1.

Introduction
Reframing Chicana/o Art

A certain anxiety accompanies archeological excavation. Along with fearing accidental destruction in the process of discovery, archeologists worry about the effect of time. Scholars of history and cultural anthropology become similarly anxious when attempting to recover previously lost stories and documents that face a scarcity of opportunities to “speak.” As I researched Chicana/o art since the 1960s, looking for materials that would corroborate the individual memories that I had recorded, I was less concerned about an artist’s inability to recall the past than the fate of the stuff that the artists kept in their basements, garages, and studios. Were moisture, insects, and chemicals destroying precious documents beyond recognition? What if someone decided to trash them before I was granted access? How much more digging would alleviate the fear that I had missed a crucial story?

These anxieties are multiplied when one is working in a field that has been invisible. Compared to other areas of Chicana/o cultural production, the critical examination of the visual arts is largely underdeveloped.¹ Awareness of this invisibility produces a “burden of representation,” as Kobena Mercer has observed about black visual arts. He reflects on the burden of getting the entire story told at the first chance because a partial account will not satisfy the urgency of the political moment, an urgency triggered by the cavernous gap in the record. In the end, Mercer urges us to decline this responsibility even though he recognizes that the burden of representation is a product of the “structures of racism” that have “historically marginalized [our] access to the means of cultural production.”²
While I agree with Mercer that the regulation of visibility is a form of institutionalized racism within the public space of museums and galleries and within art history, I am not willing to dismiss the burden of representation. If I were to put aside the encumbrance, I would feel as if I were no longer accountable to the histories and structures of racism and other concurrent forms of oppression, sexism and homophobia among them. Contesting hegemony is an ongoing struggle, and the context is too politically charged for me to feel that my choices are merely academic, made in the name of good organization and coherence. If this book appears “particularly anxious” about the recovery of Chicana/o art history, it is because I am keenly aware that the “primary work of cultural excavation” that literary scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant describes is still underway, and that it is an enormous task. The pressure to “get it right” is intense because I imagine the potential of equity within the arts.

I am convinced that Chicana/o art is a distinct category because of its structural location—how it has been, and continues to be, positioned in terms of social contexts and political and economic power. I also recognize that identity-based art is so vilified that it gets dismissed even before it is understood. Thus Chicana/o Art since the Sixties: From Errata to Remix engages with art critics and art historians who argue that the category of Chicana/o art should be retired because it is no longer relevant in the so-called postidentity moment. I join a range of scholars, including Jennifer A. González, Miwon Kwon, Kate Mondloch, and Amelia Jones, who observe that visual arts discourse is still haunted by essentialist models. The dispute turns on acceptance of a binary that separates art that is “ethnic” from art that is “universal,” or art that is “political” from art that is “global.” While González and Jones appear more comfortable with the idea that artists participated at one point in “these narrow categorical frameworks,” I am not yet convinced that the majority of Chicana/o artists promoted or practiced
“narrow” identities or produced work that activated this binary. In addition to challenging mainstream art criticism for its limitations, this book proposes a new and better method of theorizing the artistic production of people of Mexican descent. In my refusal to disregard Chicana/o art because it appears troublesome or unfashionable, I address the politics of visibility, allowing me to develop a method that does not appropriate or reify.

The debate among Chicana/o art historians over identity versus postidentity art is, ironically, linked to the ubiquitous dualist taxonomy within Chicana/o art discourse. This discursive coherence is most clearly articulated in earlier writings by Shifra M. Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto and later by Terezita Romo, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Victor Zamudio-Taylor, and George Vargas, all of whom characterized Chicana/o art in binary terms, dividing it into two periods and styles. The first period, 1968 to 1975, is “marked by a totally noncommercial, community-oriented character in the attitudes and expectations of the individuals and groups” who produced the work and in “the purposes they served.” Work of this period is often described as political art, agitprop, or people’s art, evoking Maoist principles. The second period, from 1975 to the mid-1980s, is not as neatly specified, but it is generally considered less politically charged and more commercial, arising from individual rather than collective concerns. In the late 1990s Ybarra-Frausto introduced a third phase, one dominated by the millennial generation of artists, but it simply continues and reconfirms the waning of political themes and the transcendent importance of the individual that apparently characterized the second period. This polarized classificatory scheme gave rise to what has been perceived as a public debate between Shifra Goldman and artists Malaquias Montoya and Lezlie Salkowitz-Montoya. Although they appeared to value different aesthetic practices, the Montoyas and Goldman called for a politics of accountability as an aspect of historical and aesthetic
recognition, or the more current term, *visibility*. They called on artists to engage in the struggle against multiple forms of oppression, although the Montoyas emphasized capitalism. For them, artists are agents of social change. As Romo notes in one of her reformulations of the dualist methodology, the Montoyas advanced “agency (action)” as the defining aspect of Chicana/o art, rather than “artwork (object) and intent (message),” which had been the focus of previous scholarship.

I do not take issue with the claim that Chicana/o art challenges the notion that art is autonomous—that its meaning is internal, referring only to the work itself (“art for art’s sake,” perhaps). But in this book I do intervene to argue against the dualist approach, which has generally ruled Chicana/o art history since the mid-1970s. I am especially interested in what is left out when one relies on a binary taxonomy of Chicana/o art and in how its dualistic terms of representation narrow the interpretation, reception, and documentation of Chicana/o art. Chon A. Noriega offers a partial lesson about this bifurcating methodology in his observation of “touchstone Chicano art surveys since the 1980s.” He states that “curatorial binaries” have supported a narrow interpretation of Chicana/o art that contrasts “cultural politics versus art market” orientations and “conceptual versus realist” styles. I extend Noriega’s observation and expose not only the cultural politics of institutional and exhibition settings but also the ways in which the methodology of Chicana/o art history has consistently turned to a binary to characterize Chicana/o art and artists in the following ways: political versus commercial art, folk versus fine art, parochial versus cosmopolitan art or global aesthetics, representational versus conceptual art, older or *veterano* artists versus younger ones, women versus men, feminist versus Chicano art (in this case, the authentic category is structured as patriarchal), historical documents versus aesthetic objects, untrained versus formally trained artists, ethnic-identified versus
postethnic artists, and Chicana/o versus Mexican artists. The polarities are coupled so that the existence of one requires the existence of the other. Often, however, that other is assumed or imagined: the opposing category is rarely present within an exhibition or scholarly work.\textsuperscript{17} The most troubling aspect of the binary is its ability to excuse serious research.

My burden of representation is to repair the “entrenched, polarizing accounts” and explain how Chicana/o art “might bridge or even exceed these categories.”\textsuperscript{18} Thus my goal in \textit{Chicana/o Art since the Sixties} is to challenge the art historian, curator, or critic who has classified Chicana/o art as parochial, separatist, political, “too ethnic,” or not ethnic enough. In presenting this new scholarship, I hope to broaden the ways in which Chicana/o visual art is interpreted and theorized and to expand the arenas in which critical debate takes place. Read comparatively with the existing scholarship, this book offers a revision of accepted Mexican, Latin American, and American art histories, one built on a broader, more representative base that does not conform to normative phantoms. I do so by documenting the multifaceted, intertwined, and generative visual culture of Chicana/o art in Los Angeles since 1963.

Los Angeles serves as an ideal case study for investigating Chicana/o art and its terms of visibility for several reasons. The metropolitan area may not be unique in the quality and quantity of its Chicana/o visual arts, but it is exemplary in the resources and collective energy that can be harnessed for its documentation. Los Angeles is home to three major centers of Chicana/o art production and criticism—Self Help Graphics & Art, Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), and Plaza de la Raza—that originated during the Chicano movement and continue a sustained and expansive engagement with the visual arts. Los Angeles is also one of only a few urban centers with a rich material archive. The region allows for extensive archival investigation of its own history, thanks to the private collection of postcards and other exhibition
ephemera gathered and preserved by Mary Salinas Durón and Armando Durón, the archival materials, art, and life history interviews of artists at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, and the California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives (CEMA) at the University of California, Santa Barbara, which houses the institutional materials of multiple art organizations located in Los Angeles and the private files of Shifra M. Goldman.\(^{19}\)

Los Angeles has been home to some of the most important exhibitions of Chicana/o art, and these have given rise to extensive archival documentation and popular criticism. The foundational show *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965–1985* emerged in 1990 from faculty and students at UCLA. The metropolitan area is home to internationally recognized Chicana/o artists, including Carlos Almaraz, Judith Baca, Chaz Bojórquez, Barbara Carrasco, Yreina D. Cervantez, Harry Gamboa, Gronk, Gilbert “Magu” Sánchez Luján, John Valadez, and Patssi Valdez. Their work is exhibited, collected, documented, and archived, although not at the level of other midcareer American artists.

The most recent phenomena that makes Los Angeles important is the unprecedented season in which six exhibitions of Chicana/o art were produced by mainstream institutions with support from the Getty Foundation’s Pacific Standard Time (PST) initiative.\(^{20}\) Starting in 2002, the Getty provided over $11 million to support research, exhibitions, programs, and publications on the LA postwar art scene. This initiative launched an unparalleled six-month collaboration with over sixty institutions that presented the art of Los Angeles in a series of public programs and exhibitions that began in the fall of 2011. Six of the exhibitions focused on Chicana/o art. *Asco: Elite of the Obscure* was curated by Rita Gonzalez and C. Ondine Chavoya and was presented by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) with the Williams College Museum of Art. *MEX/LA: Mexican Modernism(s) in Los Angeles 1930–1985* was curated by
Rubén Ortiz-Torres (with Jesse Lerner) at the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach. The umbrella project *L.A. Xicano*, organized by the Chicano Studies Research Center, presented four exhibitions: *Art Along the Hyphen: The Mexican-American Generation* (lead curator, Terezita Romo) at the Autry National Center; *Mural Remix: Sandra de la Loza*, an installation conceived and designed by the artist at LACMA; and, at UCLA’s Fowler Museum, *Mapping Another L.A.: The Chicano Art Movement* and *Icons of the Invisible: Oscar Castillo*. PST represented a milestone in the United States, not just Los Angeles. The exhibition of Chicana/o art in Los Angeles has often involved joint efforts between community-based or artist collectives, college- and university-based programs, and mainstream institutions. For instance, the 1975 coproduced group show *Chicanismo en el Arte* debuted at East Los Angeles College and LACMA and involved a large cohort of Chicana/o artists and arts advocates. The quality and quantity of exhibitions that are generated by collaborations or debates between Chicana/o arts cultural centers and mainstream institutions is probably unique to Los Angeles, and it creates an extensive discursive and institutional archive.

*Chicana/o Art since the Sixties* also elucidates the analysis of Chicana/o, Latina/o, and Latin American art beyond Los Angeles. Forms of and approaches to art are not unique to Chicana/o Los Angeles but are also found among Nuyorican artists in New York City, Mexican artists in Chicago, and Tejana/o artists in San Antonio. The troubled relations between Los Angeles mainstream art museums and community-based arts organizations—the debates, the tensions, and the uneven collaborations—apply to other sites of Latina/o cultural production. Most important, although the critical frames for visibility emerge from Los Angeles–based exhibition and curatorial practices, the amalgamated theoretical discourse can apply across a range of Chicana/o art cultural production. Los Angeles does not hold a monopoly on the use of
exhibition and curation as a site of art criticism or as a methodology for canon critique. In this way, the book contributes to an understanding of Chicana/o and Latina/o art that is based on a broader national and international perspective.

The Wisdom of *Action Portraits*

I begin my project with an analysis of Sandra de la Loza’s *Action Portraits* (2011). This groundbreaking work, which de la Loza created in collaboration with Joseph Santarromana, visually expresses the methodology and framework for my engagement with Chicana/o art. Simply put, de la Loza brings to the foreground of art discourse previously ignored or undocumented styles of Chicana/o murals painted in the 1970s. In her “double role as artist and curator,” she functions as a “performative archivist” who instructs us to return to the archive with eyes wide open.22 A component of the exhibition *Mural Remix: Sandra de la Loza* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in 2011, *Action Portraits* covered an entire wall of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation Gallery on the second floor of LACMA’s Ahmanson Building. In the three-channel video installation, six contemporary East Los Angeles muralists—identified as Fabian Debora, Roberto Del Hoyo, Raul Gonzalez, Liliflor, Sonji, and Timoi—are shown larger than life, painting their nude bodies with kaleidoscopic designs. Each muralist works methodically and somewhat theatrically, moving a large paintbrush over torso, arms, hands, neck, and face. As the brush moves, multichromatic patterns appear on the skin. De la Loza created these designs from samples drawn from color slides in the Nancy Tovar Murals of East Los Angeles Slide Collection.23 The motifs that make up the designs—natural landscapes, supergraphics, organic shapes, elements of nature, text, and symbols of life force, as well as spirals, concentric circles, and geometric and psychedelic patterns—are from the backgrounds of
extant and destroyed murals, painted in the 1970s, that “animated and activated” the walls of an important Chicana/o neighborhood.24

To create *Action Portraits*, de la Loza filmed the six muralists dipping their brushes into a bucket positioned off-screen and coating their bodies with green paint. De la Loza and Santarromana then digitally inserted the designs into the painted areas.25 The portraits of the sitters vary in duration, and in the three-panel display the portraits appear on the wall in a random loop sequence, occupying one or two of the three “canvases” at a time. The result is a seemingly infinite number of combinations, which thwart expectation and compel the viewer to watch actively. Unlike conventional portrait subjects, the muralists participate in their self-making. They determine how, at what speed, and where to apply the brush and move it across their bodies. Once completely covered, they stare directly at the camera, which captures their figures from waist to face. Raul Gonzalez starts his first stroke below his navel, at the body’s center of gravity, pulls the brush vertically to his neck, and then rapidly makes two horizontal swipes across his face (fig. 1.1). He pauses before the next stroke, gazing into the camera as if to acknowledge his awareness of the viewer’s inspection. The “paint” on his face recalls Hollywood’s depictions of Indian warriors and shamans, and in that moment he looks ready for battle or ritual. Fabian Debora also conveys his recognition of public scrutiny. After he completes his portrait, Debora holds the paintbrush like a weapon of defiance, firmly gripping the handle and staging the brush below his waist (fig. 1.2).26

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Figure 1.1. Sandra de la Loza, in collaboration with Joseph Santarromana, *Action Portraits* (still from digital video), 2011
Figure 1.2. Sandra de la Loza, in collaboration with Joseph Santarromana, *Action Portraits* (still from digital video), 2011

*Action Portraits* points to the invisibility of psychedelia, supergraphics, organic shapes, text, and nature motifs in art historical accounts of Chicana/o murals—an absence that was produced by scholars’ overemphasis on political realism as the only significant aesthetic produced during the Chicano movement. Similarly, by directing us to the multiplicity of these motifs, de la Loza undercuts the anticipated and conventional art discourse. By manipulating and reframing the very objects—East Los Angeles murals—that have become canonized as Chicana/o art, or that have been dismissed as cliché in some circles, *Action Portraits* invites a rethinking of Chicana/o art history and the historical, social, and aesthetic frameworks that make Chicana/o cultural production visible. We come to recognize, as de la Loza did in her study of the Tovar Collection, that Chicana/o artists of the 1970s applied a range of styles, techniques, and designs to their East LA murals.

Following de la Loza’s methodology, I look closely at Chicana/o art since the 1960s to identify and theorize the ignored, forgotten, or undocumented aspects of cultural production. *Chicana/o Art since the Sixties* documents and analyzes works, artists, experiences, and practices that have been overlooked due to prevailing theoretical conventions and disciplinary boundaries. I put these conventions aside to investigate anew artistic production, interpretation, curatorial practice, and collecting in multiple arenas. This research presents a panorama of Chicana/o art between 1963 and 2013 that includes exhibitions, institutions, private collections, and artists’ aesthetic experiences, as well as curatorial discourse and art criticism. I demonstrate how each of
these functions as an important site of knowledge and cultural production.

Because this is the first book to look at Chicana/o art from the 1960s through the first decade of the twenty-first century, and because it accounts for processes and practices across the so-called political and commercial phases of Chicana/o art, I am able to interrogate assumptions about Chicana/o art during and after the Chicano movement. For example, what is accomplished when a contemporary Chicana artist confronts the expectations about her identity? In *Action Portraits*, the arbitrary combination of portraits within the triptych calls attention to the multiple and complex subject positions—societal placements determined by prevailing discourses of race, gender, and so on—of what we recognize as “community” and “self” as well as “art” and “artist.” In this work de la Loza breaks out from the singular index. As brown skin, tattoos, and faces are covered, personal identity is obscured and collective subjectivity is amplified as the “portrait” is completed. As multichromatic images cover brown flesh, the viewer is forced to focus on the mural motifs, and the muralists’ bodies become the canvas that holds the image. The muralists participate in the obfuscation of their self-portraits. For instance, the female muralists appear with their breasts already painted, an act that disguises sex and gender and denies sexualized viewing (see fig. 1.1). By withholding racialized and gendered readings of the muralists’ bodies, de la Loza increases the resonance of a communal location and place.

The tension between public and private representation and performance of the self is built into the work through the placement of the camera and the framing of the muralists’ bodies. The spectator observes several muralists, for example, painstakingly painting each finger, making sure that no flesh is exposed. Once the portraits are complete, however, the muralists’ hands fall outside the video frame. The covering of the body—the action—is meant for the viewer, but the entire figure is not intended for the viewer’s gaze. The work tacitly forbids the appropriation of
the artist and the community. De la Loza reinforces the act of withholding by omitting the muralists’ voices from the video. The viewer cannot hear the cheerful conversation Timoi is having with someone off-screen. Her lips shape words, her face opens into a smile, and her eyes respond to conversation, but the viewer hears nothing. De la Loza recognizes that public and private visibility are connected without collapsing the distance between them. Portraiture yes, but self-representation is not offered for wholesale consumption. The work makes the viewer aware that “the visual field cannot provide full knowledge of a person,” as Amelia Jones observes about Rachel Garfield’s video installation So You Think You Can Tell (2000). When the muralists in Action Portraits gaze at the camera or hold the brush as a weapon, they tacitly acknowledge the forces that have shaped their self-making, recalling Bryan Jay Wolf’s observation that “art comes into being not by naming its sources, the forces which make it possible, but by effacing, erasing them.” It is the art historian’s task, recommends Wolf, “to understand the anxieties, tensions, contradictions, overdeterminations, and resolutions (both personal and social)” that an artwork does not display.31

In Action Portraits de la Loza insists that the muralists’ bodies—and the public memories of East Los Angeles—are not meant for appropriation. A relevant art history must insist on the visibility of Chicana/o artists and their work, but not as exotic, foreign, primitive, or other. Previous efforts to analyze Chicana/o art have resulted in the untenable charges that Chicana/o art is “too ethnic,” “too female,” or “not Chicano enough,” proclamations that do little to illuminate the aesthetic process, its social conditions, or the work itself. In this way, Action Portraits pushes us to a theoretical framework that acknowledges Chicana/o art as a historically contingent and spatially informed process of self-making, even as it extends beyond the process. Action Portraits additionally signals that Chicana/o art has emerged from an epistemology that is
grounded in spatial, embodied, affective, and relational meaning. The muralists perform the activity of self-making with great intensity and concentration. They place the brush deliberately, their hands seeking the sensation their bodies know—a patch of flesh is showing on the underside of the arm, a spot on the forehead needs another coat of paint, or the brush moves systematically across the torso in a series of horizontal strokes as the mind’s eye traces a grid. *Action Portraits* suggests that the artists’ proprioception is not only physical, providing them with an awareness of their bodies in space and the relative location of each limb, but also societal: they are aware of a sense of place, whether within the city of Los Angeles, or the field of Chicana/o art, or American art history more generally. Their knowledge of place is indistinguishable from their knowledge of themselves. When this social proprioception includes attentiveness to power dynamics, it becomes what Chela Sandoval identifies as oppositional consciousness, a critical awareness and strategy for action that intertwines ways of thinking to respond to inequality and injustice.32

Sandra de la Loza’s remix of the visual record tells us that what we thought we knew about Chicana/o art is likely insufficient, if not mistaken. The sampling, the kaleidoscope technique, and the remixing of background as foreground remind us that art histories are social constructions that can legitimate some works and some artists while rendering others invisible. Her engagement with the archive becomes a form of critical interrogation of the subjective quality of knowledge production and of the framing of Chicana/o art. *Action Portraits* skillfully rejects an essentialist reading of the very art form that has been employed to support the narrow interpretation or dismissal of Chicana/o art. By subverting the anticipated iconography, de la Loza refocuses our gaze without apology. Similarly, this book intervenes in standard discourses of American, Latin American, and Chicana/o art history by remixing the exhibition record as
well as the critical weight of specific exhibitions. It also offers new information—for example, about artists’ travel in Europe and Asia, the for-profit activities of arts organizations, the advocacy of private collectors—without dismissal or apology. *Chicana/o Art since the Sixties*, too, functions as canon critique.

In the end, Sandra de la Loza’s *Action Portraits* demonstrates that the visibility of Chicana/o art is tied to the historicization of the work. She holds scholars accountable to the historical context, but she does not pretend to have resolved the postmodern dilemma, which asks, “Whose history?” Nevertheless, the artist consistently directs the viewer to a counterhistory rather than the status quo. In her new approach to the art historical record, de la Loza does not dismiss the social and political mobilizations that activate Chicana/o communities, and she does not disregard the conditions that gave rise to mural production in Los Angeles. *Action Portraits* operates not in the space of shame, ambivalence, or apology, but as an ethical challenge intended to open the discourse and expand, not contract, how we consider Chicana/o art. If we make Chicana/o art visible, then it must be seen in terms that take account of the artist’s proprioception (expanded to include their knowledge of themselves and their relative location within art history), the actual context and content of the work, and the hegemonic imperatives of coloniality, patriarchy, and racism that caused its invisibility. Sandra de la Loza may not have intended a reorientation of the field, but she offers a model for challenging the tools that have conventionally been used to animate the field.

**Introducing Anzaldúan Thought to Art History**

Following Sandra de la Loza’s visual charge, I aim to historicize Chicana/o art in Los Angeles in ways that push beyond the current limits of American and Chicana/o art histories. My project
relies on Emma Pérez’s notion of the “decolonial imaginary.” I begin by following tactics and spaces in which Chicana/o art is visible, analyzed, and theorized. I also consider topics that other critics describe as parochial or anachronistic in an effort to disqualify those charges that I interpret as a practice of invisibility. Decolonial theory posits that invisibility—in this case that of Chicana/o art within the fields of American and Latin American art, and even in some cases within the field of Chicana/o art—is rooted in the histories of colonialism, imperialism, material and political dispossession, and legal and discursive exclusion from citizenship. A decolonial framework recognizes that the “master’s tools” have been inadequate to reveal, let alone dismantle, the hegemonic framework of art criticism. The historical and contemporary racialization of Mexicans as criminals, perpetual foreigners, and immigrants who are straining the economy and cultural fabric of the nation; the militarization of the southern geopolitical border; the longterm detention of hundreds of thousands of migrants at deportation centers, away from public and legal scrutiny, in the name of national security; gendered violence against Mexican women and Chicanas in the health care system and institutions ostensibly designed to uphold democracy and liberty; the subtractive language model of K–12 public education, which leads to the loss of Spanish proficiency within five years of schooling; the segregation of the labor market and housing; the contemporary disavowal or commercial appropriation of identity and culture—all create the conditions that obscure or reject Chicana/o art. This obfuscation and rejection has served racial, material, gender, sexual, and other hierarchies and privileges in American society and scholarship.

I intentionally employ historical description and formal analysis in my exploration of largely uncharted territory because this interdisciplinary method supports a politics of visibility—that is, it attends to the political and cultural conditions under which Chicana/o art
critics, historians, curators, teachers, and collectors engage the work. As Priscilla Wald reminds us, “History [needs] to be rewritten not only to register past injustices but also because history—the story of the past—justifies the institutions and structures of the present.” My goal is to question art history’s structures, methods, and institutions. If I am successful, my narration will draw attention to the ways in which Chicana/o art is a decolonial practice. This book is itself a function of the decolonial imaginary and “a form of reparation.” At the heart of this project is the exposure of a myth: that artists and art exist outside history. Although I do not directly engage with this premise, this book works as a counternarrative to the dismissal of identity-based art. For a broad range of scholars, curators, and critics, identity, as well as subjectivity and positionality, is “something we might be better off without.” This suggests that the universal legibility of cultural production occurs when artists rise above local meaning. I suggest instead that the power of Chicana/o art originates in its ability to access local meaning. Equally important is its ability to register with viewers who are outside the immediate context of Chicana/o experiences. I am fascinated by the ways in which Chicana/o art blends and exceeds the categories of local and global, regional and universal, or collective distinction and individuality.

A politics of visibility is intertwined with notions of accountability. This insistence on accountability is not a gatekeeping function or claim to authenticity, nor does it seek political isolation. It is simply an acknowledgment of the dynamics that made the body of work known as Chicana/o art invisible within American and Latin American art historiography. Visibility cannot be achieved without a recognition of the conversations underway within critical ethnic and feminist studies, and it cannot require the denial of the proper name of this art in any of its formations and negotiations, including Mexican American, Chicano, Xicana, Jotería, Indigena,
or Latin@. The current model of accommodation and assimilation—gaining access, seeking integration, achieving economic success—risks the further appropriation of Chicana/o art and, tragically, its further exclusion from its place within American and Latin American art historiography. My aim is to make the presence of Chicana/o art within mainstream or authorizing museums, collections, and criticism serve the collective project of emancipation, social justice, dignity, and empowerment. To do otherwise would only boost assimilationist rhetoric, the lifeblood of American cultural hegemony and extend its articulation within art history. Chicana/o art cannot gain critical acceptance only to be used as reinforcement for negative stereotypes of Mexicans, a patriarchal or homophobic gaze, or racial and cultural hierarchies that dehumanize Chicana/os and privilege whiteness. At the deepest level, then, *Chicana/o Art since the Sixties* confronts the ideological and material dimensions of white racial primacy and its ability to inhabit and control knowledge production. This study is a reparative measure because it recognizes that our public institutions of art—whether involved in education, art production, or art preservation—are unsustainable. The demography of the United States, as actor and collector Cheech Marin proudly points out, has shifted, and Chicanos and Chicanas are currently “the mainstream” simply by their numeric presence and transcultural influence.39

This book also considers mestiza consciousness, which Gloria Anzaldúa describes as taking shape at the moment when the terms *domestic* and *foreign*—or *self* and *other*—have “lost their semantic tidiness.”40 However, I do assume that the terms were tidy during an earlier period and become less tidy in the twenty-first century. Although Anzaldúaan scholarship has yet to take up permanent residency within art history, I aim to join these intellectual discourses.41 While few art historians would support the statement that culture is bounded by race/ethnicity or gender, this dated notion consistently appears as an undercurrent in discussions about nonwhite artists
who are conceived as completely separate or inherently distinct from a white population. Specifically, art history lacks a theory of the borderlands—one that ventures beyond simplistic understandings of cultural assimilation or separatism—and this omission supports the current vilification of ethnic-identified artists and their work. By linking my work to Anzaldúan social analysis, I contribute to the practice of ending what Chela Sandoval has called “academic apartheid.” In this way, Chicana/o Art since the Sixties aims to bridge disciplinary distinctions that privilege European and European American social critics over feminists of color in the United States.

As AnaLouise Keating demonstrates, Anzaldúan thought provides an analytic lens for comprehending local and global movement and dispersal across racialized, gendered, sexed, and material borders. By considering the local and international movement of not only people but also ideas and cultural products across racialized and material borders, it also explores transhistorical subjectivities, such as Xican@ indigeneity and the desire of Xican@ people to claim a native presence in the nation, in the past, and in contemporary cultures. In the Americas transnational flows take many forms, most of which are unacknowledged or denied by nationalistic rhetoric, which promotes a singular body politic. Many Chicana/o artists follow a different cultural logic: a willingness to extend temporally (transhistorically) and spatially (transnationally) across the Americas, and to do so in ways that exceed national identifiers that guide the current methods and boundaries of art history.

By tracing art exhibitions, arts organizations, artists’ lives and work, and collections, Chicana/o Art since the Sixties attempts a more capacious art history. As I grapple with the limits, errors, and omissions of a field of study, I extend the recuperative project that began in the 1960s to bring the voices of Chicana/o artists, curators, collectors, and advocates into view and
to understand their agency as theory. I aim to reposition from the margins, the art, the work, organizations, and practices of Chicana/o art. The book is expansive, with an investigative reach of five decades, even as its spatial location is precise. Although focused solely on the Los Angeles area, it delves deeply into each of its topics: presentations of art, the ways artists construct an infrastructure to present or sell their work, the paths of discovery as the artists formulate their aesthetic styles, and the ways collectors and mainstream arts institutions respond to the broad range of Chicana/o art.

Organization of the Book

In this wide-ranging study, each chapter offers new material and ways of thinking about Chicana/o art and can stand on its own as a case study of Chicana/o art. Chapter 2 documents the appearance of counterdiscourse since 1975 to argue that Chicana/o art criticism is produced through “the errata exhibition,” a term I have coined to describe a type of visual arts practice that challenges interpretations made by the so-called public museum and offers critical and visual engagement with mainstream art museums.46 By staging errata exhibitions, Chicana/o arts organizations offer alternative knowledge production, art criticism, and history of Chicana/o art. Using an interdisciplinary method that combines formalism with socio-historical analysis, the chapter describes the conceptual frame for visibility that I employ throughout the book.

Chapter 3 travels into uncharted territory regarding Chicana/o arts organizations. Following the methodology of Sandra de la Loza, I return to the archive and bring new or previously ignored information to the forefront. Focusing on the period 1969–78, the chapter illustrates how the earliest ventures operated with complex and nuanced views about commerce, politics, community, and the arts. This chapter documents how Goez Art Studios and Gallery and
Mechicano Art Center moved between for-profit and nonprofit endeavors, linking commerce and art, engaging in cross-cultural collaboration, and advocating for social transformation and the potentiality of Chicana/o art and the communities from which it emerges.

Chapter 4 also takes the reader to unmapped territory by analyzing the international influences that inform the work of Chicana/o artists. Very little has been written about the impact of non-Chicana/o or non-Mexican aesthetics on the artwork produced by Chicana/os. Researchers overlook how European art influences Chicana/o artists. For instance, during an oral history interview for the Smithsonian Institution, Jeffrey Rangel disregards Gilbert “Magu” Sánchez Luján’s remark that he was stationed for three years in England. Magu states that he joined the Air Force specifically for the GI Bill and “to go overseas and see the world,” but at this point Rangel changes the subject. By taking up a topic that has been dismissed since the earliest formations of Chicana/o art history, I argue that any analysis of Chicana/o art must recognize the social proprioception of the artist. This attentiveness to self-in-relation produces a new language and framework for comprehending the realities of aesthetic influence while acknowledging the politics of visibility. Looking closely at specific works of art, I show that Chicana/o artists craft a visual language that is both local and global, even combining visual aesthetic practices across historical moments.

In chapter 5 I argue that Chicana/o art collectors in Los Angeles embody the public emplacement of Chicana/o art, offering a new map for understanding cultural production. Their collecting practices are living corrections to the art historical record housed inside local and national museums that claim to safeguard the aesthetic achievements of the region, nation, or world. It is within private collections that the archive of Chicana/o art is maintained, preserved, and protected. Collectors in Los Angeles have created informal and formal groups to share and
celebrate their work, and in this way, I argue, Chicana/o art collectors function as “critical witnesses” to the national and international injustice of neglect and invisibility.48

Chapter 6 returns to the methodology of Sandra de la Loza, presenting a remix of the Chicana/o art exhibitions produced in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The Road to Aztlan: Art from a Mythic Homeland (2001) and Asco: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972–1987 (2011) are the main focus. This remix allows new narratives and visual aesthetics, and it brings forgotten histories into the foreground—specifically that of the early exhibition 4 Chicano Artists (1970–71).

Chicana/o Art since the Sixties concludes with an invitation to create, expand, and explore the archive of Chicana/o art. Unlike Chicana/o literary criticism, which can be distinguished by a variety of interpretative frameworks such as cultural nationalist, poststructuralist, Marxist, feminist, queer, and gothic, scholarly work on American and Chicana/o art has taken a much narrower approach. Therefore we have much work ahead of us. In raising this call, I recognize the difficulty of dismantling ideological and structural fortresses that have made it difficult to see Chicana/o art. I am inspired by the art itself, especially its arrival in unexpected places. Therefore, the bulk of the closing chapter is devoted to three delightful tales about Chicana/o art exhibitions and what they foretell for the future and the questions we are asking about art.