Painting Prophecy

Mapping a Polyphonic Chicana Codex Tradition in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract This article examines the work of the Chicana artist Sandy Rodriguez, who created the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*, an ongoing project begun in 2017 that consists of botanical illustrations and large-scale maps of California and northern Mexico. Rodriguez's *Codex* draws on pre-Hispanic, colonial, and Chicana/o/x antecedents, most notably the *Florentine Codex* (sixteenth century) and the Chicana/o/x codices of the early 1990s, produced in the context of the quincentenary of Columbus's voyage. This article posits Rodriguez's *Codex* as a polyphonic text that exceeds both the linguistic of the literary and the visual of the artistic, drawing on a multiplicity of sources, both historical and contemporary, visual and textual, oral and aural, in her mapping of California's land and history. The *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* collapses precolonial, colonial, and contemporary histories to underscore continuities between the ruptures of conquest and our dangerous geopolitical moment.

Keywords Chicana/o/x art, codices, commemoration, indigeneity, polyphony

In 2017 and 2018 the artist Sandy Rodriguez produced a series of maps and botanical illustrations that together comprise the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*, which she exhibited at the *South of the Border* and the *Rodriguez/Valadez in Vernon* shows in Southern California.[1] The *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* remains a work in progress, as Rodriguez continues to add new pages of varying dimensions, from fifteen inches to nearly eight feet tall. Exhibited as separate folios rather than as a bound book, Rodriguez pushes the codex form beyond Eurocentric notions of print and manuscript culture. She also processes native plants and minerals into the dyes and watercolors that she uses to paint each work, which she creates on *amate*, a special paper produced from the bark of fig and mulberry trees with origins in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica.[2] Foregrounding native and precolonial materials in the making of her codex, Rodriguez reclaims and redraws the rich history of painted Mexican codices in order to respond to contemporary crises of migration, displacement, and ecological destruction in the twenty-first century.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE NOTES
57:2, October 2019 DOI 10.1215/00138282-7716125

The painted books of Mesoamerica belong to an image-based form of knowledge transmission that stretches back for more than a millennium. Yet today there exist fewer than twenty known surviving pre-Columbian codices due to the large-scale book burning campaigns conducted by Spanish friars in the wake of the conquest of 1521. The destruction of indigenous books was followed by their replication in the postconquest era as friars and colonial officials oversaw the re-creation of destroyed originals by indigenous painters, alongside the emergence of hybrid genres, including encyclopedias and herbals that combined Nahua and early modern European systems of knowledge and representation. Hundreds of these colonial codices survive, many of which detail the events of conquest and life under Spanish colonial rule.[3]

The *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* draws on this disruption and convergence of knowledge systems in the colonial-era codices, and most directly from the *Florentine Codex* (ca. 1575–77), a twelve-volume encyclopedia of Aztec life produced under the direction of Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún and painted by indigenous *tlacuiloque*, or painter-scribes and grammarians who were expert in Aztec traditions of recording knowledge.[4] Educated in the painting style of the European Renaissance at the Real Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco, the *tlacuiloque* served as critical interlocutors between indigenous elders and Spanish colonial administrators, consulting with them as they painted imperiled knowledge in a moment of urgency—as one world drew to a close and another began in its ashes. The *Florentine Codex* is paradigmatic of what Mary Louis Pratt calls art of the contact zone—a dialogical, intercultural, and multiauthored work made in the shadow of the seismic devastation of conquest and amid a second epidemic that killed millions of indigenous peoples in 1576. Facing existential crisis, the *tlacuiloque* continued to paint and record their histories in Nahuatl using the Latin alphabet, as Sahagún translated the texts into Spanish. The urgency of the moment prompts scholar Diana Magaloni Kerpel to ask, "What did the *Florentine Codex* mean to the Tlatelolco team who decided to devote their lives to completing it amid a mortal battle against death itself?"[5] Magaloni Kerpel's question frames our reading of the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*, a multivocal map that traces the "theoretical dimensions of power that struggle over geography's hold" and lays bare the "relationships set forth during colonialism that continue to mark us today."[6]

Even as Rodriguez's *Codex* recalls the sixteenth-century practice of recording knowledge amid the rubble of conquest and its traumatic repetitions in the ensuing decades, her work also resonates with the production of Chicana/o/x codices in 1992, a year indelibly marked by the Los Angeles riots, the AIDS crisis, and the quincentenary of Columbus's voyage to the so-called New World. Rodriguez's *Codex* anticipates the 2019–21 quincentenary of the Spanish invasion and conquest of Mexico during the latest moment of rupture: the election and presidency of Donald Trump. Engaging cyclical notions of time through commemoration alongside existential fears and speculative futures inherent to linear progressions, the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* maps a space in the Western Hemisphere that has witnessed the ends of worlds and the beginnings of new ones.

The *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* makes visible overlapping histories of colonialism in California and northern Mexico, revealing stories that subvert the European cartographic traditions that visualized domination and naturalized European power and authority within the Western Hemisphere.[7] Marking lines of demarcation, detainment, and surveillance among the flora and fauna of the region that she paints in the tradition of the *Florentine Codex*, Rodriguez adds her place-based memories next to those of unhomed people and other human beings who are held outside nationalist confines of belonging. We thus see Rodriguez's *Codex* as a polyphonic text, destabilizing master narratives of discovery that avowed territorial expansion as a civilizing mission of empire and its reiterations in capitalism as an ideological value and economic policy of the Americas.[8] While polyphony refers to a Western musical tradition and is framed by literary theorists as a hallmark of European modernism, we contend that the phenomenon has points of origin in the Americas and through what Miguel León-Portilla calls "singing the painted books" of the Aztecs.[9] Polyphony is evidenced in the aural/oral poetics of codices, perhaps most clearly conveyed in this passage from the *Cantares mexicanos*, a collection of Aztec songs from the sixteenth century:

> I sing the pictures of the books,
> and see them widely known,
> I am a precious bird / for I make the books speak,
> there in the house of the painted books.[10]

Rodriguez's *Codex* both draws on a hemispheric repertoire of oral traditions and inspires its own "singing of the maps" through the poetic invocations of Adolfo Guzman-Lopez. In its layering of symbols and visual allegories, collaborative and dialogical research, as well as the very materiality of the paper and pigments used to create it, the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* offers a view of the un/settled ground on which all of us move and navigate an uncertain time in the twenty-first century.[11]

Art of the Contact Zone: The *Chicano Codices* of 1992

The year 1992 ushered in a surge of artistic production centered on the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas. Artists such as Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Nao Bustamante, and James Luna intervened in histories of indigenous, African, and mestiza/o/x bodies on display, producing provocative performance art that challenged dehumanizing stereotypes of non-European peoples, while reminding audiences that the origins of these visual tropes can be traced to 1492.[12] These performances offered a critical counternarrative to the triumphalist tone of the official commemoration events that took place in the United States, Spain, and select parts of Latin America. The quincentenary also spurred Mexican and Chicana/o/x artists to reclaim the pre-Columbian and colonial Latin American archive in their work. Artists like Delilah Montoya and Enrique Chagoya rethought the space of printed literature by creating codices that narrativized images and symbols and reframed sixteenth-century conquest and colonization as

allegories for sociopolitical and environmental crises in the last decade of the twentieth century.[13] Collapsing the space of time between the colonial and postcolonial in their contemporary interpretations of codices made by Nahua painters and scribes in the decades following Spanish conquest, Chicana/o/x artists reconfigured the codex as an artistic method for resisting legacies of colonialism embedded in dominant cultures and institutions.[14]

In 1992 Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino curated an exhibition of contemporary Chicana/o/x codices at the Mexican Museum in San Francisco, California, to challenge unqualified celebrations of Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas. The exhibition, titled *The Chicano Codices: Encountering Art of the Americas*, proposed "the indigenous art form of the codex as a contemporary Chicano artistic medium" that symbolically restored "the dispersed and destroyed pre-Hispanic picture books of the Americas."[15] In so doing, Sanchez-Tranquilino foregrounded a central claim of the 1960s and 1970s Chicano movement in which Chicana/o/x artists (re)aligned with their indigenous ancestry over their European heritage through a political and poetic reclamation of *mestizaje*, a term for racial mixture originating in Spanish conquest, reframed as a nationalist project in postrevolutionary Mexico and discernible in the visual and formal mixtures of Chicana/o/x artistic production.[16]

In their fusion of forms, the Chicana/o/x codices exceeded Eurocentric definitions of the bound book. Some were fashioned in accordion-style screenfolds that emulate the format of the original pre-Columbian divinatory almanacs. Others consisted of multiple unbound sheets of paper. In some instances, they eschewed the concept of books altogether, presenting instead mixed-media pieces that incorporate canvas paintings, display boxes, simulated art objects, and pseudo artifacts. In *Codex Muñoz: Petrocóatl, Aztec God del fin del Mundo*, Celia Muñoz presents a headdress, made from a gas mask and framed with feathers, of a prophetic Aztec deity, *Petrocóatl* (oil feather god), who "will save us (and the planet) from our dependence on petroleum."[17] The *Codex Muñoz* resounds in the sardonic performance art of 1992—from the self-fashioned costumes and headpieces of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco's *Couple in a Cage* to Nao Bustamante's *Indig/urrito*.

To account for the range of forms, Sanchez-Tranquilino further described *mestizaje* as a "zone" in which Chicana/o/x artists enact a "new mixing, a new field of identity—a complex cultural and theoretical space beyond two halves coming together."[18] Emanuel Martinez's *Codex Emanuel: The Quincentenary: In Light of Quinto Sol* exemplifies the process Sanchez outlines by featuring a tripartite head, or an image of two heads in profile that create one face in the middle, signifying Chicana/o/x identity.[19] A sculptural work, Martinez's codex unrolls the history of conquest from which the Chicana/o/x emerges: fallen bodies of indigenous peoples and a pantheon of Mexican revolutionaries and Independence leaders unfold on a scene, including the tripartite head, painted by an indigenous woman. The reclamation of a colonial process of racial mixture by Chicana/o/x artists, as seen in the *Codex Emanuel*, has been interrogated over decades of Chicana/o/x cultural and literary scholarship, primarily critiqued for its appropriation of indigenous identity that, as María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo contends, romanticized it "as an

ancestral past rather than recognizing contemporary Indians as coinhabitants not only of this continent abstractly conceived, but of neighborhoods and streets of hundreds of US cities and towns."[20]

Nevertheless, as Rafael Pérez-Torres writes, *mestizaje*—as an artistic and cultural discourse—allowed "Chicanos to recognize a shared colonial as well as racial history with Native Americans and other indigenous groups across the Americas."[21] Shared colonial and racial histories as expressed in Chicana/o/x art and poetics have shaped coalitional politics since the 1960s, when "groups of Chicana and Native American activists . . . worked together in common cause."[22] Common causes led to real infrastructure, including institutions of higher education like D-Q University in Davis, California, founded in 1971 and in operation until 2005.[23] Its title an abbreviation for Deganawida and Quetzalcoatl, D-Q University was a coinhabited space where the "'trope of mestizaje' was deployed not to erase contemporary Indian concerns" but "to foreground and address them."[24] Delilah Montoya's *Codex Delilah: Six-Deer, Journey from Mexicatl to Chicana* exemplifies the political strategy of visualizing shared colonial and racial histories of Native Americans and Chicanas/os/xs through her critique of nuclear weapon and waste production in the US Southwest. Weaving together Maya, Mixtec, and Aztec symbols and glyphs, Montoya foregrounds indigenous epistemologies to expose the modern coloniality of nuclear missile manufacturing in the Sandia mountains of New Mexico, which are figured as Crow-Woman, a healer who lives on the mountain and whom Six-Deer seeks.[25]

Alongside numerous indigenous-identified Chicanas/os/xs in the 1960s and 1970s were those whose "ambivalent relationship towards their indigenous ancestry" was influenced not only by Mexico's modern campaign of cultural and biological *mestizaje* but also by the changing of their racial status from Spanish and White to Hispanic and nonwhite Hispanic in the United States across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—further exacerbated by de facto and legal discriminations against Native and Mexican Americans.[26] Chicana/o/x ambivalence toward their indigenous heritage pertains to the trauma of cultural loss and fractured indigenous knowledge in the context of the US matrix of power; representations of that loss are palpable in the exhibition of *The Chicano Codices*.

Loss and fracture narrativizes the *Codex Not-Vargas: The Forgotten Name Codex*, in which Kathy Vargas uses the triptych to stage three mixed-media photographs with inscriptions that reflect the haunting "loss to Chicanos of all their indigenous names."[27] In fact, each codex featured in the show bore the name of its maker and was appended with a subtitle. The naming conventions of the Chicana/o/x codices signaled a conscious departure from their pre-Columbian and colonial antecedents, as Sanchez-Tranquilino points out in his catalog essay: "Rarely, if ever, were the pre-Columbian codices or colonial facsimiles named after the indigenous owner or scribe/artist."[28] Indeed, most codices are named after their European patrons, the institutions in which they are housed, or the cities in which they reside. The *Florentine Codex*, for example, is named as such due to its location in the Laurentian Library in Florence, Italy. Even in cases where names of the indigenous artists are known, the colonial codices typically retain their ascribed European titles.[29]

Symbolically, then, the Chicana/o/x codices counter Eurocentric naming conventions by laying claim to them in the writing of the artists' names. While one could argue that this practice reifies Eurocentric traditions of authorship and ownership (in the ideological and economic structure of the United States), self-naming is less about possession than about emplacement, which, as Karen Mary Davalos posits, seeks "locatedness and belonging" beyond "European orientations, meanings of space, and attachments to place and power."[30] Emplacement requires imaginaries like the zone that Sanchez-Tranquilino theorizes for Chicana/o/x codices—which echoes Gloria Anzaldúa's new mestiza consciousness (1987) and anticipates Emma Pérez's *Decolonial Imaginary* (1999)—or a third space of encounter, collision, and convergence, producing new modes of knowledge transfer.[31] These spaces for re-membering indigenous knowledges after their dismemberment (fracture and loss), require the "'imaginative' creation of new possibilities," which Mishuana Goeman argues "must happen through imaginative modes precisely because the 'real' settler colonial society is built on violent erasures of alternative modes of mapping and geographic understandings."[32]

Similar to indigenous frameworks for (re)mapping through "non-normative geographies," as Goeman posits for "vibrant Native futures," the *Chicano Codices* suggested a decolonial pathway for speaking to ancestors who were removed from personal and familial memory through war, annexations, and state policies. If colonial codices tell a history of commercial and diplomatic exchanges between European patrons and collectors through their names, the Chicana/o/x codices recenter the knowledge of the *tlacuiloque*, who in both the pre-Columbian and the colonial periods served as the mediators of knowledge on behalf of the community. The artworks featured in *The Chicano Codices* exhibition do not merely tell the stories of individual authors or lay claim to the stories; rather, they are deployed politically in regard to intersecting histories of colonialism, annexation, and nation making.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Sanchez-Tranquilino's description of *mestizaje* as a "zone" participated in a larger discourse on cultural syncretism. In 1990, for example, Mary Louise Pratt proposed the art of the contact zone as a space where "cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism and slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."[33] Pratt's framework responded to sociopolitical unrest, racial conflicts, and cultural polarization in the United States concerning the art, literature, and history of the nation and coincided with the Columbus quincentenary. Pratt relied on a colonial allegory to situate her thesis on the contemporary contact zone, referring to the indigenous Andean author Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, whose 1615 illustrated manuscript denounced the abuses of the Spaniards in early colonial Peru. In his "rediscovered" manuscript, Pratt identifies "autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, [and] vernacular expression" as "some of the literate arts of the contact zone."[34] While miscomprehension, "unread masterpieces," and the "absolute heterogeneity of meaning" are "some of the perils of writing in the contact zone," Pratt claims that these forms of communication "live among us today in the transnationalized metropolis of the United States and are becoming more widely visible, more press-

ing, and, like Guaman Poma's text, more decipherable to those who once would have ignored them in defense of a stable, centered sense of knowledge and reality."[35] The Chicana/o/x codices employed each of these modes of communication—from imaginary, polyglossic dialogues to visual parody and social critique. Twenty-five years later Sandy Rodriguez continues the art of the contact zone, responding to ongoing threats of environmental collapse and national anxieties over "invasive" species and societal extinction in the context of the impending anniversary of Spanish invasion and conquest of the Aztec empire in 2019–21.

Continuing a Chicana/o/x Codex Tradition

Rodriguez's decision to name her recent body of work the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* does not directly reflect indigenous or sixteenth-century postconquest manuscripts but rather gestures to the interventions made by her Chicana/o/x artistic predecessors. The inclusion of her paternal and maternal last names signals her position as inheritor of intergenerational knowledge. The hyphen also connotes the collaborative nature of her artistic practice, since the names reference not only individuals but also families rooted in the Americas.[36] In the same way that indigenous *tlacuiloque* consulted elders to reconstruct pre-Hispanic lifeways and the events of conquest, Rodriguez relies on a range of elders for knowledge about local medicinal plants and herbs of the region, as we will discuss shortly. The naming of her codex, then, gestures not toward the self but toward a community as a wellspring of memory and knowledge.

Like her Chicana/o/x artistic predecessors, Rodriguez reclaims the codex as a site for the graphic expression of communal knowledge, exceeding its material stipulations as a set of bound or otherwise interconnected folios. To date, it includes three *mapas,* of which two are accounted for here: the *Mapa de la Región Fronteriza de Alta y Baja Califas,* made in 2017, and, in April 2018, *De las Señales y Pronosticos & ICE Raids en el Sanctuary State of Califas* (figs. 1–2). In between the production of the maps, Rodriguez painted botanical illustrations of native plants toward a goal of twelve that function as an annual calendar, marking the seasons in which they are harvested for making medicine and pigments.[37] The botanical illustrations, like the maps, encode multiple and often divergent spatiotemporal contexts into the very materiality of the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*, underscoring its polyphonic quality.

In *Nopalli–Opuntia basilaris* (cactus), for example, as well as *Cempoalxuchitl–Tagetes erecta* (marigold flower), helicopters hover at smaller sizes relative to the plants they depict and are barely discernible as they blend into the natural pigmentation of the *amate* paper (figs. 3–4). When viewers detect them, they realize that the helicopter cockpits are actually skulls, and the compositions exceed the scientific and painterly genres they represent. The imposition of man-made surveillance technologies deployed along the US-Mexico border on the botanical paintings disrupts their calendric function. The juxtaposition of plants and helicopters also conveys a temporal irony, recording the passing of time through the seasons of plant life while gesturing to the detention of people whose ancestors have inhabited and cultivated the lands of the Western Hemisphere for millennia. As many US citizens proceed with their daily lives, they are oblivious to the suspension of time for detained peoples, for those seeking asylum, and for those awaiting reunification with their families.

Analogous to the polyphonic quality of the botanical illustrations, Rodriguez's large-scale maps merge pre-Hispanic and European mapping methods, aligning with the hybrid forms of the 1990s Chicana/o/x codices. The large-scale *mapas* do not fully emulate the morphology of ancient painted codices. Rather, their large, single-sheet format conforms most perceptibly to *lienzos*, which illustrate family lineages and were shown publicly or used in litigation both in the colonial and modern periods as a means of asserting land claims.[38] *Lienzos* often combine representations of land, important historical events, and individuals or ruling families associated with such events by including human figures within a delineated territory or footprints to signify human presence and passage through space.[39]

While the first and second maps of the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* include only a few human figures directly within the defined space of California, Rodriguez alludes to the importance of human-related events in more subtle ways: through the demarcation of borders, the locations of detention centers, and the tools of surveillance for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). All these visual elements have a temporal dimension, simultaneously connoting centuries of change to the natural world through the built environments that shape the border region of the twenty-first century. These human elements are inlaid in the maps along with representations of plant life, like cacti in bloom, which signify late spring and summer in arid regions of Southern California and northern Mexico. Rodriguez's codex, then, manifests a temporalization of space, an extension of Miguel León-Portilla's reading of Mesoamerican pictorial histories as spatializations of time.[40]

Rodriguez's codex also continues the Chicana/o/x codex tradition of foregrounding cyclical time in the commemoration of world-changing events and future predictions that respond to the existential fears of Western societies oriented along linear timelines. The artists of the 1992 *Chicano Codices* narrativized the catastrophic impact of 1492 as the context for social and environmental disasters at the end of the twentieth century. This visual language prompted Chicana writer Cherríe Moraga to sing the painted books—transcribing their symbols and poeticizing the connections they pose between the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival and cataclysmic events of the late twentieth century. "It is 1992 and Los Angeles is on fire," Moraga writes:

> Half a millennium after the arrival of Columbus, the Mesoamerican prophecies are being fulfilled. The enslaved have taken to the streets, burning down the conqueror's golden cities. A decade-long plague that attacks the very immune system upon which our survival depends assumes pandemic proportions. . . . With such violent movement, our ancient codices have predicted, this era—"El Quinto Sol"—will be destroyed.[41]

Moraga's essay disrupts Eurocentric notions of linear time as progress by refiguring state violence against marginalized and oppressed peoples as prognostications presaged by the Aztecs in the Calendar Stone and the codices.

Originally written as a catalog essay for *The Chicano Codices*, "Codex Xerí: El Momento Historíco" reappeared as the final entry of Moraga's *The Last Generation* (1993), an anthology of essays and poems that takes as its central metaphor the "dis-

Figure 1. Sandy Rodriguez, *Mapa de la Región Fronteriza de Alta y Baja Califas*, 2017. Hand-processed dyes and watercolor from native plants and earth pigments on amate paper, 94½ × 47 in. JPMorgan Chase Art Collection.

Figure 2. Sandy Rodriguez, *De las Señales y Pronosticos & ICE Raids en el Sanctuary State of Califas*, 2018. Hand-processed dyes and watercolor from native plants and earth pigments on amate paper, 94½ × 47 in. Collection of the artist.

Figure 3. Sandy Rodriguez, *Nopalli–Opuntia basilaris from the Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*, 2017. Hand-processed dyes and watercolor from native plants and earth pigments on amate paper, 15⅓ × 22¾ in. JPMorgan Chase Art Collection.

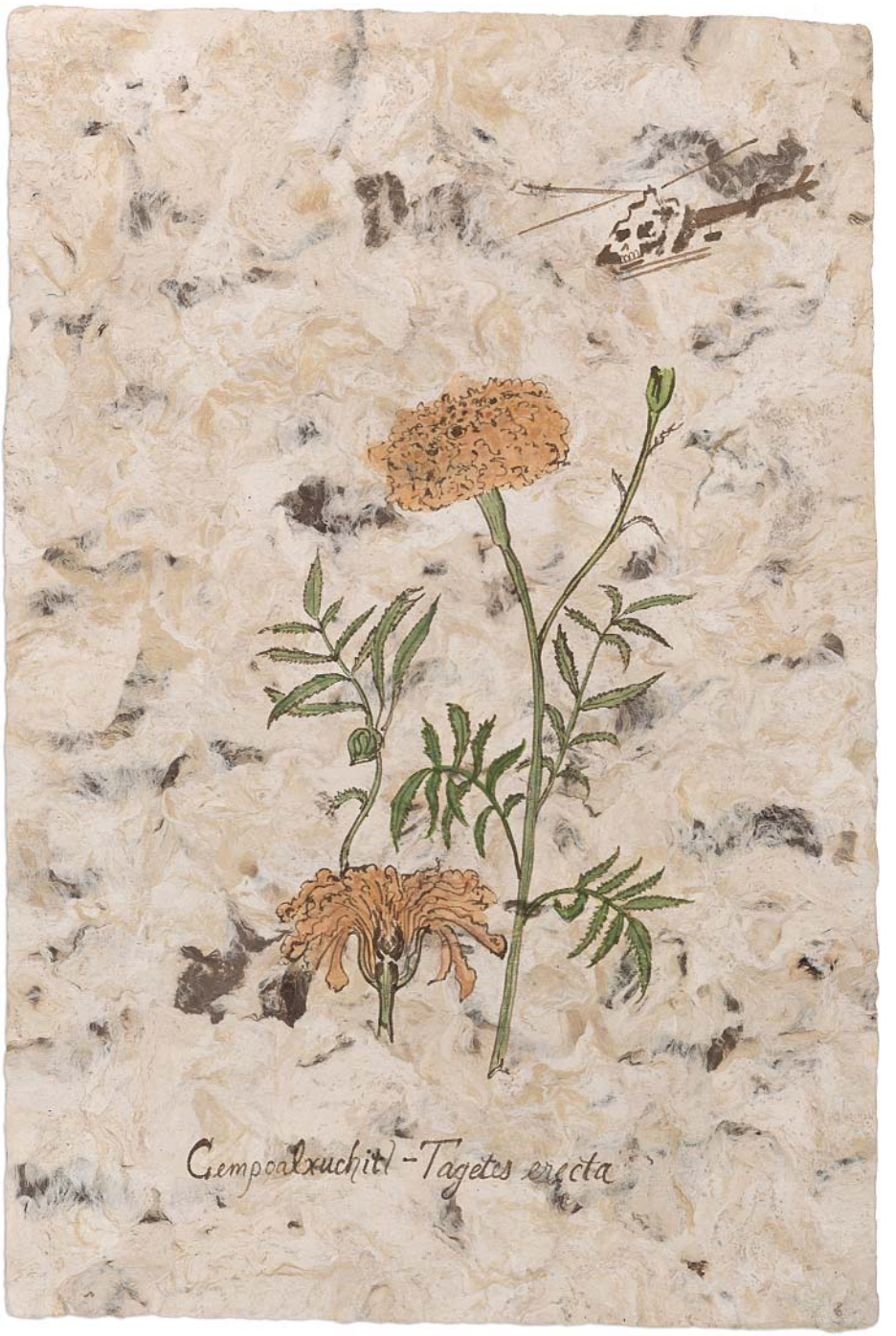

Figure 4. Sandy Rodriguez, *Cempoalxuchitl–Tagetes erecta from the Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*, 2017. Hand-processed dyes and watercolor from native plants and earth pigments on amate paper, 15⅓ × 22¾ in. Ellen Hoobler Collection.

covery" and conquest of the Americas. For our purposes, it is noteworthy that Moraga's central metaphor begins in the visual realm, using the codices as a point of departure for her prose. She assumes the position of priestess who deciphers and "sings the books," performing one of the "multiple stations of codex production [of] the ancient Mexican Tlacuiloque" and suggesting that the codex "resists the Western ideology of writing as a solitary act";[42] from its precolonial, colonial, and contemporary forms, the codex brings together multiple voices in its visual expression and inspires new ones through ekphrastic poetry prompted by the work itself.

Materiality and Process in the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*

As other Chicana/o/x and Mexican artists have collaborated with writers on text and inscriptions for their codices, Rodriguez foregrounds collaboration through a community of elders. Engaging art historians, curators, researchers, a trained herbalist, and the staff and unhomed clients of a community hospital, Rodriguez also offered her codex to poet Adolfo Guzman-Lopez, who sings the book in narrative poems that emulate the literary structure of the Nahuatl passages in the *Florentine Codex*. "Why does the green of that cactus touch my soul?" Guzman-Lopez calls out to the painted *Nopalli–Opuntia basilaris*, adding, "Why do those shades of pink remind me of my ancestors and of their toil over the earth in the old country?"[43] In poetic incantations that emulate those of the *Florentine Codex*, Guzman-Lopez usurps a dominant trope of American immigration history to subvert the east-to-west orientation of the nation, imagining what José Saldívar calls "an alternative American *Bildung*," or a different location for the "central immigrant space in the nation."[44] From a south-to-north trajectory, Guzman-Lopez relocates the "old country" to the Western Hemisphere and, specifically, to the south of the US-Mexico borderlands, reframing land not as possession but as "a marker of shared space among a range of travelers—Native Americans, Chicanas/os, Mexicans, and others willing to live concurrently and harmoniously on Turtle Island."[45] Sharing the space of her codex with a community of people—her fellow travelers—Rodriguez extends the story of her home region to include several realms of knowledge, resonating with the collaborative nature of the *Florentine Codex* and other sixteenth-century manuscripts.

Born in National City, California, Rodriguez descends from a family of Mexican painters and worked in museum education at major institutions in Los Angeles designing arts education programs for community centers for nearly twenty years. Her movements between elite institutions and community spaces alerted her to the disparities of access to the arts. Rodriguez connected these economic inequities in the availability of art resources to the history of color in the Americas, which she explains, "involves sixteenth-century colonization and the imposition of colonial values on native cultural traditions of cultivation in the Western hemisphere."[46] In 2016 Rodriguez was awarded an artist residency by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, and she designed and taught watercolor workshops to staff, administrators, therapists, and unhomed clients at the Recuperative Care Center (RCC) of the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital. Her lesson plans directly involved participants in making organic colorants from the region; they "saw, felt, smelled, touched, and in some cases, tasted the materials in various states, [grinding] plants and insects into pigments in a mortar and pestle." Contact with natural materials

spurred questions from the class to which Rodriguez pursued answers at the Getty Center; she spoke with museum experts as she studied seventeenth-century natural history illustrations, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ethnobotanical records, and books 11 and 12 of the *Florentine Codex* (which detail the flora and fauna of the Aztec world and Spanish conquest) as well as contemporary scholarship on this sixteenth-century encyclopedia. Immersed in dialogical research, Rodriguez connected the dots between art, labor, and colonialism in the Americas. "I was engrossed by the way that colonized people worked plantations and missions to cultivate and process local resources," she recalls, "and how these colors can stand in for the labor upon the reception of the very material."

Yet "there were also questions about the materials that I couldn't answer," Rodriguez adds, and so she enrolled in the Blue Wind School of Botanical Studies in 2017. Studying the edible and medicinal flora of California's central coast in San Luis Obispo with the herbalist Tellur Fenner, Rodriguez embarked on a three-month program of field studies in the Sonoran, Mojave, and Great Basin deserts. Sharing her sketches of plants, animals, and landscapes with the Recuperative Care Center's staff and clients, Rodriguez offered specimens and images from historic sources. "The participants would comb through my notebooks," she recalls, "and chime in when they recognized a plant from their own family histories—from times that they spent with their grandmothers." In finding answers to the unhomed clients' questions, Rodriguez accessed their memories of homeplaces, listening to their stories of different uses of plants within their family traditions and adding them to her repertoire of institutional knowledge based on her access to collections and museum specialists.

When the residency concluded, Rodriguez expanded her field studies to the Pacific Northwest, New Mexico, and El Cajon foothills near San Diego, California. Equipped with skills acquired from her museum education work, community collaborations, and botanical and field training, Rodriguez completed the *Mapa de la Región Fronteriza de Alta y Baja Califas* and four botanical illustrations that comprised her codex at the end of the summer of 2017 and in time for her first exhibition. But one could also argue that her codex began prior to its existence as an art object—when she transgressed genres of art and literature as well as fields of history and medicine to learn and teach the production of native colorants. In her collaborative approach to learning, teaching, and painting the codex, Rodriguez pushed back against colonial systems of classification that persist in disciplinary borders and compartmentalize knowledge, separating art and history from medicine and ceremony, as well as isolating their forms—from the textual and visual to the oral and performative. Rodriguez restores each of these modes of knowledge by foregrounding conversation and mediation of the different times and spaces of knowledge, which in turn, produces the polyphonic quality of the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*.

Mapa de la Región Fronteriza de Alta y Baja Califas

Against the natural reddish-brown fiber of the *amate* paper, Rodriguez outlines the nineteenth-century boundaries of California on the map, but she "unborders" the land annexed by the United States in 1848, extending the line to the Mexican states of Baja California and Baja California Sur. As the only territorial demarcations on

the *amate*, the lines visually suggest that California floats on the paper. The optical illusion conjures the origin of California's name, which derives from a sixteenth-century Spanish romance novel describing an Edenic island. This was imposed on the land by Spanish explorers in search of such mythical places following the Spanish conquest of Mesoamerica.[47] Bordering and "unbordering" the colonial-turned-national lines of territory, Rodriguez plays with Western notions of time as both a linear progression and an ideological value of progress rooted in imperialism and discernible in the geography of global capitalism.[48] Doing so confronts the dominant cultural experience in the United States of land as a "project of accumulation"—what Goeman describes as division into "disaggregate parcels at various European-conceived scales" that devises "multi-scalar ways of thinking about land as divided up into different domains and which carries the weight of the colonial and its ongoing consequences."[49] From hemispheres and continents to nation-states and reservations, the scales of land add up over time, eliding interconnections between species and habitats and codifying the borders between human and nonhuman in subject-object relationships.[50]

Within the bordered and "unbordered" land, Rodriguez also combines aerial views of color-coded climate zones with detailed vistas of mountain ranges, fields, and waterways, but she illustrates the flora and fauna at larger scales relative to the map, drawing on pre-Hispanic techniques of pictorial scaling reflected in sixteenth-century colonial codices that visually compress time or represent time passing in space. A prickly pear cactus, for example—of the genus *Opuntia* and known in Spanish as *nopal*, a name derived from the Nahuatl word *nopalli*—is lush in bloom, corresponding with other green and flowering flora located in specific areas on the map and producing an intervisual relationship with Rodriguez's botanical illustrations. As previously mentioned, the size and color of the plants suggest more than their locations; they also denote a space of time, specifically that of spring or early summer. Each plant reappears outside the map and within the boxes that illustrate Rodriguez's production of the pigments she used to create it, signifying the cyclical rhythms of human-plant relationships, which we have come to expect but which are rapidly changing due to climate change.

Furthermore, in these boxed illustrations Rodriguez explains that she "included historic images of plant harvesting and processing, representing myself in the role of the *tlacuilo* (painter), connecting past and present."[51] By locating herself in the map and revealing her artistic process, Rodriguez not only records the natural histories of the upper and lower border regions of California but also communicates communally sourced knowledge from her institutional and botanical studies that was corroborated by the unhomed people at the Recuperative Care Center, themselves displaced and marooned from their homeplaces amid global capitalism's borderless economy. Rodriguez's self-portraits echo those of the painters in book 11 of the *Florentine Codex*, recording another interval of time between the colonial past and the speculative future in the contemporary moment of climate change, species displacements, war, and national uncertainty.

Turning to the coastline, Rodriguez populates the Pacific Ocean with real and imaginary sea creatures that originate in medieval and Renaissance cartography,

a tradition of representation that shaped several genres of visual art and scientific knowledge and influenced the Nahua painters of the *Florentine Codex* (ca. 1575–77).[52] From book 11 on "Earthly Things," Rodriguez replicates the *papalomichi* and *ocelomichi*, or flying fish of the family Exocoetidae, to allegorize childhood memories of Catalina Island and Baja California.[53] Farther down the coast, Rodriguez takes creative license with her image of the *quauhxouili*, described as an "eagle" in both Spanish and Nahuatl in book 11. Reinterpreting the fish as a parrot, Rodriguez maps her memories of white sand beaches produced from the waste of the *Scarus compressus*, or azure parrotfish, along with the *ayotl*, or *tortuga*, which made it impossible for her to walk along the beaches in Cabo San Lucas during its breeding season, when her family returned to one of their homeplaces.[54]

At the same time that she maps interconnected ecologies through personal and shared memories, Rodriguez subtly documents the construction of geopolitical space through her insertion of man-made locations that intrude and disrupt the natural environments of indigenous species, which include native peoples. Territorial intrusion and disruption is the story of the New World and, indeed, the story of nearly all colonial and contemporary codices. On closer inspection of the map, viewers see that Rodriguez has painted small circles with sharp points that mimic map coordinates. The circles are, in fact, razor wire, and these unnatural marks on the map are locations of facilities in which ICE detains undocumented people in the United States.[55] The razor-wire circles visually echo the archetypal image of imprisonment in the Western imagination following World War II that dominates the visual index of the US-Mexico border in the late twentieth and now the twenty-first century. The symbols amplify the map's temporalization of space: it is within these spaces that people literally wait time out as the *nopal* blooms, the beaches in Cabo San Lucas turn white, and the breeding season of the *ayotl* comes and goes.

De las Señales y Pronosticos & ICE Raids en el Sanctuary State of Califas

Produced in 2018, Rodriguez's second map builds on the codex's themes of intrusion and disruption by plotting the convergence of natural and man-made disasters through representations of California's wildfires in late 2017 and arrests made by ICE in early 2018. If the *Mapa de la Región Fronteriza* centers intergenerational memory and knowledge amid interlocking cycles of time, then the map *De las Señales y Pronosticos* catapults viewers directly onto the ground and the immediacy of human crises and environmental dangers. *De las Señales y Pronosticos* reveals an interplay of detainment and containment in California and the chaos that such disturbances cause to all species. The wildfires, for example, denoted by glyph-like flames, push billowing clouds of gray smoke into the ocean. They are arranged systematically along the coastline as if their containment will soon prove an impossibility. The helicopters with skull cockpits appear above the ocean, alluding to the unintended impact of wind and carbon emissions as ocean currents swirl in dangerous chaos. A large-scale octopus grasps an airplane in its tentacles, evoking the sea monsters of medieval and Renaissance maps to communicate contemporary fears over the unknown fate of marine life amid rising ocean temperatures.

Moving to the land, fireballs rage outside the perimeters of detention centers, which are depicted from above, imitating aerial shots of buildings captured by drone surveillance footage. The fireballs cannot penetrate these walled compounds but also provide another barrier to escape. The territorial demarcations are more clearly defined in *De las Señales y Pronosticos* than in the first map, solidifying California as a space of containment. Color-coded climate zones and locations of flora and fauna have all but disappeared, and human beings enter the territorial space of the map, blurring the visual conventions of the first map as well as those of *lienzos* and codices in the precolonial and colonial traditions. The human beings in the map are hooded farmers who toil in the agricultural fields of the central valley under the light of stars, suggesting labor exploitation due to the interminable need for profit but also in response to drastic temperature changes that have disrupted harvesting cycles.

The calamity continues in the boxed illustrations that border the map and descend to the right of the state of California as Rodriguez uses most of these spaces to illustrate the apprehension and arrests of undocumented peoples and activists in protest of ICE raids. But Rodriguez appears in one frame among a gathering of female figures on both sides of a fire. Like her mother and sister, Rodriguez paints scholars with whom she has been in dialogue about the materials, process, and meaning of her codex in the twenty-first century. Named after the first omen in book 12 of the *Florentine Codex*, titled "De las señales y prognósticos que aparecieron antes que los españoles viniesen" ("Of the Signs and Prophecies That Appeared before the Arrival of the Spaniards"), Rodriguez's second map restages the Aztec prophecies as occurring in "real time," amid the rupture of Donald Trump's presidency. Perhaps the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* is book 13 of the *Florentine Codex*, linking sixteenth-century conquistadores with the ICE agents who patrol and enforce a heavily militarized landscape in the twenty-first. Like Cherríe Moraga's "Codex Xerí," penned in response to the artworks of the *Chicano Codex* exhibition, Adolfo Guzman-Lopez's verses offer poetic transcription of the visual language of the *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón*. Reading the signs and symbols of both maps, Guzman-Lopez returns to the theme of predictions and prognostications to remind viewers of their significance in our contemporary moment:

> The power of prophecy
> is not that it foretells the future
> but that it shakes us
> into seeing
> our present.[56]

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Acknowledgments

Our thanks to Sandy Rodriguez for her generosity in sharing her materials and insights with us. We are grateful to Kristi Peterson and *ELN*'s two anonymous reviewers for critical feedback in the writing and editing process.

Notes

1 *South of the Border* took place at The Loft at Liz's from October to December 2017. Rodriguez next exhibited her *Codex* in a two-person show with the canonical Chicano artist John Valadez in *Rodriguez/Valadez in Vernon*, from April to June 2018, at East 26 Projects in Vernon, California.

2 In researching the history of *amate*, Rodriguez consulted López Binnqüist, "Endurance of Mexican Amate Paper."

3 For further discussion, see Gruzinski, *Painting the Conquest*; and Jesús Douglas, "Indigenous Painting in New Spain," 71–79.

4 Magaloni Kerpel, *Colors of the New World*, 2. On the life and work of Bernardino de Sahagún, see Klor de Alva, Nicholson, and Keber, *Work of Bernardino de Sahagún*.

5 Magaloni Kerpel, *Colors of the New World*, 14.

6 Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 4. Goeman proposes the Americas "as a social, economic, political, and inherently spatial construction [that] has a history and a relationship to people who have lived here long before Europeans arrived" (2).

7 We are inspired here by Karen Mary Davalos's discussions of the limits of European notions of cartographic "accuracy" through her analysis of artwork by the Chicano artist Gilbert "Magu" Luján. See Davalos, "Landscapes of Gilbert 'Magu' Luján."

8 Cornejo, "Decolonial Futurisms."

9 Building on Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" in the work of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Michael M. Ossorgin uses "visual polyphony" to explore the "painterly aspects of Dostoevsky's work—his imagery, ekphrases, visual descriptions" as "generative forces in his fiction" ("Visual Polyphony," 1–2). Slav Gratchev also provides comparative analyses of Dostoevsky's prose and Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* in the origination of the polyphonic novel (*Polyphonic World of Cervantes and Dostoevsky*). Writing on the emergence of *testimonio* as a Latin American literary genre in the 1960s and 1970s, John Beverley frames *testimonio* within a polyphonic tradition: "Each individual testimonio evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives and experiences" ("Margin at the Center," 16). We argue that the polyphonic element that Beverley detects in *testimonio* is equally pre-Columbian in origin, as it is attributed to the postmodern and intercultural dialogue between the interlocutor and the native informant.

10 León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World*, 5.

11 See Carrillo Rowe, "Settler Xicana," 531.

12 Fusco and Gómez-Peña performed *Couple in a Cage: Two Amerindians Visit the West* (1992–93) at several institutions. Bustamante performed *Indig/urrito* in 1992, and Luna performed *Artifact Piece* in 1987, entering a display case at the Modern Museum of Man in San Diego, California. He followed it with *End of the Trail* (1990) and *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* (1991). See Diaz, "Seeing Is Believing," 64–68; and Blocker, "Failures of Self-Seeing."

13 While not included in the *Chicano Codices*, Enrique Chagoya contributed contemporary works with *Tales from the Conquest/Codex* (1992) and the *Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to Border Control* (1998), coauthored with Felicia Rice and Guillermo Gómez-Peña.

14 Baca, "Chicano Codex," 564.

15 Sanchez-Tranquilino, "Chicano Codices," 3.

16 Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*; Davalos, *Exhibiting Mestizaje*; and Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*.

17 Sanchez-Tranquilino, "Chicano Codices," 4.

18 Sanchez-Tranquilino, "Chicano Codices," 4.

19 Tripartite heads are iconic to Chicano art. See José Montoya's *La Resuerreción de los Pecados* (1971) at calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/hb9q2nb9mt and Amado M. Peña Jr.'s *Mestizo* (1974) at americanart.si.edu/artwork/mestizo-35250 (accessed December 1, 2018).

20 Saldaña-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán?," 413. Key interventions in the discourse on *mestizaje* following Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of the new mestiza consciousness include Davalos, *Exhibiting Mestizaje*; Beltran, "Patrolling Borders"; and Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*.
21 Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 16.
22 Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 16.
23 Diaz, *Flying under the Radar*, 53–55.
24 Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 17. Criticism of *mestizaje* as a trope for Chicana/o/x indigeneity continues in the twenty-first century with Zepeda, "Queer Xicana Indígena Cultural Production," and Rowe, "Settler Xicana," both of which view Chicana/o/x claims to indigeneity through a lens of settler colonialism and the androcentrism implicit in Western knowledge production.
25 Courtney, "Decoloniality," 6, 19–20. Courtney writes, "Crow-Woman represents the effects of coloniality at multiple levels: on the earth, in the form of environmental crisis, on the female body, and on indigenous epistemologies" (19).
26 Rowe, "Settler Xicana," 530. Chicana/o/x claims of indigenous ancestry were also ambivalent mimicry (Bhabha, *Location of Culture*) or a "strategic assertion of racial difference" in a nation that altered the racial designation of Mexican Americans for over two centuries (Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 16). Calling oneself "Chicano" in the 1960s and 1970s also resisted the modern Mexican use of *indigenismo* that "subsumes the Indian as a heroic past to the mestizo heroic present" (Saldaña-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán?," 408).
27 Sanchez-Tranquilino, "Chicano Codices," 5.
28 Sanchez-Tranquilino, "Chicano Codices," 3.
29 The *Codex Mendoza* (1542) is attributed to the indigenous artist Francisco Gualpuyogualcal and the Spanish scribe Juan González, but it continues to bear the name of its patron, Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza.
30 Davalos, "Landscapes of Gilbert 'Magu' Luján," 42.
31 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Pérez, *Decolonial Imaginary*, 6. Pérez draws on Homi Bhabha's "Third Space of enunciation," which disrupts the "structure of meaning and reference" in the cultural knowledge of a Western nation, challenging "our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People" (*Location of Culture*, 37).
32 Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 2.
33 Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 34.
34 Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 37.
35 Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 37.
36 Sandy Rodriguez, interview with Ella Diaz, March 13–26, 2018.
37 Rodriguez, interview.
38 Boone, *Stories in Red and Black*, 125–61.
39 For more on the format and scale of *lienzos*, see Mundy, "Mesoamerican Cartography," 215.
40 Mundy, "Mesoamerican Cartography," 193. On León-Portilla's concept of the "spatialization of time," see *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 54–57.
41 Moraga, "Codex Xerí," 20.
42 Baca, "Chicano Codex," 572.
43 Guzman-Lopez, "Untitled," 30.
44 See Saldívar, *Border Matters*, 29. Saldívar draws on George J. Sánchez's example of Los Angeles International Airport as a major immigrant point of entry (*Becoming Mexican American*, 271).
45 Davalos, "Landscapes of Gilbert 'Magu' Luján," 45.
46 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are taken from Rodriguez, interview.
47 Rodriguez consulted Petersen, "California, Calafia, Khalif"; and Masters, "Why Did a 1542 Spanish Voyage."
48 For further discussion of progress as a form of social control and contemporary Central American artists who engage in this critique, see Cornejo, "Decolonial Futurisms."
49 Aikau et al., "Indigenous Feminisms Roundtable," 94.
50 Aikau et al., "Indigenous Feminisms Roundtable," 94.
51 Rodriguez, unpublished artist statement, last revised October 18, 2017. Copy shared with authors.
52 See Magaloni Kerpel, *Colors of the New World*, 15–19. For her artistic influences, Rodriguez consulted Waters, "Enchanting Sea Monsters on Medieval Maps."
53 Rodriguez, email to Diaz, April 23, 2018. See *Florentine Codex*, pages 125 and 126, book 11, folio 63, at www.wdl.org/en/item/10622/view/1/125.
54 Rodriguez, email to Diaz, April 23, 2018. See *Historia general de las cosas de nueva España*, book 11, folio 63, at www.wdl.org/en/item/10622/view/1/127.
55 Rodriguez, email to Diaz, December 3, 2017. Rodriguez studied an online map of private and local facilities in California that ICE uses (Pickoff-White, "MAP").
56 Guzman-Lopez, "Numbers 11:29," 33.

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