Degree Show, Bargehouse, Oxo Tower (2007), Galería Paolozzi (2000-2008) Galería Celadon (2000), Galería Aragon (1998), Galería Riverside (1997), Casa Latinoamericana (1996). En Barcelona, España en la Galería Estol (1987). En México en la Galería Proteus (1985) y la Galería Dr. Atl (1983-1985).

A sido seleccionada en estos certámenes de Arte: Sue Ryder Care's Art Liberating Lives (2008), Londres, Reino Unido, The National Open Art Competition (2008), Chichester, Reino Unido, Jerwood Drawing Prize 2007, U.K. (exposición itinerante por el Reino Unido que estuvo en el Jerwood Space en Londres, la Galería Pitville en Cheltenham, la Galería Mackintosh de la Escuela de Arte de Glasgow en Escocia, en La Royal West Academy de Inglaterra en Bristol, en Bay Art en Cardiff y en la Galería Hatton en Newcastle), Mono 93, Centro de Arte Watermans, Reino Unido, V Encuentro Nacional de Arte Joven, Palacio de Bellas Artes, ciudad de México, México. Exposiciones individuales: Fiesta Mexicana '92, Kensington, U.K., Galería Aragon. Londres (1997), Reino Unido, Old Town Hall, Richmond (1991), Reino Unido.

Curso su licenciatura en Artes Plásticas en la: Escuela Nacional de Escultura, Pintura y Grabado "La Esmeralda" (1980-1985), en la ciudad de México, México. Tiene un master en Dibujo como Proceso por la Universidad de Kingston en el Reino Unido. Actualmente es doctoranda en Arte e Investigación en la Universidad de las Artes en Londres y del Centro de Investigación de Arte Transnacional, Identidad y Nación (TrAN).

Caroline Menezes (Rio de Janeiro, Brasil). Comisaria y Crítico de Arte.

Sus artículos han sido publicados en Brasil y en el Reino Unido, que incluyen a la revista británica de Arte "Studio International" para la cual ha sido corresponsal desde 2006. En su trabajo como comisaria desde 2008 ha tenido el puesto de Directora Asistente de la Colección de Latinoamérica en la Universidad de Essex y ha sido comisaria de la exposición "Landscapes in Perspective" (Paisajes en Perspectiva), en la Galería 32, en Londres. En 2009 fue visitante académico, profesora invitada del programa de "MA Transnational Art" donde coordinó la exposición Final de graduados de posgrado de Camberwell College of Arts en Londres. En ese mismo año, fue parte del equipo de producción de la VII Bienal de Mercosul, en Porto Alegre, Brasil, y fue la comisaria asistente de la exposición "Neoconcrete Experience" (Experiencia Neoconcreta) en la Galería 32. De 2010 al 2011 trabajó como escritora de arte para las publicaciones del Consejo Británico correspondientes al intercambio de arte entre Latinoamérica y el Reino Unido. Ella tiene un master en Historia por la Universidad de Sussex y actualmente es doctoranda en la Universidad de las Artes en Londres y del Centro de Investigación de Arte Transnacional, Identidad y Nación (TrAN).

Juan Grima Cervantes (Turre, Almería, España). Académico, historiador y escritor.

Es profesor en excedencia de Geografía e Historia en el I.E.S. Alyanub de Vera; coordinador de la Revista Axarquía, director de la Revista Almansura; miembro fundador de la Sociedad Española de Historia de la Arqueología (SEHA) y vocal de publicaciones de la Revista Achaia; académico correspondiente de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de Granada; miembro del Instituto de Estudios Almerienses de la Diputación Provincial. Ha coordinado y dirigido cinco Cursos de Verano de la Universidad Computense. Como historiador ha publicado una veintena de libros y más de sesenta artículos de investigación. En la actualidad es presidente de la editorial Arraez, con mas de 300 títulos editados hasta el día.

Cayetano H. Ríos (Granada, España). Fotógrafo.

cursó su licenciatura en lingüística aplicada (ruso e inglés) y estudios etnográficos en la University of West London (1992-1996). A continuación pasó un par de años desarrollando nuevos destinos turísticos en el sudeste asiático para distintos turoperadores en el Reino Unido. Durante este tiempo, también realizó estudios de posgrado en enseñanza secundaria en King's College, London. En 2005, fue descubierto como fotógrafo por su trabajo en el Jardín Botánico de Londres (Kew Gardens) por su visión del color y la forma (The Gender of Flowers) y recibe su primer premio de fotografía en 2006 durante el certamen fotográfico organizado por el Ayuntamiento de Richmond en asociación con el Jardín Botánico de Kew. 2007 es el año en el que realiza sus estudios de posgrado en fotografía en el London School of Printing (University of the Arts London).

Su trabajo ha sido seleccionado y galardonado en varias ocasiones entre las que se encuentran Travel Photographer of the Year (2006) y The Al-Thani Award for Photography (2008). Sus trabajos incluyen estudios etno-culturales y de identidad en América, India, Europa y recientemente en África.

DVD Through the Mask Exhibition 2011

VLC – Part 1: VTS_01_1-VOB – 753.3MB

Parts 2 and 3: VTS_02_1.VOB – 926.9MB

Camera and production: David Gray (2012)

In Memory Of Viva Exhibition Invitation

University of the Arts London

Exhibition at “The Morgue” CLG10
Chelsea College of Arts & TrAIN
In conjunction with doctoral thesis viva voce.

17th November 2014

Marcela Montoya Ortega/Marcela Montoya-Turnill

‘In Memory Of’



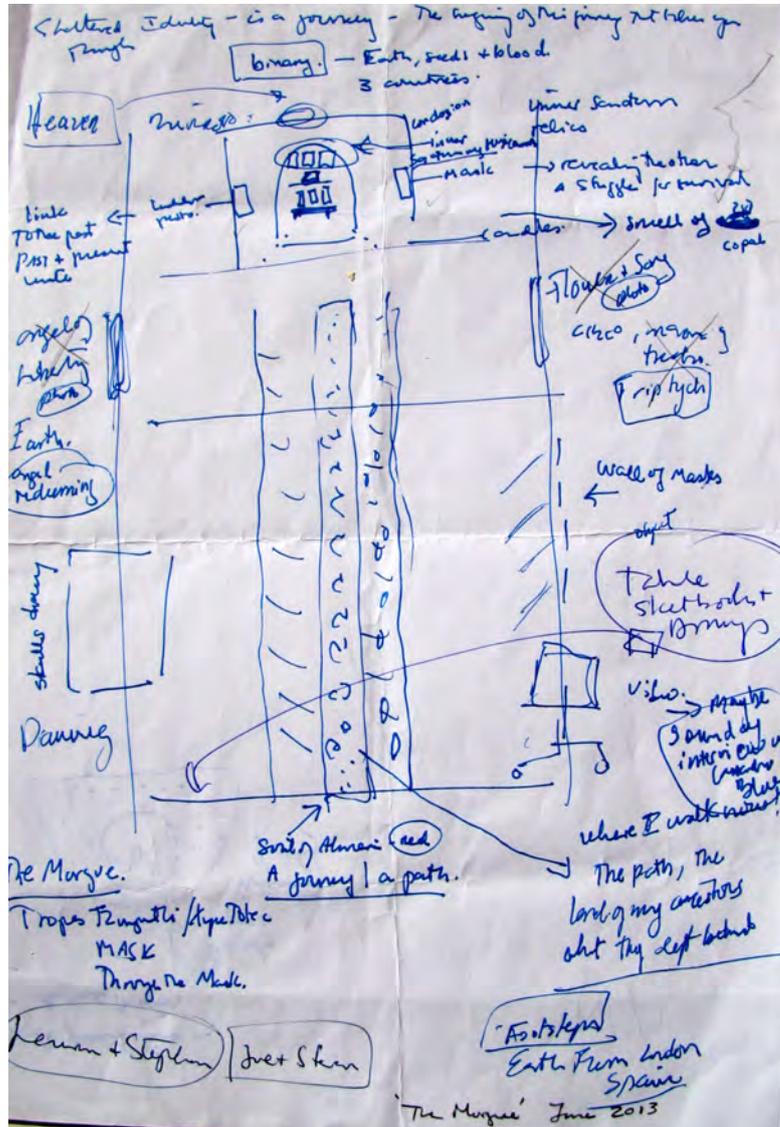
“Today from Guerrero we hear that same scream again.”

Javier Sicilia 15/10/2014, Cuernavaca, Mexico¹

This exhibition is dedicated to the forty-three students of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College, in the Mexican state of Guerrero, who disappeared on the 26th of September 2014.

¹ Javier Sicilia in an interview for *El País* newspaper, Inés Santaaulalia's article: *El PRI creyó que podría administrar el infierno*, 19th October 2014. Sicilia is a Mexican poet and founder of “Movimiento por la Paz” (Movement for Peace).

2013 Planning Diagram for Viva Exhibition at The Chelsea Morgue



Installation in the Chelsea Morgue space 2014



In Memory Of Exhibition 2014, Image by Sam Putera



In Memory Of Drawings, 2014 Image by Cayetano H. Ríos



Drawings and Sketchbook, and Xipe Totec Mask Drawings, 2014 Images by Sam Putera



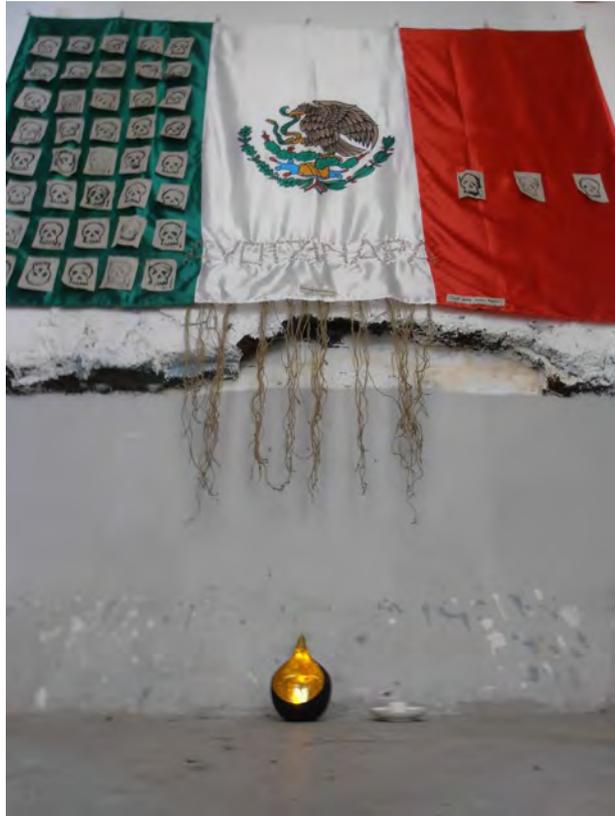
Contained Inside a Box, 2014 Image by Sam Putera



The Boy Who Dreamt Outside the Box, 2014
Image by Cayetano H. Ríos



Installation at The Morgue and Ius Soli, 2014 Images by Sam Putera



That Same Scream Again!, 2014 Image by Regan O'Callaghan



Mythologies—Smash 'N Slam Wrestlers (to the far right), 2014 Image by Cayetano H. Ríos



Shattered Identity and Time for Justice, 2014 Images by Cayetano H. Ríos



Chapel, 2014 Image by Cayetano H. Ríos

DVD In Memory Of Viva Exhibition and Performance 2014

VLC – VTS_01_1.VOB – 207.6MB

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdHUmJPXwUM&list=PLdUtRkRtXguAspDj2C9T8bsiB_hiQcd7C&index=1 - Published on 13 January 2015.

Music: Ravi Ramoneda

Camera: Regan O'Callaghan

Photography: Cayetano H. Ríos

Art and Performance: Marcela Montoya-Turnill

Production: Jesica V. Sánchez (2015)