

# LatinX

## Arts Exhibition

Presented by  
UCO Archives & Special Collections

October 23, 2019  
Edmond, OK

*Cover art by Daniel Acuna, Title Topo Chico.*

## Special Thanks

In celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month, the Chambers Library, Archives & Special Collections is pleased to present *Latinx Arts Exhibition* featuring six local professional Latino artists sharing their complex stories of history, culture, and identity. This multimedia event is dedicated to the arts and art history of the Latinx community through a collaboration between the Hispanic American Student Association, Hispanic Faculty and Staff Association, OKCine Latino Film Festival, office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Chambers Library, Archives & Special Collections. We are grateful to be able to share this exhibition. We would like to thank those who had a hand in making this event possible.

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## Introduction

The idea for celebrating Hispanic heritage began in 1968 when Pres. Lyndon Johnson designated a weeklong celebration of Hispanic culture. This was expanded to a month under the Reagan Administration. The month we start celebrating Hispanic heritage is significant in that several Latin American countries mark their independence during the month of September. National Hispanic Heritage Month began as a way to promote the history, culture and the contributions of Hispanic-Americans. Specifically, those whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Hispanic American men and women through their dedication to family, community, and our country have helped build a better future for all Americans. There are some interesting facts to note about Hispanics and Latinos in the United States.

Even though the terms are used interchangeably, there is a difference between Hispanic and Latino or the gender neutral alternative Latinx. Hispanic refers to language. You are Hispanic if you and your ancestors come from a country where Spanish is spoken. Latino refers to geography specifically to Latin America. So Latinx people come from the Caribbean (Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic), South American (Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, etc.) and Central America (Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, etc.) Brazilians are a good example of Latinos who are not Hispanic as Portuguese rather than Spanish is their prevailing language. Both terms were meant to refer to ethnicity, not race. However, in the U.S. they are often used haphazardly to refer to race as well. In May 2019 the U.S. government specifically distinguished Hispanic and Latino as terms to define regions of origin, not their race. Both Hispanic and Latino are

clearly ethnicities as both groups comprise people of many races and race mixtures, as well as people of many nationalities.

Since ethnicity cannot be identified by Hispanic/Latino labels due to the wide variety of cultural groups within the Caribbean, North, Central and South American including customs, foods, traditions and music styles, some have pointed out these labels are racial and the only label that accurately represents their ethnicity is their nationality, which immediately identifies their cultural traditions, foods, music, etc. For example, Hispanic food often really means Mexican food in the U.S. and does not provide an accurate glimpse of the different types of food available in the Americas' and the Caribbean. According to a survey released by the Pew Hispanic Center, only 24% of Hispanic adults said they most often identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. About half said they identified themselves most frequently by their family's national origin.

Currently, the Hispanic population in the U.S. stands at more than 56 million, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic group. In addition, there are 3.7 million residents of Puerto Rico, which is a U.S. territory. It is estimated by 2050 the Hispanic population in the U.S. will grow to 119 million people. When you compare the U.S. Hispanic population worldwide it ranks second. Only Mexico has a larger Hispanic population than the U.S. In addition, twenty-five U.S. states reported Hispanic's were their largest minority group with the largest populations being found in California, Florida and Texas. Approximately 65% of Hispanic Americans are of Mexican heritage.

In terms of Latino surnames, Garcia, Rodriguez, Martinez & Hernandez are the most common according to the last census. The 2000 census was the first time a Latino surname broke into the top 15 most used surnames in the nation with four Latino names making the list. That year the most used surnames in the U.S.

included Garcia ranked 8th, Rodriguez 9<sup>th</sup>, Martinez 11<sup>th</sup> and Hernandez ranked 15<sup>th</sup>.

During this month we recognize National Hispanic American Heritage Month examining some of the achievements and contributions of Hispanic American champions who have inspired others to achieve success. Let us celebrate this window into what's special about Hispanic/Latino people who embody the American values of devotion to family, hard work, and patriotism through their countless contributions as leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, and members of the Armed Forces.

Nicole Willard, M.A., C.A.  
Asst. Exec, Dir. Chambers Library  
University of Central Oklahoma  
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Fall, 2019



## **Oklahoma Cine Latino Film Festival**

### **By Rogelio Almeida, Jr.**

My journey through independent filmmaking started in one of the rarest places you could think. It was in the streets of Baqurah, Iraq during my second deployment in a combat zone. I had a small Sony handycam, and I filmed everything I could behind the wire. I filmed my friends and training exercises, and sometimes I took my trusty handycam on patrols. It was my intention to interview the locals to figure out what they really thought about us being there. In the end, this experience not only captured my interest in politics, but it also sparked my interest in filmmaking.

After separating from the military, film school became my focus. While in film school, I noticed the absence of Latino representation in film and media. It became my mission to change that, one film at a time. I started producing and directing short films and music videos. Eventually, I graduated into filming, directing, and producing feature films. Sometimes I was behind the camera as director of photography. The experience of being behind the camera is one of the best feelings a filmmaker can have. Watching your scenes unfold before your own eyes is incredible, the acting, the cinematography, sound and most importantly the story. Everything comes together between just two words: “action” and “cut.” Yet, one could say yelling “one more take” is a filmmaker’s most precious luxury.

After many years, something was still missing. The reason I became interested in filmmaking was the need to have Latino voices heard and to inspire the next generation of filmmakers. With this idea and with the help of some friends, the Oklahoma Cine (OKCine) Latino Film Festival was born in 2014 to promote and empower Latino filmmakers through the cultural impact of

cinema. The first festival took place at the El Nacional building and the OCCC Capitol Hill Center right in the heart of the Latino community at Calle Dos Cinco a Historic Capitol Hill neighborhood in Oklahoma City. The event was a small but ambitious two-day festival with about 20 films, all in Spanish, with local and international guest speakers and filmmakers. We recruited judges from around the country to help us review and evaluate film submissions, including our own UCO expert Dr. Guillermo Martinez-Sotelo.

By 2017, the OKCine Latino Film Festival had outgrown its venues in Capitol Hill, and the festival temporarily moved to the CHK Central Boathouse in the Boathouse District, just north of I-40, while construction on new venues happened in the Capitol Hill District. The growth of the festival also influenced the quality of films we received from all over the world. Our small film festival was accepting films from Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico.

That same year, we launched the Youth Film Workshops, an idea that had been in the works for many years had finally materialized. The idea of the workshop was to train and inspire the next generation of Latino filmmakers. We recruited about 20 students from high schools with large Latino student populations and placed them in a six-week workshop. Every Saturday, highly enthusiastic students attended the workshop to learn the basics of filmmaking and storytelling. Students learned the basics of script writing, acting, lighting, directing and editing. The first class of student filmmakers successfully completed two short films that premiered at the 3rd annual OKCine Latino Film Festival to a crowd of over 100 film enthusiasts.

In 2019, the festival moved back to Calle Dos Cinco into the newly constructed OCCC Capitol Hill Center, its main venue. The Capitol Hill Library, hosted the Youth Film Workshops and

served as a secondary film venue. The film festival is going strong. In 2020, we will be celebrating the sixth year along with the fourth class of the OKCine Youth Film Workshops. I believe embracing other cultures and languages helps us to understand each other better. Filmmaking is just one way Hispanic/Latino people can share their journey and dreams, tell their story adding to the overall narrative of our Nation. I have observed a small change in the local filmmaker scene since OKCine Latino and the youth workshops began. Many of the students from the past three youth classes are now in college pursuing a degree in media, and some are already producing and directing their own films. The future of Latinos in film and media looks much brighter than when I started film school. Even with this increase we need more representation from the growing Hispanic/Latino community. It will remain my mission to increase representation of Latino voices in film and media.

## **Mariachi Lopez of Oklahoma City** **by Regina Lopez, Ph.D.**



*Regina Lopez and her  
father Frank Lopez*

Mariachi music has a long history dating back to at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mariachi can refer to a musician, a group, or to the music. Mariachi music started as regional, rural folk music. The size of the Mariachi group depends on how many musicians are available, but the basics include, guitar, guitarrón, trumpets, vihuela, and violin. Mariachi music has slowly entered the mainstream, “Everyone likes Mariachi music” to

quote Frank López of Mariachi López

The history of Mariachi Lopez began in Ft. Worth Texas. “A family who plays together stays together,” is Frank López’ motto. Music has always been a big part of Franks’ life. He is a self-taught musician; his brother bought him his first guitar from a pawnshop. He wanted to learn to play, so he would watch and ask questions. Even before he was married, he would play guitar on the street corner with his buddies, and accompany people who wanted to sing. Music provided a little extra income even though they were not paid much.

Frank López is a self-taught musician who performed throughout Texas with a Mariachi trio until his children were old enough to learn how to play instruments. Frank taught his oldest son Louis guitar, his oldest daughter Rachel bass, and his second daughter Rebecca would play percussions and help him sing. In Ft. Worth, Texas, they were known as Frank López and the Little

People since they were all so young. They played Mariachi music in El Chico's and other local Mexican restaurants. In the summer of 1978, they moved to Oklahoma and Frank continued to play Mariachi music with his children. They were the first family Mariachi group with trumpets in the Oklahoma City area.

Mariachi López have toured Missouri, Kansas, Texas, and Arkansas. They have performed in many venues including the Governor's Mansion, the Festival of the Arts, the Paseo Arts Festival, the Cox Convention Center, the Cowboy Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City Zoo, all the major universities in Oklahoma, and many more venues, too numerous to mention. Mariachi López began with Frank's children but since has passed down the Mariachi musical tradition to include some of his grandchildren and great grandchild as well.

Currently, Mariachi López consists of Frank López, the director and founder of the group, his sons Louis and Philip, his daughters Regina and Rosemary, granddaughters Leah and Andrea and his great granddaughter Naomi. His daughter Rachel

and grandson Joseph still sit in if they are in town, but live out of state. At the age of 88, Frank López was awarded the Hispanic Musical Artist of 2017.



*Lopez Family Mariachi*

Mariachi López continues to perform for weddings, quinceañeras and many other private events.

Dr. Regina López has played Mariachi music since she was 16 years old. Her father handed down this tradition the old-fashioned way, by teaching her about ten songs and then going to play in public, learning on the spot whenever a song was requested. Dr. López has taken over the role of contracting the group's performance since their father Frank is legally blind and hard of hearing. This however, does not stop him from performing. He jokes he may retire when he turns 90 yrs. old, which will be in 2020.

Along with performing, Dr. López also does some song writing and poetry writing when inspired. She would like to share a couple of her poems.

### **Soy Mariachi**

Mariachi López, soy yo.  
Playing music to greet the dawn  
Las Mañanitas, the birthday song

Mariachi López, soy yo.  
Canciones de Vicente, Juan Gabriel, y Solís  
Never go wrong

Mariachi López, soy yo.  
Huapangos, boleros, y corridos  
Tell the story of my people

Mariachi López, soy yo.  
With my guitar y un grito!  
Cantando Cielito Lindo.

Mariachi López, soy yo.  
Filled with tradition and pride  
Música de mariachi will never die

Mariachi López, soy yo.  
Siempre será mariachi en mi corazón.

Dr. Regina López (2019)

### **¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)**

¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

In my infancy I was loved by my familia,  
Mom, Dad, brothers, sisters, abuelos, tíos, and  
primos

and one by one we went off to school

To learn to play by a different set of rules

¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

Little by little I learned in school  
my family was different, and so were the rules  
my food, my speech, my color, my physique

What does it mean to be in the mainstream?

¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

Don't be so loud, Don't stand so close

Don't run around, I needed some hope

only speak English, and we will let you in

but I was born here, what's the difference then?

¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

And so it began adíos to my language

abuelita, don't cry

Hasta la vista, until we meet again

deeper into the system I tried

but did I get in! No!

¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

I did my best to assimilate

I raised my hand, and learned to wait

I spoke only English, wasn't that great?

Again I was asked, aren't you Mexican?

Why don't you speak Spanish then?



¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

So back to the beginning I had to go

Hola, Buenos días, and ¿Cómo está?

Yes, learned to speak Spanish and learned it well

Now I am bilingual as hell!

¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

In my journey I have learned

to take the best from both worlds.

the rules are still different for me I know

Why are they different? I'll never know.

¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

I will never be tall, blond and blue-eyed

But, I still have American pride

I will always be of Mexican descent

proud of my raíces and tradiciones

¿No Puede Ser? (How can it be?)

That I would ever want to be anyone but me

Dr. Regina López (2013)

## About the Artists

### Daniel Acuna, 1988- Mexican American

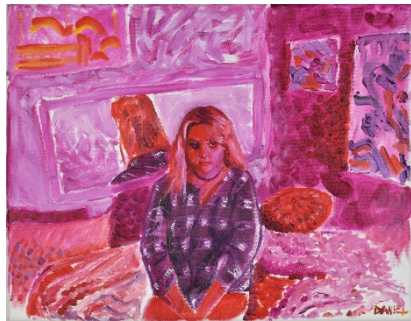


*Topo Chico*

given special consideration and relate personally to the individuals in the portraits.

As a first-generation Mexican artist and musician, Daniel is aware of the lack of cultural representation in traditional western fine arts exhibitions, he advocates the importance to be able to

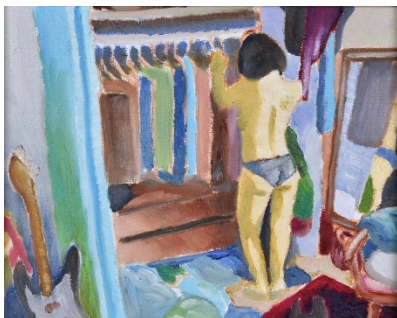
Daniel Acuna is an Oklahoma City painter who is inspired by French Impressionism and Fauvism. He emphasizes color usage with short, broken brushstrokes to create intimate and inspirational portraits. The colors and environments of each work are



*Pink Stephany*

showcase art from culturally diverse individuals in all established settings.

Daniel is one of two artists participating in Inclusion In Art's 2019 mentorship program, and is the featured artist at Little D Gallery at the Paseo Art District.



*Ante Meridiam*

## J. Monserath Cruz, 1997- Mexican American



*Mom's Parents*

Monserath Cruz is an Oklahoma-born fine art student, attending the University of Central Oklahoma. She obtained her certification for Spanish Interpreting as well as an Associates in Fine Arts through Tulsa

Community College. Monserath has maintained a constant interest in art throughout her life and prefers to use the medium of watercolor in her paintings. In the future she hopes to be able to make a career out of her two special interests, Spanish and art.

Monserath conveys that both of her parents come from poor village backgrounds in valleys of Mexico. Monserath has been able to visit family there nearly every year since she was eight years old and feels very humbled and blessed to see where her family originates from. Family and respect of elders and parents is a very important concept in Mexico's collectivist culture.

About her art piece Monserath expresses "Here I decided to depict my parents and my grandparents. I know that seeing all of my family alive and still together was a unique experience.



*My Parents*



*Dad's Parents*

I have since lost two grandparents within the last 5 years but I will never cease to be amazed by the longevity of their partnerships.”

### **Isaac Diaz, 1998- Latin American (El Salvador)**



*Into the Sun*

Isaac Diaz is a Norman based artist, who uses ink, watercolor, acrylic and sometimes graphite to express who he is and what he loves. Diaz's recent work with woven tapestries is drawn from ancient history. These motifs were inspired by Diaz's research into the Greek, Mayan, and Pre-Columbian cultures found across the Americas. He discovered many of their beliefs are still applicable in our contemporary world today. He emphasizes these explorations and merges them with his Salvadorian identity to create dream like visuals.

He also takes inspiration from nature, music and his Salvadorian heritage. Diaz thoughtfully expressed, “The indigenous people of

El Salvador and Latin America are known for their textiles, and I look to them for my art. Whether it is in a drawing, or a weaving the arts often tell a story of the balance between humanity and nature.” He said about his piece Golden Sphere, “Each little string on the sun reminds him of a little person cheering.”

A current studio artist at the University of Oklahoma he is working on his degree in ceramics and sculpture. Isaac’s work has been shown both at the Norman Art Walk and at The Plaza District in Oklahoma City.



*Golden Sphere*

### **Gabriel Rojas, 1990- Latin American (Argentina)**



*EL Condor*

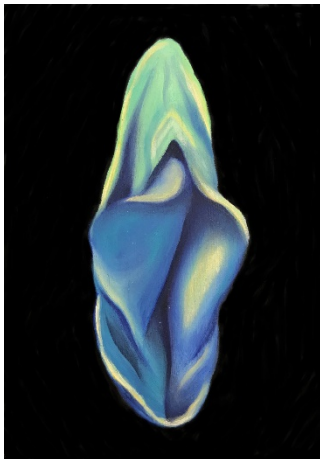
Gabriel Rojas is an artist from Tulsa, Oklahoma. His work is defined by bold use of color and interplay of multiple visual elements and techniques; often including mixed media and sculptural design in his process of "painting". His new body of work *Raíces (Roots)*: stems from childhood experiences and feelings of alienation. These works are composed of

assemblages of paintings, objects, and textile designs all densely layered and woven.

Inspired to use abstraction as a way to communicate this deeply personal experience. Gabriel began to look at Indigenous Andean customs still alive today, textile designs, making of *chárki* and *chuño*, the hanging systems, and how to incorporate his own style to these processes. “I decided to revisit the idea of cultural identity in a way that felt true to my roots, culturally and artistically. It has allowed me to reflect on what it is to be a bicultural, first-generation American and given me an outlet to express this dialogue between two cultural identities.”

Gabriel received his BFA from Oklahoma State University, and has been featured in venues statewide including the Gardiner Gallery, Oklahoma Contemporary, Living Art, the McKeon Center for Creativity, and the Henry Zarrow Center for Art and Education.

### **Elizabeth Suárez-Montero, 1995- Mexican American**



*Blue Vagina*

Elizabeth Suarez-Montero is an OKC-based artist and aspiring art therapist. She completed a Bachelor’s of Fine Arts and a Bachelor’s of Art in Psychology from the University of Central Oklahoma. Suarez-Montero’s work embraces the beauty of the female body using vaginal imagery to enforce female identity. She states, “I directly challenge the social taboo associated with the vagina with my use of non-traditional, monochromatic colors. The use of bright



colors allows the viewer to observe the imagery with a subjective mind, rather than an objective one.” She believes gender identity is influenced by cultural and societal aspects.

Over the centuries the vagina as a subject and a symbol has a long history of connotations that are contrary to contemporary beliefs as an overly sexualized object. Suarez-Montero’s research investigates how gender roles are constructed and the influence of religion on female identity. Her work has been displayed at several galleries including Untitled in OKC and the Knockdown Center in New York in the 2017 Nasty Women Exhibition conceived as a response to the 2016 election.



*Grey Vagina*

This program was produced by the Max Chambers Library, Archives & Special Collections at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma to commemorate the exhibit opening and lecture of *Latinx Arts Exhibition* held in celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month. The event was held at 3:00 pm. on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Max Chambers Library on October 23, 2019.



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