

JORDAN SCHNITZER **MUSEUM OF ART**

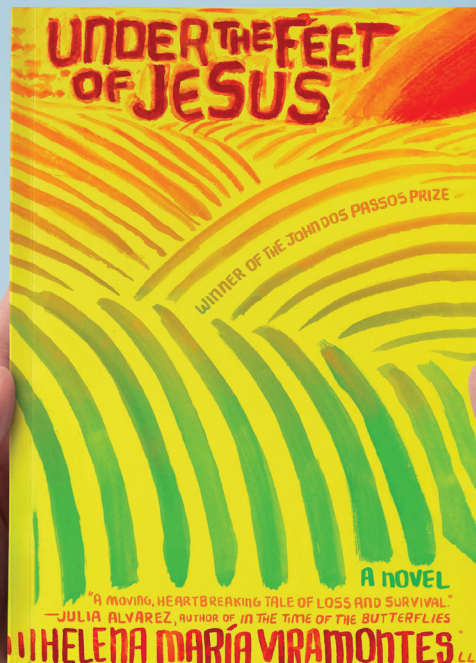
VISITOR'S GUIDE

RESISTANCE AS POWER:

A Curatorial Response to *Under the Feet of Jesus*

September 7, 2019 - February 23, 2020

All quotes by Helena María Viramontes from her novel *Under the Feet of Jesus*



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A Curatorial Response to *Under the Feet of Jesus*



Emanuel Martinez. **Farm Workers' Altar**, 1967. Acrylic on mahogany and plywood.
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the International Bank of Commerce in honor of
Antonio R. Sanchez, Sr.; 1992:95

Common Reading at UO is a year of conversation around a shared book. This academic year, all first-year students will receive *Under the Feet of Jesus*, a 1995 novel by Helena María Viramontes. Faculty will use this story about the vivid world and difficult lives of migrant farmworkers in California to teach a variety of topics ranging from farm labor policies and access to quality health care and material resources, to food justice and environmental racism. The title of the book refers to the act of placing important documents, including birth certificates, beneath a portable religious statue each time the protagonist's family arrives at a new migrant work camp. More information about the Common Reading, including upcoming university events, is available at commonreading.uoregon.edu.

To complement the Common Reading, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) presents its fourth annual **Common Seeing**, an exhibition that expands upon these themes and supports cross-cultural understanding. Five artists in the exhibition grew up in migrant worker families in California and the Midwest. JSMA curators Cheryl Hartup and Danielle Knapp developed the checklist in response to conversations with faculty members from the Latinx Scholars Academic Residential Community Stakeholders Group; Julie Voelker-Morris, Faculty Fellow, Common Reading Program; and other members of the university community.

Two special loans from the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) by artists Emanuel Martinez and Domingo Ulloa provide historical and cultural touchstones for the book and for contemporary works from the JSMA's permanent collection. On exhibit for the first time are recent acquisitions of works by V. Maldonado and Lilliam Nieves. Also on view are two etchings by Ashland-based artist Betty LaDuke and a special loan by the late sculptor and painter Rubén Trejo. Ester Hernández's iconic **Sun Mad** starkly contrasts the familiar scene of a smiling young woman on raisin boxes, an image Viramontes' protagonist reflects upon while harvesting grapes under a mighty white sun.

Resistance as Power: A Curatorial Response to *Under the Feet of Jesus* is one in a series of American art exhibitions created through a multi-year, multi-institutional partnership formed by the Smithsonian American Art Museum as part of the Art Bridges + Terra Foundation Initiative.

“Under the roof of the bungalow, Petra thought of the lima bean in her, the bean floating in the night of her belly, bursting a root with each breath. Would the child be born without a mouth, would the poisons of the fields harden in its tiny little veins?” p. 125



Betty LaDuke (American, b. 1933)
Latin America, Seeds of Unrest, 1983
Colored etching, edition 4/12
Gift of Betty LaDuke; SC2014:12.16



Betty LaDuke, 2017. Courtesy Photo/Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art.

For over six decades, Betty LaDuke's art has addressed social justice, sustainability and shared humanity. She has travelled extensively in Mexico, Central and South America, Asia and Africa, sketching the lives and struggles of people and recording oral histories that inform her prints, paintings, and sculptures. LaDuke states, "I'm a social activist in that my work is for educational purposes—it's displayed in museums and nonprofits and universities. Art is meant to be enjoyed aesthetically, but it should also bring forth questions." (*Willamette*, the magazine of Willamette University, Fall 2017, p. 23)

What do the birds and feathered beings in **Latin America, Seeds of Unrest** communicate to you? How would you describe the expressions on their faces? How does the artist's colored-etching depict unrest? Point to other seeds of unrest in the exhibition and share what you think they will become in the future. What seeds of unrest do you see and feel around you?

"If we don't take care of each other, who would take care of us? Petra asked. We have to look out for our own." p. 96.

"Petra took care of Alejo, not because of who he was, but because she was a mother too, and if Estrella was sick, or Ricky and Arnulfo were sick in the piscas, she would want someone to take care of them. And of course, she did it for the love of God." p. 124.



Betty LaDuke (American, b. 1933)
Tree of Life #21, Mother Courage, Nunca Más, 1986
Colored etching, edition 1/12
Gift of Betty LaDuke; SC2014:12.13



Mexican Tree of Life clay sculpture from
Izucar de Matamoros, Puebla, Mexico

Folk art frequently influences the style and imagery of Betty LaDuke's work. This print is part of the artist's "Tree of Life" series. Mexican Tree of Life sculptures, first made in the 1920s in Izucar de Matamoros, Puebla, Mexico, traditionally depict the biblical Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, the Serpent, and the Archangel Gabriel at their base. What does LaDuke's **Tree of Life #21, Mother Courage, Nunca Más** have in common with a traditional Mexican Tree of Life clay sculpture, like the one pictured here? Describe the expressions on the faces in LaDuke's **Tree of Life** print. How do they compare to the facial expressions in **Latin America, Seeds of Unrest** exhibited beside it? Why does the artist reference birds in both works? How does LaDuke communicate courage in this print and why do you think she included the phrase "nunca más" or "never again" in the title?

“He wheezed and almost fell, and if it wasn’t for the fact that he was determined not to fall, he would have tumbled like the ripe peaches hitting the ground with a hard thud. His body swung forward and he caught himself by hitching on to a branch and he scratched his face against a mesh of leaves. As the rotary motor of the biplane approached again, he closed his eyes and imagined sinking into the tar pits.” pp.77-78.



V. Maldonado (American, b. 1976)

The Fallen, 2018

Acrylic on canvas

This work was acquired with the assistance of The Ford Family Foundation through a special grant program managed by the Oregon Arts Commission;

2019:22.1

Describe a time when you simultaneously felt visible and invisible, heroic and knocked off your feet. In **The Fallen**, Maldonado presents each *lucha libre* figure differently through line, shape, color, scale, and perspective. What does each representation communicate to you? How does the artist’s use of color shape your interpretation of **The Fallen**?



From 2013 to 2015, V. Maldonado (they, them, theirs) donned the masks of the most famous Mexican lucha libre wrestlers—El Santo (1917-84) and El Demonio Azul (1922-2000)—and they became Macho Libre or Mad Mex, two alter egos spending time at home and out and about in Portland, Oregon, as well as at the state's coast and mountains. Maldonado had recently become a U.S. citizen, after living in the United States for thirty-eight years. This experience caused them to confront and embrace latent fears and to contemplate the meaning of freedom. **The Fallen** is perhaps the culmination of their investigation of the subject of masked lucha libre wrestlers.

V. Maldonado (<https://pnca.edu/faculty/meet/vmaldonado>).



V. Maldonado. **Washed Up**, 2014. Digital pigment print. Edition of 5. 19 ½ x 25 ½ in. Courtesy of Froelick Gallery.

“Estrella’s eyes sting like an onion, and the baskets of grapes resisted her muscles, pulling their magnetic weight back to the earth. The woman with the red bonnet did not know this. Her knees did not sink in the hot white soil, and she did not know how to pour the baskets of grapes inside the frame gently and spread the bunches evenly on top of the newsprint paper. She did not remove the frame, straighten her creaking knees, the bend of her back, set down another sheet of newsprint paper, reset the frame, then return to the pisca again with the empty basket, row after row, sun after sun. The woman’s bonnet would be as useless as Estrella’s own straw hat under a white sun so mighty, it toasted the green grapes to black raisins.” p. 50.

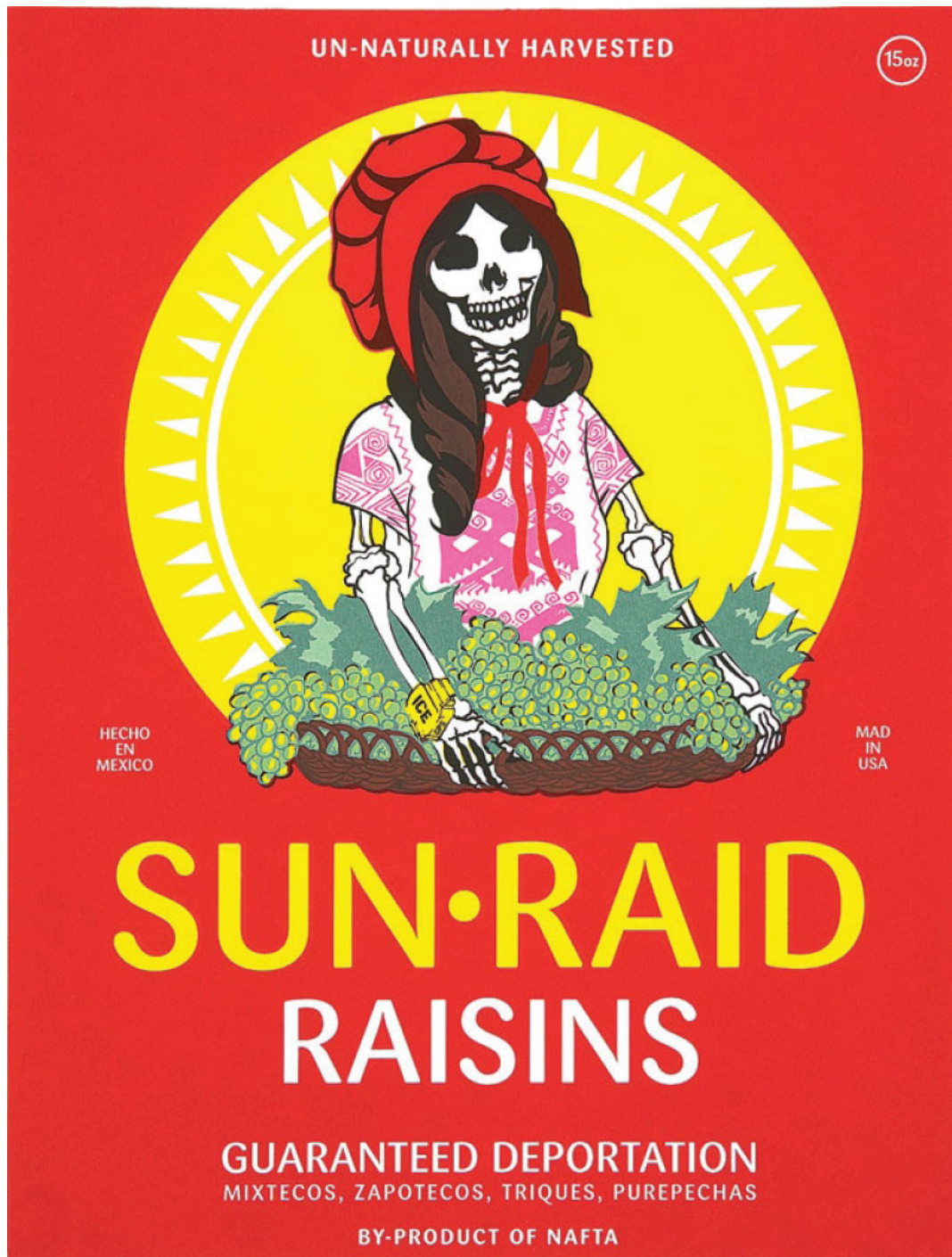


Ester Hernández (Chicana of Yaqui and Mexican heritage, b. 1944)
Sun Mad, © 1981 (originally printed 1982)
 Screen print on paper, third edition, 19/56
 Museum purchase in honor of Jill Hartz; 2019:30.1



Ester Hernández

Compare Ester Hernández’s **Sun Mad** to the Sun Maid logo. How did the artist altar the wholesome icon? What effect do her changes have on you? The graphic arts, especially in Mexico, have a long tradition of agitating and educating the public. Chicana artists were inspired by Mexican printmakers, like the collective Taller de Gráfica Popular, whose work advocated for political awareness and social activism. Find another example of how an artist appropriated and altered a corporate logo or famous icon to make a political statement and share how this work of art changes one’s perception or actions.



Ester Hernández (Chicana of Yaqui and Mexican heritage, b. 1944)

Sun Raid, © 2012

Museum quality giclee print, 20 x 30 in.

Thirty-one years after **Sun Mad**, Hernández made **Sun Raid** in 2012. Does **Sun Raid** have the same impact on you as **Sun Mad**? Explain your answer. Look for other representations of the sun, the female body, and grapes in this exhibition. How do the symbolic values of these subjects change from one work to the next?

“Is that what happens? Estrella thought, people just use you until you’re all used up, then rip you into pieces when they’re finished using you?” p. 75.



Domingo Ulloa (American, 1919-97)

Braceros, 1960

Oil on masonite

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Eugene Iredale and Julia Yoo;

2014:20



Domingo Ulloa

Shortly after the United States entered World War II, the country needed a source of inexpensive labor for the agricultural industry and railway maintenance. In 1942, the U.S. and Mexico signed the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement, which guaranteed a minimum wage of 30 cents per hour and “humane treatment” for workers. From 1942 to 1964, 4.6 million Mexican nationals came to work in the U.S. as *braceros* or field hands.

Domingo Ulloa painted **Braceros** in 1960, the same year Juan Loza (b. 1939, Guanajuato, México) joined the *bracero* program and travelled from Mexico to the United States. Loza worked in Arkansas, California, Michigan, and Texas, picking beets, celery, corn, cucumbers, onions, peanuts, peppers, rice, soybeans, and tomatoes. Below is an English translation of Loza’s firsthand account of what it was like living in the type of housing Ulloa painted in the far back of **Braceros**. For Juan Loza’s complete oral history as told in Spanish to his niece Mireya Loza in 2005, go to: <http://braceroarchive.org/items/show/175?view=full>

JL: Well, in Arkansas I—we lived in a very rotten small house . . . very small. There were rats below because they used half the house to put seeds to sow the next year or to put fertilizers or to put tractor fuel [or] threshing machines and things like that. The boss saw it as nothing [not a big deal]. I came to see that even their dog during that time had a new house and I saw [that the dog got] about three [more] new houses during the time that I was there; and during the time it was cold, it lived in their [the boss’s] own house. But on the other hand, we, well, didn’t have that opportunity. We didn’t have that ability. We had to cover ourselves. I remember it as if it was now. They gave us some blankets that the Army [said in English] uses—green ones—and when some braceros started to leave because their work had ended, some left the blankets, and I picked them up. We needed them to cover us.

Domingo Ulloa’s deep respect for the figure, and political and moralistic subjects were inspired by the Mexican muralists and Mexican print collectives; Rico Lebrun, his art professor in California, who encouraged him to create work in service to humanity; and his membership in a painters’ labor union. Compare the faces in Ulloa’s painting **Braceros** to the faces in Betty LaDuke’s prints **Latin America**, **Seeds of Unrest** and **Tree of Life #21, Mother Courage, Nunca Más**. What is the mood of Ulloa’s painting? How does it compare to the mood of **The Fallen**? How does Ulloa’s repetition of form and depiction of space impact your experience of the work?

"It was always a question of work, and work depended on the harvest, the car running, their health, the conditions of the road, how long the money held out, and the weather, which meant they could depend on nothing." p. 4.



Rubén Trejo (American, 1937-2009)

Roots, 1982

Steel, wood, metal, glass, wood shavings
Collection of Tanya Trejo and Keane Watterson



Rubén Trejo, 1987 (Courtesy Eastern Washington University
EWU-007-0588_11_05_021)

Rubén Trejo was “[a] Minnesota-born mestizo of mixed Tarascan Indian and Hispanic heritage who lived and worked outside the geographic centers of art and culture, [and] he was thoroughly and comprehensively an *American* artist.” (*Ruben Trejo: Beyond Boundaries, Aztlán y más allá*, edited by Ben Mitchell with Tomas Ybarra-Frausto and John Keeble, University of Washington Press, 2010. p. 4.). He spent about half his life in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the other half in Cheney, Washington, pursuing a lifelong engagement with Spanish, Mexican, Chicanx, ancient indigenous, and English literature, poetry, mythology, philosophy, and theology.

Trejo used color sparingly on nearly every element of the sculpture. How does the artist’s minimal applications of yellow, red, green, and grey paint enhance your interpretation of the work? How does Trejo’s use of materials and design influence your response to the work? What are your “roots”? Who gets to decide, label, categorize and define what “roots” are? How are “roots” an imposition, an expectation, a fortification?

“In Memory of César Chávez” dedication page.



Emanuel Martinez (American, b. 1947)

Farm Workers' Altar, 1967

Acrylic on mahogany and plywood

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the International Bank of Commerce in honor of Antonio R. Sanchez, Sr.; 1992:95

Write your definition of an altar _____

How does this altar compare to altars you have seen, or your idea of an altar? The artist made this work when he was nineteen years old, and it was used for a sacred event involving one of the most important labor leaders and civil rights activist at the time—César Chávez. Chávez broke a twenty-five-day water only fast by receiving the Eucharist (bread and wine), served by a priest from this altar, during a Catholic Mass. Martinez's altar activates a variety of signs and symbols. Next to each visual element, write what it symbolizes to you.

The color pink _____

Maize _____

Wheat _____

Grapes _____

Cross _____

Stylized black eagle in red circle _____

Fist _____



Stepped fret design _____

Tripartite face _____

What else would you like to add? _____



Cesar Chávez breaks his 25-day fast as his wife, Helen, and friend, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, look on in Delano, California, March 10, 1968.
Photo by John A. Kouns.

Think of a social justice leader you admire. What would you make or do to honor that person's cause?

"Tools to build, bury, tear down, rearrange and repair, a box of reasons his hands took pride in. She lifted the pry bar in her hand, felt the coolness of iron and power of function, weighed the significance it awarded her, and soon she came to understand how essential it was to know these things." p. 26.



Lilliam Nieves (Puerto Rican, b. 1975)
Beauty Queen IV (*taladro*) [drill], 2019
Ink on red oak



Lilliam Nieves (far right) and UO students in Mariko Plescia's SPAN 348 U.S. Latino Literature and Culture class with *Beauty Queen IV* in process. Nieves also met with Kelley León Howarth's SPAN 301 Identidades Hispanas class in July 2019.

Beauty Queen IV (taladro) [drill] is a self-portrait of the artist holding a tool, which she uses to make her art. If you were making a self-portrait, what would you hold in your hands? What would you wear? What part of the globe would your feet be touching? In each self-portrait from her **Beauty Queen** series, the artist includes a cursor icon in a different place. Why do you think she does that, and what would your cursor icon point at? How is Nieves' image similar to your concept of a beauty queen? How does it differ? There are several representations of women in this exhibition. How do they each exude resistance and power?

Programas públicos / Public Programs

Gratuito / Free

Día de Muertos: Altares colgantes de Coatetelco y otras expresiones morelenses

Presentación en español por el fotógrafo mexicano Fernando Soto con una traducción en inglés

Miércoles, 30 de octubre, 5:30 p.m.

El apoyo generoso para este proyecto fue provisto por Art Bridges.

Day of the Dead: Hanging Altars of Coatetelco and Other Expressions from Morelos

Presentation in Spanish by Mexican photographer Fernando Soto with English translation

Wednesday, October 30, 5:30 p.m.

Generous support for this project provided by Art Bridges

Celebración del Día de los Muertos / Day of the Dead Celebration

viernes 1 de noviembre y sábado 2 de noviembre / Friday, November 1 and Saturday, November 2

6:00-9:00 p.m.

Este evento es patrocinado por Oak Hill School junto con el Museo de Arte Jordan Schnitzer, MEChA de UO, Adelante Sí, Oficina de Equidad e Inclusión de la Universidad de Oregon, Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato, y Instituto Estatal de Atención al Migrante Guanajuatense y sus familias.

This event is co-sponsored by Oak Hill School in conjunction with the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, MEChA of UO, Adelante Sí, University of Oregon Office of Equity and Inclusion, Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato and Instituto Estatal de Atención al Migrante Guanajuatense y sus familias.

Día de la familia / Family Day

7 de diciembre / December 7

12:00-3:00 p.m.



JORDAN SCHNITZER
MUSEUM OF ART



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