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In the Valleys:

Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle and Chicana Art in the San Joaquin Valley

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Carissa Marina Garcia

2016

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2016

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

In the Valleys:

Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle and Chicana Art in the San Joaquin Valley

by

Carissa Marina Garcia

Master of Arts in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Judith F. Baca, Chair

Three years ago I found my mother's name in a book about muralism throughout California. Not knowing my mother as a "public" artist, I pursued an intimate investigation on Chicana artists in public vs. alternative spaces. This thesis explores the process of making a short documentary film, that focused on two artists Cecilia Aranaydo and Silvia Figueroa Garcia (my mother) from an early Chicana art collective in the San Joaquin Valley called *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* (1978). As we dig through the memories of constructing their only mural, which was whitewashed and destroyed shortly after its construction, we uncover what it means to be a Chicana artist in California's San Joaquin Valley. This research aims to develop an experiential lens in understanding Chicana Art by asking, when we're dealing with histories of erasure and censorship, is a name in a book—representation—enough? Should art production merely be evaluated through the product, often losing the artist's social and political location? A particular focus is posed on how and why the artists moved from public muralism to private crafting collective spaces, exploring connections to the rural and urban divide of the Central Valley and the artists' connection to place, space and memory.

The thesis of Carissa Marina Garcia is approved.

Anne J. Gilliland

Susan J. Plann

Judith F. Baca, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

Dedicated to the Chicana artists who paved the way, in recognition of your struggles, sacrifices and triumphs. And to my beloved San Joaquin Valley and its many unearthed but never forgotten stories.

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Acknowledgments

I am not sure that I knew exactly what I was getting into when starting a doctoral program. I surely did not know how grueling the hours would be and how the exhaustion would bear on my body. Add in a chronic illness and any sort of personal difficulties and the route often felt impossible. For these reasons I am incredibly thankful to my tireless mentors, Judy Baca, Renee Tajima-Peña, Charlene Villaseñor-Black, Virginia Espino, Lizette Guerra, Elena Esparza, and Maria Cristina Pons, who helped me maintain perspective and gave me the truth and the ganas I needed to push forward. These mentors were not just advisors to my work but holistic healers and guides who checked in on me when I was ill and encouraged alternative routes to make this journey possible. I have found so much love and power in relationships with women of color.

Introduction

While taking a course at UCLA titled "Beyond Mexican Muralism" with professor Judy Baca, I found my mother's name, Silvia Figueroa[1], written into the pages of *Signs from the Heart*, as a Chicana muralist from Fresno with *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* (Cockroft, 40). A single paragraph composed the entire Chicana art history in Fresno:

> Women have been very active in Bay area muralism. As with Judith Baca, who played a pioneering role in Southern California in an artistic genre where women's participation was discouraged by convention and their menfolk, the Mujeres [Mujeres Muralistas from San Francisco] were both germinal and inspirational for women artists of Northern California. Many like Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle of Fresno took courage from their example. Fifteen Fresno women including Helen González, Cecilia Risco, Sylvia Figueroa, Theresa Vásquez, and Lupe González, started work in 1977 on an outdoor 60x80 foot [corrected: 60x8 foot] mural for a Parlier labor camp which was funded by La Brocha del Valle. Vandalized a year later with the words "The white race is the right race," it was restored and housed indoors.

The strength of *Signs from the Heart* was in revealing a blueprint of Chicana/o muralism, a widely contested art form. From my intimate connections with the artists the book seemed to lack strikingly in a connection to their life stories. I began to question not only normative forms of academic knowledge production, but also, where in the relationship between my mother and I this information got lost. Why didn't I know my mother was a public artist? Does this single mural make her a public artist? I could not help but wonder, when dealing with histories of erasure and censorship, is a name in a book—representation--enough? Should art production merely be evaluated through the product, losing the artist's social and political location*?*

For two years, as I filmed interviews with *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* (*Las Mujeres,* for short), I traveled the road between Fresno and Los Angeles, anticipating the vastness of land,

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[1] Her married name is now Silvia Garcia.

sky, and freeway that signaled home. My position as a researcher is both from afar—from my new home in Los Angeles, from the outside looking in, and also from here, from this place—this "x" I mark in the fields of my San Joaquin Valley hometown— the inside looking out. Although this liminal perspective allows flexibility and a multitude of analyses, I do not take the border crossing lightly. In many ways working between and transcending dualities, has become central to my research methodology as a Chicana artist from the Central San Joaquin Valley researching Chicana artists from the Central San Joaquin Valley. I assert myself from within, not with the authority of access but with the sensitivity to the land and to alternative stories not easily captured by another researcher.

Through the process this research has become multifaceted, approaching the fields of oral history, art history, archival studies, Chicana feminisms, ethnography and performance studies. As the narrative of *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* developed, efforts to film their story were not to put them in spotlight, but to add to the field an expanded view of Chicana artistic production through a place-specific investigation, a space of closeness. What has developed is a *Valley Conocimiento*, rooted in place and a difference in landscape, cultural production, and aesthetics. I frame the research in the work of Chicana feminists who seek stories of difference and dive deeper into the margins, the "Valleys" as I call them here. This framework allows me to place *Las Mujeres* back into conversation with Chicana artistic production without notions of acquiescence and position their social and political locations. Thus, tracing the movements of these valleys means not asserting my own posture or objectivity but reflexively following footsteps, to uncover what has been erased.

A key component to my methodology has been the reflection on my relationship to the artists, especially the difficulty of working between authority and agency in the filmmaking

process in the most intimate spaces of home. Researching from "home" made me think intently about resources and platforms to tell their stories, while also negotiating the push and pull of wanting, and, at times, needing to be fully present to do the work. Populating this archive with a fuller story includes portraits of two artists, Cecilia Aranaydo and Silvia Garcia, from *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*, weaving their personal narrative with a visual analysis of the mural they constructed. The recovery of memory is central to the research process here, and in conclusion I focus on how the process of filmmaking can work through memory to uncover invisibility and silences. This research is thus located in the embodied and situated knowledges[2], not assuming that the peripheries/margins/valleys constitute an absolute or an ultimate site of understanding, but that narratives from these spaces add to a network of differentiated stories, a network of Chicana artists throughout California, working transnationally and globally.

[2] A term used by Donna Harraway in *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* to describe the mutually constructed subject/object relationship.

Chapter I

Sites of Exclusion/Emergence

Reconstructing the narrative of *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* warrants a framework and genealogy focused on disjunctures and critical interventions in the field. Rather than simply extracting “found” information and weaving it into a dominant narrative, in this review of literature, I frame Chicana art production as an act of differential movement within the decolonial imaginary, not tracing conversations around linearity or development but centering on the margins and valleys of exclusion, alternative spaces, and the imaginary.

The foundational discourse on Chicana Art stems from a historical move from the male-centered Chicano art spaces in addition to spaces dedicated to a white-centered feminist art movement. In “Chicana Art and Scholarship on the Interstices of Our Disciplines,” Guisela Latorre seeks to understand why there is so little written about the production of Chicana artists. Delving deeper into the historical fractures, she states “Chicana feminist aesthetics emerge from an interstitial and bordered space wedged somewhere between feminist epistemologies and Chicano nationalism, among other discourses, refusing to stake allegiances to any one ideological camp” (11). She argues that looking toward the interstices, the margins, the silences created in the discourse, provides a lens of recovery. For Latorre, looking at sexuality in Chicana art, serves as her intervention in the recuperation of a Chicana aesthetic. Critically engaged with the scholarship on Chicana artists and framed in historical genealogy of Chicana art production, Latorre sets the foundation for further study of Chicana art. However, as the cache of scholarship grows, I would add that the politics of location adds a crucial layer, warranting place-based studies.

Without spaces to create, Chicana artists reimagined their work by turning to both public and collective spaces. In *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals,* Cockcroft, Eva and Holly Barnet-Sánchez focus on public muralism, looking at how and why community-based methods of art production developed out of the Chicano Movement. The authors look historically at muralism, from the post-industrial revolution development of the art world system, to the Mexican Revolution and Mexican muralists politically charged social realism. Public art from the Chicano perspective is redefined as a collective vision for a community, a form of reclamation of culture and a place to represent identity. As the book that began my headfirst research into *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* and the first to publish scholarship on their contributions, only a short paragraph details their work. In an effort to amass a wide lens view of Chicano muralism, in-depth stories are washed over. This method of survey although important in situating a movement is missing the artist's voices.

Turning away from the traditional and Eurocentric forms of evaluating art production, María Ochoa, in *Creative Collectives: Chicana Painters Working in Community*, weaves personal narrative with social and historical context to create a dialogic oral history process. Her study focuses on the identity construction of Chicanas working toward a collective form of artistic and cultural representation that reflects a call to action toward social justice. By understanding women as active agents in quotidian life she looks at strategies employed by collectivities that reflect everyday resistance. This approach is at the crux of my interventions, utilizing oral history methods to maintain the social agency of artists through their own vernacular and quotidian lives.

Distinguishing the gaps in scholarship about Chicana artists sets up the framework I use for excavating erasure. Chicana feminist projects have worked toward reversing the historical

erasure of Chicana voices, mapping out spaces to re-insert their narratives. Emma Perez in the *Decolonial Imaginary* recovers sites of erasure by looking at the genealogy of Chicana identity and sexuality, producing a counter hegemonic space by which to insert Chicana Feminist thought into the discourse. Her concern is with the authority of a male-dominated *his*tory, the colonial historiography of linearity, and the search for authenticity of fact and origin based on the false pretense of objectivity. For Perez, "There is no pure, authentic, original history. There are only stories—many stories" (xv). By looking at different knowledge systems and drawing mainly from Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* and *genealogy*, Perez digs vertically instead of horizontally to uncover a Chicana historiography that opposes power and creates a space for change. Rather than looking to situate power, she moves in the metahistorical decolonial space, which she terms the *Decolonial Imaginary*. Perez creates important new tools for theoretical intervention, by tackling the epistemological issue of a colonial historiography, dismantling the tools used to reiterate colonial discursive practices. These tools become the foundation for any historical investigation that seeks decoloniality and the recovery of narratives in the margins.

Similarly, Chela Sandoval, in *The Methodology of the Oppressed,* provides methods of intervention against a system of global capitalism and toward coalition building, emancipation, and love. She theorizes a *differential* mode of oppositional consciousness, drawing from the subjectivity of U.S. Third World Feminists during the social movements of the seventies and eighties. Focusing on the intersectional subjectivity of marginalized women-of-color, she refers to a shifting practice employed to navigate power, it "functions like the clutch of an automobile, the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage, and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power"(Sandoval, 75). The framework of the differential calls for a multivalent theory that merges the practices of shifting subjectivities with other oppositional forms of

recognizing and decoding power. Looking at the differential helps me understand how U.S. Third World Feminists—like *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*—existed in the margins and also how they enacted the space as a site of change.

The Chicana Art field emerged along with the Chicana feminist movement through conversations about internal marginalization and lack of representation in both fields. Chicana artists challenged patriarchal colonial forms of representation by focusing on gender and sexuality, which was excluded by the male dominated Chicano discourse. Critiques of race and class were shared amongst Chicana/o artists to counter the Eurocentrism of the wider art world. Continuing the development of differential narratives is not a move simply toward representation but toward decolonial efforts to change hegemonic discourses, locating sites of erasure to recover the stories of Chicana artists, setting into motion several important questions that are at the center of my research investigations: How can we further locate sites of erasure and emergence to recover the stories of Chicana artists? And, how do we write about Chicana Artists without losing their social and political location? In this study, the recuperation of knowledge is enacted through embodied memory and place, centering in the San Joaquin Valley, a place of production that has been outside of dominant narratives about "public" and "urban" artistic production and concentrating on the embodied experiences of Chicana artists creating alternative forms of art productions from the peripheries and intimate collective spaces.

Tracing Movements

> "If the art of oral history begs the question of authority as well as agency, the visual life history does so even more."

--Ishizuka and Nakamura, "Adding the
Visual to Oral History"

Since very little had been written about *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*, interviews became a necessary means of data collection. However, the driving exploration behind my methodological development was forged by a concern whether filming the interviews would add to the study. Ishizuka and Nakamura posit, "for people of color, because we have been hidden from view—even from ourselves—it is not only important to record our thoughts and hear our words, it is important to see our faces" (46). I agreed wholeheartedly that seeing the women means seeing us "as we are" but when I thought of my shy mother, how she blushes when put on the spot and never wants to publically speak, I had my reservations that the women would even agree to be on camera (Ishizuka and Nakamura, 47). In this way, I found my training as a visual ethnographer outweighed my training as an oral historian, drawing upon a type of documentary filmmaking in intimate spaces, based on relationships rather than the search for fact or truth.

Filmmaker and visual ethnographer, David MacDougall is concerned with how the relationship to subjects moves us away from the spectacle and into the intimate spaces on film, where power—between the filmmaker and subject—is negotiated and subjects carry on with their everyday lives, senses of place as well as corporeality reveal nuanced histories, memories, and stories. Visual anthropology scholars Ana Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz explain that the advent of Observational Cinema following Cinema Verité constituted an observational method that was no longer about objectivity and moved toward developing intimacy, relationships, and continuities ("Social Observers," 5). MacDougall also describes the historical relationship between photography and film as a progression toward closeness with the film's subjects in

simultaneity of time and space that expresses "the intersubjectivity of the participants" (50; 245). Documentary films became less about reflecting a true representation and more about a reflexive connection of subjectivity that rejects the myth of objectivity.

Through preliminary phone conversations with my mother, Silvia Garcia, and her friend and fellow muralista, Cecilia Aranaydo, I learned two important additions to the story of *La Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* that would later steer the way I conducted my research. First, I realized that locating the eight women named on the mural would not simply be a matter of snowball connections. *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* had formed only for the one mural project, not as an organic women's organization, so the majority of the women never kept in touch and had very little contact after the mural construction. In addition, many of the women had changed their names after marriage and moved to different parts of the state. What I imagined would be a sweeping investigation including all eight of the women, quickly moved into a series of three in-depth interviews with the two women with whom I had already been in contact, Silvia and Cecilia. The focus of the study turned from the formation of *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* toward a broader understanding of what it meant to be an early Chicana artist in the Central Valley, allowing for richer life history accounts and a filmmaking process that I could manage on my own.

Secondly, I learned that after the mural was whitewashed, it was taken down and housed for future restoration but shortly thereafter the storehouse burned down in a fire and the mural was forever lost. This story off loss, prompted hours of digging in garages looking for traces of archival evidence, photos, slides, newspaper articles describing the incident, which both Cecilia and Silvia described having at some point, but through moves and borrowing had lost. However,

in a moment of excitement we were able to recover slides[3] in great condition, tucked away in Silvia Garcia's garage. Panel-by-panel shots meant that after developing the images in the vibrancy of restored colored, we were able to digitally reconstruct the mural (fig. 1) for the first time in almost 35 years.

Although I there was much preparation and many conversations before the formal process of interviews began, nothing would prepare me for the moment of exchange as I took up a camera and began interviewing. I scheduled the first interview with Silvia and drove the four hours to my hometown, Fresno, California, with my film equipment in tow. Even though I had clear questions in mind, I made an agreement with myself, that I would not let formalities overtake the interview process and allow my mother to share at her own pace. The first visit did not go as I imagined and our mutual discomfort was palpable my entire stay that weekend. My notes that day exposed the difficulty:

> After work, even though we had scheduled this time for our interview, my mother proceeds to her bedroom and closes the door. I walk into her dark room and she is thrown diagonally across the bed, feet against her pillow and her head at the foot posts. I think initially that she looks like a child, passed out after a long day of play. Is she avoiding me? But then I remember *who* my mother is. She's tired. She has worked a full day as the only person with a steady job in the household. She needs help, not me here with a pesky camera adding more tasks to her daily life. I also recognize her nature; she's shy and doesn't like formality. She will never take the stage and this idea is at the very core of my investigation—how she makes a concerted effort to object the analytical and I cannot expect to conduct myself in this manner either.
>
> I sit on the bed next to her and say, "mom, don't worry, if you want to do this tomorrow, it's ok." I return to the dinner table and think of what I can say when she awakes. I spend the rest of the evening reflecting on my intentions. I haven't been specific enough with her—or even myself—about what I'm here for and it shows in our lost communication. When she awakes I imagine I will tell her that I'm not here to talk with her formally over the camera, just to catch glimpses of her life as she cooks, as she creates, even her tiredness, and the

[3] A second set of slides belonging to Cecilia Aranaydo exist but were given to an unknown researcher who never returned the slides

> busyness of the household. But instead, I start dinner and when she awakes she peels papas and we spend the evening enjoying each other's company.[4]

I realized that in my desire to engage in a casual conversation, I was not clear enough with my mother about my intentions. In an interview with Chon Noriega and Teresa Barnett, Karen Mary Davalos speaks of the necessity for a collaborative mode of oral history interviewing where the interviewee has control over the questions covered, she states "It's not acceptable to spring it on them at the last minute" (118). Davalos encourages the flexibility and collaborative ability of the researcher in order to capture what she calls the *reflective voice* through oral histories (131). The reflective voice is not captured in moments of informal conversation as I had assumed but in the in-depth process of engaging memory. The "casual" conversation is built over time—through carefully crafted questions that sought to recover memory and a relationship built through clear intentions.

After our third interview, I felt like we broke ground and I developed a method for engaging with my mother. I removed the camera from its tripod and began filming her in the practice of jewelry making. For the first time I was comfortable getting close. From the closer perspective, sounds became richer and suddenly the pouring of beads echoed the tediousness of her work. Her careful sigh and focused attention to her task released our mutual discomfort. We realized we were engaged in art-making together, I with my camera, and she, with her beads. In a reflexive moment, she states, "actually, I enjoyed this since you started doing it" (Garcia). Her statement illuminated our interactions in this fashion before; we have shared in the creation of many things, and although we had to negotiate to see this particular engagement in the same way, we were creating together again. After our interview, off camera, she tells me, "I see things differently

[4] Field notes. 4/07/14

now, I see your vision." This *co-creative relationship* is a methodology I feel useful in describing my interviewing and filmmaking process, as both a subjective art form and an engaged form of research.

I used the same methodology when approaching interviews with Cecilia, taking care this time to send her my interview script and let her make any changes necessary. We had several meetings and exchanges over the phone and via social media before she agreed to interviews and before the camera ever went into her home. Still, as I imagined, the camera changed the course of our interviews. At times, Cecilia would look directly into the camera, aware of an audience. Ishizuka and Nakamura suggest that videotaping a life history interview "alters the social construction of data collection, and it assumes an audience, which functions to enhance the performativity of the interview" (35). It was clear, in the interviews with both women that there was a dance, a movement between their story and a larger audience and between them and the audience of one, me. The intimate moments I looked for, those that were filled with affectual glances and the closeness of careful wording and warm tone, were actually the moments shared not with a wider audience but between my mother and I, and Cecilia and I, a moment of transmission in a multigenerational conversation about the struggles faced by Chicana artists in the Central Valley and their interventions made in resistance.

The negotiations of these relationships took me to the intimate spaces of the women's houses, in backyards, tucked between netting, in their crafting garage spaces and across kitchen tables. Yet, no matter how close we have become, we are constantly negotiating the multiple levels of power in our relationship. The authority of the camera, and being the person asking questions, asserts a power that I continue to confront. Patai addresses this power dynamic in the article "Is Ethical Research Possible?" stating, "in an unethical world, we cannot truly do ethical

research" (150). Even from my place as an insider, in the most intimate of relationships with my very own mother, conducting research is not without a relationship to power. It is up to me to continue explaining that I just want to work along side her and learn, knowing that we will find better ways of collaborating but never eradicate the power dynamic. Ishizuka and Nakamura suggest that "those of us who use the camera as a means of data collection would be wise to turn a critical eye on ourselves and provide a reflexive account of how we do what we do, resulting in a more transparent and rigorous analysis of videotaping as a methodology" (36). Although I do not presume to have any answers, my process discloses how authority and agency play a tremendous role in calling for a style of filmmaking that mixes oral history and visual ethnographic methods, based on an intersubjective relationship between the filmmaker and participants built over time and with clear intentions and purpose.

Through the Archive

> "To listen carefully is to preserve. But to preserve is to burn, for understanding a meaning" --Trinh T. Minh-Ha, "Woman, Native, Other"

The archive as I refer to it here, is not the just the mural itself, or the paper trail that acts as visual evidence, but the process of recovery and remembrance. The archive of traceable items, Diana Taylor argues, in *The Archive and the Repertoire*, work in tandem with embodied and performed acts (21). Recognizing that performance can be reconstituted for the purpose of cultural transmission, Taylor says embodied acts "reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next" (21). Maylei Blackwell calls this *retrofitted memory,* a "form of countermemory that uses fragments of older

histories that have been disjunctured by colonial practices of organizing historical knowledge or by masculinist renderings of history that disappear women's political involvement" (2). This is to say that although Chicana histories have not always existed in institutionalized archival form, they exist in memory, in counternarratives. Similarly, Joseph Roach's study of the "Circum-Atlantic memory" found that colonialism set the stage for the washing over entire histories but left Other cultures with an "incomplete forgetting," an embodiment of what was left, which is continually performed through what he terms *surrogation* (7). He contends that *surrogation* is not just the mere reproduction and replication of tradition, for which "the fit cannot be exact," but that *surrogacy* is a site of change and reimagination (Roach, 28). Thus, archives, as a space of surrogacy, through embodied acts, are a space of transformation, not a vessel for direct representations or fact but a surrogate space for the cultural transmissions of memory. Eric Ketelaar suggests that "archives do not store memory, but they offer the possibility to create memory" (141, Ketelaar). Here, in the space where archives are never complete, in a constant process of creation and recreation, of interrogation and intervention, is where we begin to recover the memory of *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*, and plunge into the reconstitution of what Michelle Caswell and Anne Gilliland call the "imagined records," a record that stands for what has been left out.

Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle set out on a mission: to reinsert women into the male dominated Chicano discourse. This arose from a differential perspective, recognizing power from an intersectional identity that moved back and forth in spaces according to gender, sexuality, race and class. After working within a co-ed organization of artists called *La Brocha del Valle* the women share that they were often overlooked by the men who outnumbered the group. Silvia states:

> getting involved with the *Muralistas* was a very, umm, umm, I guess energizing because I was also part of *La Brocha* during that time. That was one of the first things you recognized, that it was mostly male and uh, that's when Cecilia asked me to join that group and um I said "yes." So we wanted to do more stuff participating in the women's art because gosh there were only a few of us in *Brocha*, and all the rest were men (Garcia, 4/8/14)

In addition, while both Cecilia and Silvia were working on their Bachelor's degrees in Fine Art, they began taking Women's Studies courses at Fresno State. They found difficulties in identifying with the emerging Feminist Art program started by Judy Chicago, which was questioning gender and sexuality but not race and class. Silvia states:

> And it was a different environment, you know. I think I was more comfortable in a Chicano environment…People understand what you're doing, you know. It's different. And I'm not ah, um, umm….like an…I dunno during that time I felt like a lot of feminist art was sending a message, you know, you painted with a message intended and sometimes I would look at the work and say "I didn't even see that," you know. But you have to think, it's a different thinking too… You know, it was *very* different, you know, than what I was used to, you know. Um, it opened my eyes up a lot taking those classes there, the women's studies, with Joyce Aikens, Jean Ray Laury, even Ray Laury, the husband (laughs) you know. Umm…it was, it was a different culture, you know (Garcia, 5/13/14).

In *Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, the Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the Collective Visions of Women Artists*, Jill Fields asks, "So, why does Fresno matter" (3)? Her investigation into this question explores the place-based impetus for the creative production of a renowned Feminist artist Judy Chicago but does little to speak of marginal spaces, especially the racialized landscape of the Central Valley.

From this standpoint, the women banded together to work on a project produced by Chicanas only, where they could *imagine* (in the *decolonial imaginary*) a history that included their voices. The expansive 60-foot mural painted by *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* was comprised of 15 panels, painted for 6 months at a youth center in Fresno and then transported and erected at a farm labor camp in Parlier. Painted by women-only, they intentionally broke from the normative

tropes in Chicano muralism by placing women as the principal subjects. Although the mural has a seemingly historical trajectory, reading from left to right a span of pre-columbian imagery to present-time identity constructions, I argue that a linear historiography was not their goal. Using archetypical figures such as La Virgen de Guadalupe (fig. 2) and La Malinche (fig. 3), encoded with narrative symbolism, they made a necessary intervention in a male dominated Chicano discourse. Pre-Columbian motifs refer to a past but mix with the women's contemporary construction of identity and subjectivity to create a narrative of Chicana consciousness in the Central Valley. For instance, La Malinche is not simply a pre-Columbian woman but a recognizable iconic figure inscribed with meaning. In the mural, she stands behind Cortes, blocked from entering the foreground by his phallic sword. As a historical figure La Malinche is connected to a colonial history as a Nahua woman given as a slave to the Spanish conquistadores becoming a translator and wife of Cortes. Because of her marriage to Cortes, her name became synonymous through the "colonial imaginary" with being traitor to her people, a "malinchista," a word that was often used during the Chicana/o Movement to describe the Chicana feminists who moved away from the male dominated nationalistic sentiments of the Movement. Rewritten by Chicana artists, academic, and writers, as an archetypical figure not as a historical figure, La Malinche became a symbol for a woman negotiating power in the face of colonialism and patriarchy, she transformed "from the great Chingada to the great Chingona" ("[Un]framing," Gaspar de Alba, 77). Emma Perez explains "just as Oedipus is everywhere, always, reinscrbing sociosexual and cultural relations, for Indias/mestizos/Chicanas, La Malinche is always everywhere reinscribing woman's agency. In Chicana/o myths, histories, tropes, taxonomies, and so on, La Malinche cannot be avoided. La Malinche encodes all sociosexual relations and there is no way out" (122). As an archetypical figure La Malinche holds a Chicana history by

embodying the symbolism of transgression and agency and although she stand stoically and seemingly apathetic in the mural, she is the impetus for the activist movidas set out by *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*.

The mural's centerpiece, framed by a tree of life and surrounded by glowing yellow and orange aura, is the ubiquitous image of the Virgen de Guadalupe. *Las Mujeres* were in conversation with a wide network of artists including Ester Hernandez, a kindred Chicana artist from the Central Valley. In Silvia's garage we also found a zine called *Maize: Xicano Art and Literature Notebooks* published in 1978 that featured Yolanda Lopez's famous reimaginations of the Virgen. La Virgen, as the archetype for reverence is associated with a narrative or a "mythology" of sacrifice, sexual purity, docility, and motherhood; a gendered role described as *marianismo,* which is carried out by colonial religious practices. By taking on the Guadalupe image as the idol of Chicana womanhood and giving her life, "exuberance" and agency, Guadalupe, Yolanda Lopez's offers La Virgen as a "Chicana feminist proposal" (Davalos, 81). With moves to re-mythologize, Yolanda Lopez put forth a new canon for Chicanas by initiating a visual language of alternative narratives. *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle's* narrative intervention exists in a similar alternative narrative in the imagery of *La Virgen's* burning robe. She is not burning in contempt, but as the impetus for transformation of the Chicana. Her fire is reminiscent of both the indigenous fire ceremony that seeks new beginnings and, in the Central Valley, the controlled burning of fields in order to inspire growth and fertile soil. She is the flame that creates a new Chicana narrative.

One week after the mural was erected it was whitewashed with the words "the white race is the right race" written across. Images of women, women of color with fists in the air and with guns in their hands, students and farm labors in protest, were symbols of empowerment for

Chicanas. However, the overt racial slurs “the white race is the right race” washed across the mural make their own symbolic marking of the social constructs of the Valley. In 1978, when the mural was created, the *Movimiento* was in full swing, and the United Farm Workers were conducting mass boycotts in the region. The politics of the Valley are situated on the economic force of industrial agriculture, where race and class lines are splitting across labor, between farmers and farm laborers (Mitchell 1996). Redefining the public landscape, populated with women and people of color, shakes the very grounds of power dividing landowners and racialized bodies for labor. Don Mitchell explains,

> the material landscape –from the minutiae of labor camp arrangements to the larger view of (white) rural civility—serves as an important medium for the constructions of a hegemonic discourse about race: a discourse about insiders and outsiders within a solidifying historic bloc. In the Chicantowns, Japantowns, Mexican Barrios, and numerous racially stratified labor camps throughout California, in the spaces within which agricultural labor was historically reproduced, these processes were readily apparent (92, Mitchell)**.**

There is no doubt that having a public display of Chicana power, although built with permission from the landowner, was unacceptable by the hegemonic forces of the community at large.

After the mural, *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* disbanded and a fire in the storehouse caused the permanent loss of the mural. Shortly thereafter, due to a loss of resources in the fire and continued difficulty in garnering financial support, *La Brocha del Valle* also parted ways. For *La Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*, there remained few modes of publically showing their work, if they were not actively working in collectives to create these spaces. Amongst a network of Chicana artists throughout California, the women began to see how resources and the culture of place created different support systems for artists. Cecilia states:

> It seems like people who maybe went to bigger cities, LA, San Francisco, they were maybe more career independent driven then here in the valley I think they just had that cultural thing, you know, take care of ourselves. But I've seen people leave from the

> valley and able to pursue this because, I think it was more supported over there you know, then it would be here. You know, where here, it would be like, umm, you're not taking care of your kids (laughs) that kind of stuff or whatever…And, just being able to have a career back then. Even having a career as a woman was, uh, you know, still new. And so we weren't supposed to be doing that. We were supposed to be having kids and staying home. (Aranaydo)

Changes in the women's lives, getting married, having children, and struggling for the monetary and spatial resources to actually produce work constantly guided their movement. Both Cecilia and Silvia, moved to a more private alternative spaces of art production, joining a crafting circle called *Manos Morenas* with several other women, including a prominent local women's activist Rosemary Morrison. The question that emerges here, is whether the crafting circles were a turn toward self-censorship or a redefinition of artwork and art spaces that allowed for their expression. In her own words, Cecilia answers this question:

> I really feel like I'm where I'm supposed to be, ahh, I have a friend, Magu who was a very well known artist. He passed away a couple of years ago. And, ah, when I retired, he kept getting me on the phone, he wanted to mentor me, he was going to tell me how I should be doing, and I, I had, you know I felt really pressured cause I know he wanted, you know, he was living down in the LA area, and I kept going, I don't want to live like that you know, I just had to think about it and it really made me start really thinking about how seriously how I need to be happy with what I was doing. That I really am doing what I'm supposed to be doing. (Aranaydo,)

Similarly Silvia explains:

> the whole view you start thinking like, come on, realistically (emphasis) are you going to be able to produce that much work, you know, to always have shows going on. Umm... I was now going to have, uh, you know, my first daughter and, uh I, you know, working out of a small house and just adjusting to it-I think my biggest accomplishment would have been to just have graduated. And that would have been an accomplishment, you know, there. But I never gave up that hope and, uh, continue crafting, painting, whatever. And I think to this day, doing that was an empowerment for me as a woman. (Garcia, 4/8/14)

For the women, being an artist and activist is a part of their everyday life. The mural they created was not for an artistic feat but a process of situating their own subjectivity. Their choices to live

and work from the Central Valley, show differential narratives that are less about success as an artist a more about their continued modes of production. They represent the awakening of a Chicana womanhood, that Gloria Anzaldua calls the *nepantleras*, using their shifting subjectivities between race, class, gender, sexuality and the politics of the urban/rural place and public/alternatives space to rewrite their identities ("Light in the Dark").

Chapter II

A Valley Conocimiento

"Already I am becoming the valley,

A soil that sprouts nothing

For any of us."

–Gary Soto, "The Elements of the San Joaquin"

"can you hear it now

life in the middle of it all

this field of dust and poison

and pain like a perfectly orchestrated song

whelping out its measures of silence?"

--Andres Montoya, *The Iceworker Sings*

People in the Valley know "What work is"[5] as the title of Philip Levine, a valley transplant and longtime Professor at Fresno State's seminal book suggests, they work hard and never get a

[5] Levine, Philip. *What Work Is: Poems*. New York: Knopf, 1991. Print.

break, stay “stuck” in the middle, the middle of the state, the crevassed “armpit” as it’s so lovingly called. In the marginalized spaces of the Central Valley we know not only labor and its movements within space but also its negotiations of power. In 1939, Carey McWilliams wrote *Factories in the Field* describing the rise of industrial agriculture in the Central Valley, explaining, “today it is impossible to visit these valleys without gaining an impression of vast power, of immense potentialities, and of the dramatic conflict between man and nature” (6). Place, what Yi-Fu Tuan calls, “a pause,” is a stable connection we have to a specific location, he describes, “the pause makes it possible for the locality to become a center of felt value”(138). These values, however, have different meanings according to power. Rather than studying place simply through “broad philosophical or humanistic terms,” studies have moved toward situating “places as sites of power struggles or about displacement as histories of annexation, absorption, and resistance” (Feld and Basso, 5). Similar to place, the social production of landscape is gathered from the lived experiences of the people and its representations. Although shaped by people, the landscape is “not necessarily owned or controlled by them” thus, “social struggle makes the landscape and the landscape is always in a state of becoming: it is never entirely stable” (Mitchell 30). Thus the pause of place can be transformed through the collective regenerative capabilities of a reimagined landscape.

From a place-based perspective we can see that Chicana artists engaging in art production within the marginalized communities of the Central Valley, outside of the hegemonic lens, produce sites of visual and experiential signification of place, and build a collective memory that acknowledges their shifting identities. Alicia Gaspar de Alba describes her theory of *place-based aesthetics* as “a system of homeland representation that immigrants and natives alike develop to

fill in the gaps of self" ("Embodied Aesthetics", 104). She argues that *place-based aesthetics* move "*beyond* place of origin" to include "race, religion, community, and the body as sites of identity," thus extending place to a changing social and political location (109). A place-based analysis does not stem from a search for origin but a localized view of intersectional experiences across power. Furthering this argument, Joan Borsa in her essay on authorship refutes the "Death of the Author" proposed by Roland Barthes, saying that "unless we are to become hopelessly disembodied, distanced and destabilized within our own identities (which we do carry with us) our locations need to be accounted for, not willed away, disguised, denied or melted down into some big pot of sameness" (24). By centering views of artistic production on authorship and the product, we wash over what is the local, the very specific means of creation in reaction to local social and political and historical issues. Michel de Certeau ties the means of production to local knowledge when he says, "By challenging consumption as it is conceived and of course confirmed by these authorial enterprises, we may be able to discover creative activity where it has been denied that any exists, and to relativize the exorbitant claim that a *certain kind* of production (real enough, but not the only kind) can set out to produce history by "informing" the whole of a country" (167). Studying Chicana artists in the central valley cannot situate the excavation of what was lost (revering the *certain kind* of production Certeau speaks of here) in a search for origin or in the talk of potentialities "given such-and-such resources, would things have been different?" The focus should remain in how they created *differently*, developing their own unique means of production reflecting the view from their bodies in space, place and time.

The production of place and memory

The San Joaquin Valley centers around the city of Fresno, with a constellation of rural cites and towns surrounding. This relationship between the rural and urban makes the Valley distinctly different from other urban areas in California. The open landscape, once home to marshlands filled with Tule comes with an air of open space. People often suggest, “It must have been beautiful growing up with all of the openness surrounding you.” Carey McWilliams keenly describes the false interpretations of the landscape, “There is a surface placidity about the great inland farm valleys of California that is as deceptive as the legends in books.” (4). Although visually the space may seem vast, the experience of space is regulated, the segregation of corporate owned fields and urban sprawl, distinctively distinguish who owns the land and who works the land. This hidden topography links how place and power work in tandem to perpetuate erasure. On a filming trip through the valley, my father showed me where he picked grapes growing up, as we moved from the outskirts of Fresno, the fields changed from low hanging grapes to aisles of orchards engulfed in netting. There in the landscape, looking out of the window on the roads between the urban and rural, in the strange arrangement of space, the identity of the Valley emerged:

> As we entered Parlier, I was struck by an unnatural vision of the land. Rows and rows of towering citrus trees carefully covered in white netting. My first reaction was awe at such an out-of-place sight but as I put my feet to the ground that awe transformed into eeriness and a decentering silence. The rows were more akin to factories than the spirit of freedom, fertility and growth. My father tells me that the netting is used to keep citrus fruit from cross-pollinating and I ask, “What’s being left out?” “Everything” my father replies.

The netting became an ominous symbol of controlled space, holding the memories of dominance, not a vastness associated with freedom and liberation.

Recovering memory and situating place in the process of making *In the Valleys*, warranted a mixed linear and non-linear format. Weaving through archival footage of *Las Mujeres*

Muralistas del Valle, photos, and interviews with the women in the intimate spaces of their homes, meant reconstructing a past but also recalling affectual connections to memory. Creating a non-linear perspective aligns with filmmaking processes that seek to evoke memory instead of narrative, a "working *through* rather than *about* memory" (Grossman, 200). I wanted to move away from a style of film that simply recounted a past with an authoritative hand and instead evoke a connection to the desires and memories, similarly Grossman's states, "I wanted my film to critically examine memory by evoking how it operates and feels, rather than by explaining or depicting memories themselves" (200). Materially speaking, reconstructing a film works, like memory, from a fragmentary nature; scenes are cut in breaks of time and it is up to the editor to create continuity. The narrative of the film holds the subjectivity of the filmmaker, through the process of not only framing the shots but also stitching together the scenes. For me, this practice is never formulaic and approached as an assemblage rather than a linear narrative, taking on its own *rasquache* aesthetic. Amalia Mesa-Bains defines *rasquachismo* as "a survivalist irreverence that functioned as a vehicle of cultural continuity" (159). *Rasquachismo* is about putting fragments to new use, not back together. The practice of recovering memory through film is not about pretending to reconstitute a whole but a weaving of fragments, revealing the filmmaker's presence through the materiality of the process.

Working away from the structure of a linear narrative and working toward fragments of memory, the story is coalesced though sensory and affectual experiences of place. In a long introductory sequence, my mother prepares our interview space as she closes the mosquito drapes (fig.5) to create a sense of intimacy and comfort for our exchange. In another shot, similar netting is draped over citrus tress, keeping the seedless fruit from cross-pollinating with the other nearby orchards. The scene is eerily barren as the camera moves over the body of the

tree. I wanted to evoke the discontinuity of the landscape that is clearly constructed in the same way my mother constructs a space for us within the gazebo's mosquito net. I wanted to create a tension that related to the larger setting of the place, outside of the intimacies of memory. The subjugation of the city was represented not only in this tension but also in the juxtaposition of the usage of netting. Both actions are a regulation and construction of space but each evokes a much different affect on the viewer.

The affectual moments on screen are mainly tied to the intimate story between Silvia, my mother, and me as the filmmaker as our unique story of discovery and detachment weave through the film. I also situate myself as a character caught in the movement of the Valley, passing within and moving outside of the experience shared with *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*. A viewfinder effect pulls away from interviews and pans through a parking lot where onlookers stare into the oddness of her camera, asserting my own process of politicization, standing at the nexus of having the access to information and resources and the process of documenting the women and landscape that have shaped me. Later in the film, the viewfinder effect pans across a rural main street of Parlier, California and I share the story of finding my mother's name in a book while away at school.

Mural Montage

The film works through fragmentary *rasquache* aesthetics and feelings of discontinuity and distance to convey ideas of regulated and constructed space, movement and distance. The process of weaving these juxtapositions with personal narratives and historical accounts is best explained as a process of montage. A montage can be broadly defined as, "simply implies the joining together of different elements in a variety of combinations, repetitions, and overlaps. It is

customarily associated with cinematic editing, but the basic principles of montage play a crucial role in a broad range of artistic, cultural, and academic practices" (Suhr and Willerslev, 1). But more than just a practice, the montage is a different way of seeing, a visual analysis that asks when images are placed next to each other in time and space, what do they convey? Montage has the "capacity to disrupt the normative space of naturalistic film footage, thus allowing for a sudden burst in the experience of a multifaceted reality" (Suhr and Willerslev 5). A scene that I call the *mural montage* cuts between images of land and close-ups of the mural, overlaying images, for instance, the Virgen de Gualdaupe with a fire burning in the field (fig. 4). This was an effort to question, what is "natural" and what is representation, what reveals itself in the imagination? Who constructs the land? What do both the mural and the land say about the artists' experience and identity? What does the land say about labor for the artists as well as the filmmaker and the community?

The process of montage has another interesting capacity in the amplification of the invisible and the declaration of difference. Suhr and Willerslev explain, "It is precisely from within the cracks of such unfinished discordant knowledge-in-the-making that the invisible ground of human experience is most forcefully evoked" (13). The montage—through its power to disrupt the norm—functions as a method that reflects the margins, and can be used as a tool to reverse erasure and convey the human experience. Outside of filmmaking, Chicana/o artists have been working in a similar capacity. Sandra de la Loza's *Mural Remix*, exhibited at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) as part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time initiative in 2011, is a transformational and experimental space layered with ideas of performance, documentary, embodied erasure, invisibility, and agency. The project began when De La Loza was asked to help scan images by her neighbor, Nancy Tovar (Loza, 190). Tovar had

photographed murals throughout Los Angeles during the seventies and amassed a large archive of slides. By situating herself in the archive and acting outside of the standard Chicana/o Art discourse, De la Loza discovered that the majority of murals she viewed did not express the dominant Chicana/o politically charged imagery but instead conveyed a relationship with "space and power within our [Los Angeles'] urban landscape" (Loza, 190). Instead of the overtly political Chicana/o standard, she found that the spatial language introduced—through the mural archives and interviews she conducted—a connection to psychedelic hippie culture and social transformation, which she used as the two driving forces in her effort to make the archive "come alive" (CSRC).

Through the *Mural Remix* De La Loza asserts that artists are as historians, archivists, and scholars producing knowledge through visual representation. Rather than simply rehashing imagery, simply reinserting the same imagery into the discourse, she "remixes" and montages layers of symbolism. Maylei Blackwell employs a similar methodology in *¡Chicana Power!* linked to a DJ, mixing, sampling, and remixing layers of meaning. Blackwell states, "As one digs through the old crates of records (historical archives) to find missing stories, the songs (narrative groove, if you will) must be selected and then remixed to produce new meanings" (38). Montage—in its broadest definition— is a method of knowledge production that centers disruption, a chiasmus in continuity of time and space. The strategic layering of the traceable archive and historical knowledge or the "real" with exploration into the silences and the places of erasure, creating an important space for new artistic interventions that cuts through systems of power.

Conclusion

When we're dealing with stories under layers of oppression, with histories erased and silences, in addition to overt censorship and self-censorship, we see how stories like that of *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*, become detached from the very communities from which they emerge. How then do these stories return to the dislocated artist? In our final interview, Silvia, when asked how it felt to have her artistic legacy written in book she states:

> I never looked at it like that until, you know, recently since you've been in school and you've been find—reading these books… And then you brought me the recent one and um, and then um, you know, you started telling me all about this and I really didn't. I, like I said, really notice, I mean thought of it like that until you've been telling me more, you know. But, now, you know, when I look, think about it and all the articles that I read, and all the women muralistas starting from San Francisco down. I mean, it was a movement during that time and I think that's why it's so significant, you know. Umm, and we were part of a role that was evolving, you know. And it made a statement during that time whether we were aware of it or not (laughs). I know I wasn't, that it was going to be such an impact and to this day now, I, I'm, I'm very exci—I mean, it brings a lot of pride to me, you know. Umm, uh, it uh, it's kind of like ah, a feeling of um—encouragement to keep going to um, I wanna say, I *want* to keep doing art now. I wanna continue to stay involved. Umm, even if it's still small—doing small things…I just think it's uh, um, uh, opened up uh, a pass [past?] that I think you girls are becoming more famil—aware of, you know. Um, because the art's always been in me. It's always been in my heart, you know. So, um, but bringing back all this it was like a discovery for me because I didn't know that it was—that we played such a big role in it, you know (Garcia, 5/13/14)

My first intervention was from a perspective of research mirroring—working from a place of knowing—a self-reflexive space where my full subjectivity is disclosed along the process. Engaging in such research from the thirdspace, asserts my own *differential consciousness* in an effort to redefine how we approach silence and search for decolonial methodologies. Questioning power along the way led me to understand that when approaching histories of erasure, normal

traces of the archive do not apply; there is a contested paper trail and the citational genealogy does not always lead back to the body.

Analyzing artistic production in the margins, through memory and place, begins to uncover this silence. In this way oral histories and visual methods bring us back to the body. Conducting oral histories requires presence, an intent listening and exchange of "other ways of knowing." The subtle glances, blank stares, the crying, the affectual pieces that are a part of the way we keep and transmit meaning are the parts missing from normative modes of scholarship. Documentary filmmaking, in the tradition of Third World feminist filmmakers like Trinh T. Minh-Ha, also works from spaces of silence and erasure rather than a search for fact, building bridges in memory and intimate spaces on film, where power—between the filmmaker and subject—is negotiated and subjects express their own ways of knowing. Through the theoretical tools of the *decolonial imaginary* and *differential consciousness* I see how a history can be removed, erased, censored from the very lives of those who participated and the communities and people closest to them, and through practicing decolonial research methods in oral history and documentary film, do I see how this history can be returned to their bodies. Throughout my research I have developed and questioned my own sensing, trying to understand what it means to write from my memory—a place of knowing, a place of wondering/wandering. Here I have laid out the objects, the memories, the senses of the work I have accomplished and continue to create.

Appendix A: Film Treatment

Filmmaker: Carissa Garcia
Title: "In the Valleys: Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle"
Format: Documentary Video
Length: 15 minutes
Logline: A portrait of two Chicana artists from the San Joaquin Valley who formed a muralist collective called *Las Mujeres Murlalistas del Valle* (1978) during the Chicana/o Movement.

We see the vastness of land as fog settles into the early morning of the Valley on a hill above the San Joaquin River. We hear the immersive song of birds while the sunrise reveals an endless field of grapes. Shots of land shift to a lush backyard, as a woman adjusts the sun glittered netting shades of her patio to create an intimate art studio space. We focus on her hands as they work diligently on jewelry and as she speaks of the "fire that keeps burning" for her to return to school and her art practice.

In the Valleys, a 15-mintue documentary film, focuses on two artists, Cecilia Aranaydo and Silvia Garcia, as they recover the memories of constructing their *only* mural as *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle* in 1978, which was whitewashed and destroyed shortly after its construction. Tucked between netting and across kitchen tables, this film uncovers a history of erasure and exclusion beyond their mural, through their stories as artists who continue to make art from the margins of the Central Valley. Their story is not one of a single monumental artistic feat but of transmission—a multigenerational story of struggles faced by Chicana artists in the Central Valley and their interventions made in resistance. By concentrating on what the hands, the land, and the memory tell, the film develops a visual blueprint and call to action for Chicana artists in the Central Valley to continue their work.

Set in the juxtaposition of California's San Joaquin Valley's mixed rural and urban landscape, the land as a character transforms from sunshine filled fields to the regulated space of eerily barren rows of netted citrus trees. The land also shows the temporality of the Valley as a

place constantly in motion, cars passing through freeway thoroughfares and cruising down rural main streets. Known for its vastness, beauty, and abundance this place holds the memory of not only who owns that land but also who works the land, complicating the identity constructions within those two frames. Suddenly, a controlled fire in the fields is a marker for rebirth and growth linking to Silvia's words "the fire keeps burning" and the central image of the mural—a Virgen de Guadalupe with her robe aflame. When a montage of carefully selected mural images slowly fades into the land, the connection to the women's story is revealed.

Cecilia Aranaydo, the heart of *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*, sits at her kitchen table, picking at a cloud of stuffing as she makes dolls. She reflects on photos of the mural she lost several years ago, sharing vivid memories of what it meant to be a Chicana artist during the seventies and considering her activism as a way of live. Standing in her overflowing garage studio, she tells deeper stories of her struggle between being a mother and an artist in the public eye, standing at the crossroads of an artist producing from the rural/private space and trying to make her break into the urban/public space.

Silvia Garcia, is introduced as she makes jewelry at a table she set in her lush backyard. She shares her "struggle" to have a family and while producing work as a public artist and completing her college degree. She also shares her connection as the mother of the filmmaker; a direct look at how artistic activism and practice is passed on from generation-to-generation. The affectual moments on screen are tied to the intimate story between the filmmaker and Silvia—her mother, as a unique story of discovery and detachment is woven through the film.

The filmmaker situates herself as a character caught in the movement of the Valley, passing within and moving outside of the experience she shares with *Las Mujeres Muralistas*. A viewfinder effect pulls away from interviews and pans through a parking lot where onlookers

stare into the oddness of her camera, asserting her own process of politicization, standing at the nexus of having the access to information and resources and the process of documenting the women and landscape that have shaped her. Again with a viewfinder effect panning across a rural main street of the Central Valley, she shares the story of finding her mother's name in a book while away at school, never knowing her mother painted a mural.

The film is a conversation between two generations of artists--a filmmaker who frames the land to situate the women's activist work, and *Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle*, who carry the wisdom and messages of a history of artistic production in the Valley. Part advocacy film, part point-of-view in conversation, the film contains many dimensions, including archival footage of the artist collective, photos, interviews with the women in their homes, and a view of the Valley layering land and memory. The music of "huelga" songs sung by the Fresno duo *Mujeres Valientes*, center around stories of Chicanas, creating uplifting and hopeful moments in the film. Adhering to a non-linear format, the film concentrates on the recovery of memory, pulling out and into interviews, archival footage and photos, and a landscape in the circuit of the Central Valley, and those constantly in the movement of work, migration, and resources.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

PRE-INTERVIEW—Initial contact:

1. If you were writing this study, what would you include?
2. Who else do you think I should interview?
3. In general, what do you consider important when researching Chicana artists in the San Joaquin Valley?

LIFE HISTORY—Interview #1 (one hour):

1. What year and where were you born?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Tell me what ____ was like when you were growing up.
4. What memories do have about your family there?
5. Where were your parents born?
6. How many siblings do you have?
7. What did you dream about becoming when you grew up?
8. What was your idea of fun as a child?
9. What were your most memorable and transitional moments of childhood?
10. What did your family do for a living?
11. What were your earliest memories of school?
12. Where did you go to school?
13. What types of courses did you enjoy?
14. When did you meet your spouse? When did you marry?
15. How many children do you have? What are their names? When were they born?
16. Do you consider yourself an artist? If so, why?

17. When did you start making art?

18. Who were your mentors?

19. When you're working on a new artwork, where does the inspiration come from?

20. Why did you choose to work in __________ (medium specific question)?

21. Do you identify as a Chicana?

22. Do you remember when you adopted that identity?

23. The UFW has such a strong history in the Valley, were you aware or a part of their activism?

24. Chicana/o artists as often categorized as "political," would you put yourself in that category? If so, what does it mean to be a political artist?

PROJECT SPECIFIC—Interview #2 (one hour):

1. Can you paint a picture for me of what it was like to be a woman artist in the seventies?

2. Can you give me personal examples of this type of experience?

3. How did you get involved with La Brocha del Valle?

4. What type of interactions did you have with the other members of La Brocha?

5. What shows/exhibitions/projects did you work on with La Brocha?

6. How did Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle form?

7. What was it like working with only women?

8. Do you remember conversations or interaction you had during the time the mural was being made, other than the painting itself?

9. Why did you all choose to create a mural?

10. Can you tell me the basics of the process? How did you choose a site? How long did it take to create? How large was the mural? Who was involved other than the women listed on the mural?

11. Why create a mobile mural in the rural space rather than on a wall in the city like other artists were doing at the time?
12. What did the immediate community surrounding the mural think? Were their opinions a part of the creative process?
13. Was this the only mural you ever worked on?
14. Did the process change your perspective on art-making in any way?
15. What moments or images about the process stand out to you the most?
16. The mural no longer exists, what happened to the mural?
17. How did you feel when you heard that the mural had been whitewashed?
18. Who do you think defaced the mural?
19. Are there any photos of the aftermath? If yes, can you share them with me?
20. Did you continue working as Las Mujeres Muralistas del Valle after the mural?
21. What types of activities did you continue doing together?
22. Do you feel things have changed since then? If so, how?
23. If you created the same mural today, tell me how you'd imagine the process and its reception.
24. What advice would you give a young Chicana artist in the Valley today?

IN-DEPTH—interview #3 (optional, one-hour):

1. After reflecting, do you have any clarifications you would like to make about the previous interviews?
2. You said in our previous interview that you were inspired by ________, how do you connect with the ________ around you?
3. When someone asks you to describe the valley, what do you say?
4. In the seventies, where did Fresno stand in conversation with other metropolitan cities in California, like Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento?
5. Where do you think it stands now?

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