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Preface

As Educators, their clients – parents and students – and, indeed, all thoughtful citizens become increasingly aware of the need to understand the diverse cultures of the contemporary world, more and more attention is being given to studies that introduce and develop accurate knowledge about other peoples. Global Education in recent years has broadened and deepened the traditional curriculum in the Social Studies. Ultimately, the clichés and stereotypes we now have of the way people in other lands live, work, play, believe, and create will be exchanged for concepts that are more in accord with the true facts. One step to this new understanding is this unit of study, Latin American Visual Art Today.

The California Framework for the Visual and Performing Arts, disseminated by the State Department of Education in 1983, recognizes that the arts provide a universal language and, thus, a natural route for understanding other cultures. The interdisciplinary section of the framework provides a means for developing units of learning the combine objectives for one subject of the general curriculum with those of one or more of the arts. For example, multi-cultural studies integrate art, music, dance, drama/theater. Such correlated learning is both efficient and effective.

The present unit, Latin American Visual Art, is precisely the type of material that should be used in this kind of teaching. It introduces the arts into the social studies curriculum which is often limited to the political and economic aspects of a nation or region. Further, it presents the cultural picture in a manner that shows the creative people of Latin America to be as intellectual, urban, and aesthetically sophisticated as their European and North American counterparts.

The original artworks, and many more examples, are accessible for first-hand viewing at Window South Gallery. A teacher might offer the slides and discussion as a self-contained unit with quite satisfactory results. For a maximum aesthetic experience, the unit should be used as an introduction to a gallery visit, where the paintings, drawings, and sculpture may then be experienced with increased understanding and enjoyment.

Introduction

Results of the 1982 Latin American Art Week at the Sotheby-Parke-Bernet auction house in New York set a new record with sales of $7.5 million, twice the amount of the previous year. While this was surprising to the general public in the United States, Latin Americans were not surprised. Who were the artists whose works commanded such value? Some are well-known artists such as Mexico’s Jose Clemente Orozco, Rufino Tamayo, or Guatemala’s Carlos Merida. The majority, however, are artists unknown to the general public in the United States. Many are young, born after World War II, and quickly gaining international reputations. These living Latin American artists and their works are featured in this curriculum in order to provide teachers and students with new images of the visual arts in Latin America today.

Why are new images of Latin American visual arts so necessary? When many students and even art educators are asked to describe the art of Latin America, frequently only the classic murals of Rivera, Orozco, and Siquieros are mentioned. While the Mexican muralists are still considered among the best of modern art, many other painters, sculptures, and graphic artists are equally significant. Today, the fine arts reflect the urban reality of Latin Americans. Now most Latin American countries are largely urban with galleries, art academies, bookstores, and concert halls open to the public. Visual artists respond to the intensity of urban life with realistic, emotionally charged and abstract images. Just as Latin American novelists and composers are internationally recognized, painters, sculptors, and graphic artists are also gaining the international recognition they richly deserve.

If one defines ‘fine art’ as the creation of beauty in various media (music, literature, visual art), one must appreciate popular arts as well. Yet just as one distinguishes a novel from a broadsheet, and a symphony from a folk song, then one must separate the visual arts of painting, sculpture, and graphic
arts from folk art or crafts. San Francisco’s Mexican Museum divides its collection into pre-Hispanic, colonial, Mexican fine arts, and folk art. Within each collection are paintings, engravings, sculpture, graphics, textiles, and jewelry. This unique resource offers northern California students an opportunity to explore a wide range of artistic production.

Another resource featured in this curriculum is the Paul M. Cook Collection of Twentieth Century Latin American Art, *Window South*, in Menlo Park, California. The visual arts of painting, sculpture, graphics, and collage have been collected from among twenty Latin American countries. The purpose of this collection, barely seven years old, is to assemble significant examples of the best visual art being introduced in Latin America today. The results, thus far, promises to be a magnificent regional resource for the understanding of Latin American visual art today.

Examples of the visual arts – painting, sculpture, graphics – are found throughout the Latin American countries where Spanish, Portuguese, and French are the dominant languages. Traditionally, Latin America differs from the United States in the realm of art because of two distinctions. First, art in Latin America has always been supported by governments; and, second, Latin American artists enjoy wide-spread public respect. The earliest example of official patronage for the fine arts was the creation of the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City in 1785. Portugal, as well as the royal court of Spain, promoted art during the colonial period (1500-1810) with the formation of the Brazilian Art Academy in 1816. During the national period, art academies were founded in Chile (1848), Peru, and many other Latin American countries. Artists have held political or diplomatic office; participated in national cultural life, as in the case of Mexico’s José Guadalupe Zuno (former governor of Jalisco), Juan O’Gorman, and Uruguay’s Pedro Figari.

Today aesthetic innovations are showcased at the internationally-known exhibitions of Sao Paulo, Medellin, Mexico City, Caracas, and Buenos Aires. These urban regions (Sao Paulo-Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires-Montevideo, and Mexico City) serve as magnets for art and artists from a wider geographical region. Several corporations have also been patrons of the fine arts during the twentieth century, including: Benson and Hedges, Instituto Torcuato di Tella (Argentina), International Petroleum (Columbia), Kaiser (Argentina), and General Electric (Uruguay). The results of both public and private patronage can be seen throughout Latin America today. Each year 3,000 art exhibits are held during the Buenos Aires art season. Colombians have willingly paid high prices for works by Colombian artists in Bogota. IN 1982, a new Museum of Modern Art (with paintings given by the artists Rufino Tamayo) opened in Mexico City to international acclaim and new modern museums have appeared in Caracas (Venezuela), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) and Bogota, Medellin, and Cali (Colombia). The fine arts are an expression of both national pride and identity with many museums, exhibitions, and galleries open to a wider public – literate and illiterate.

Public enthusiasm for the arts remains strong despite serious challenges for young as well as mature artists: government centralization of national cultural life; awards based upon politics rather than artistic merit; impoverished museums; exorbitant import prices for paints, supplies, and books. Today young artists are often educated in schools of architecture rather than art, sometimes with innovative results. Despite these frustrations, Latin American artists of the 1980s receive international acclaim.

The curriculum, *Latin American Visual Art*, features art by artists who are loosely grouped into three generations: inter-war (1920-1945), post-war (1945-1970), and contemporary (1970-present) according to aesthetic styles. Most are living today, although significant artists from the early twentieth century are included to provide historical chronology. The first generation of artists were most active between the World Wars with the Revolutionary Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, Sculptors, and Allied Trades (Mexico, 1921-22), Modern Art Week (Sao Paulo, 1922), and Taller Torres-Garcia (Montevideo, 1932) as centers of artistic production. The second generation was born during the 1920’s and 1930s with Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago, Caracas, Mexico City, Lima, Bogota, and Rio de
Janeiro as well as Sao Paulo as predominant centers between 1945 and 1970. Finally, the third generation (1970 – present) includes artists, sculptors, and engravers from twenty countries who are active today and whose works receive international interest.

What unites Latin American art today with artists from such a large and diverse geographical region? Donald Goodall, curator of the Paul M. Cook Collection Window South Gallery, wrote in 1980: “There is no direct equation of Latin American art with sources in European and North American art, nor even with the pre-European cultures of the Americas.” While all of the countries of the western hemisphere share a history of immigration, one must not consider its art provincial. The diverse countries of Latin America are definitely part of the Western World and its fine art traditions. Consequently, the visual arts in Latin American reflect European aesthetic styles; yet artists also draw inspiration from African and pre-Hispanic cultures. This interaction of Western and non-Western culture has significantly shaped the character of Latin American art today. Nowhere else are artists challenged by such rapid urbanization in a society which is clearly a mixture of African, European, and American Indian cultures.

Although the basic themes emphasized in this curriculum may be common to the visual arts of other urban societies, it is the way that the Latin American artists depict those themes which is distinctive. Students should understand and recognize six main themes: reality, structure, expressions, decoration, dissent, and pop. The meaning of each term must be initially explained. For example, reality in art presents people, places, or things as they appear without distortion. Structure implies that lines, shapes, color, or space are most important whether geometric or free-flowing. Expression conveys the artists’ emotions with color, shape, line or space. Decoration emphasizes a pleasing design or composition that the artists intentionally arranges. Dissent is essentially a social message which may be a comment or criticism of the artists’ society and its values. Finally pop represents urban realities, yet the images are derived from advertising.

It is possible that one or more theme may be identified in a painting or sculpture. Perhaps students will disagree on which theme predominates, yet this is the essence of art appreciation and its history. These themes are only a framework to discuss these artworks. It remains clear that the unique environment of each Latin American artist creates “a wide range of artistic styles...reflective of the specific environmental and societal pressures within each country,” according to Donald Goodall, curator of Window South (Living Masters of Latin America, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1980). Another authority on Mexican art, Nora Wagner of San Francisco’s Mexican Museum, characterizes art after the Mexican revolution as one of “diverse personalized styles.” She wrote in “An Introduction to the History of Mexican Art” (The Mexican Museum, Catalog of Selections, San Francisco, 1981): “After an extraordinarily fruitful revolutionary period, Mexican art surged toward global heterogeneous artistic expressions. No longer was the artist necessarily committed to a preoccupation with social implications. Alienation, fragmentation and loss of common ideals experienced at this time became a strong force that strained the artist toward a yearning to transfer that unrest into diverse personalized styles. The play, struggle, and experimentation within realistic and abstract art and within figurative and non-figurative expressions has been continuous to the present day.”

These themes will recur throughout the curriculum as students and teachers view examples of artwork by painters, sculptors, and engravers who use diverse materials and techniques to express their personal aesthetic styles. The struggle between abstract and realistic art is further complicated by widely varied uses of line, color, space, and textures. Often, however, one can see that a questioning of imported aesthetics in favor of new and complex artistic expressions is a unifying measure for Latin American art today.

The three generations of artists are drawn from diverse Latin American countries and reflect varying aesthetic styles. Since it is the purpose of this curriculum to introduce Latin American visual art today to students and teachers at elementary and secondary levels, the emphasis is upon living Latin
American artists. Twenty-one artists have been selected from Latin American countries of differing racial and cultural mixtures. Through the assistance of Donald Goodall, curator of the Paul M. Cook Collection, we were able to obtain permission to use slides of artwork located at Window South, 173 Jefferson, Menlo Park, Ca.

**Background for the Teacher**

During the 1920s and 1930s muralismo dominate the art of Mexico and other Latin American countries. Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siquieros, and Jose Clemente Orozco executed huge murals with realistic figures, monumental scale, and controversial social themes. From the past, both Maya wall paintings and Italian renaissance murals were historical models, yet each artist’s works were singular. The muralists, encouraged by Jose Vasconcelos (in the early 1920’s), Minister of Public Education, participated in a Revolutionary Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, Sculptors and Allied Trades whose goal was to redefine Mexican ideals through a national artistic revival based on the principles of the 1917 Constitution and the rediscovery of pre-Hispanic archaeology. The National Preparatory School (1921-22), Agricultural School (1923), the National Palace (1935), and even the San Francisco School of Fine Arts (1931) were some of the public buildings upon which the murals of the sindicato were displayed. Many other artists throughout Latin America shared the spirit of muralismo: glorification of social change and pre-Hispanic aspects of Latin American history and culture. Its legacy still lingers today.

Simultaneously with muralismo another aesthetic style became prominent among South American artists. Two women, Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral, organized the Week of Modern Art in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1922. Encouraged by the writer Oswaldo de Andrade, the Semana sparked a controversy with its new forms of abstraction, expressionism, and cubism. Influenced by the “Mexican Renaissance” many Brazilian artists rejected European dominance of Latin American art forms and began a nationalist movement within the Brazilian art world. Emilio de Cavaclante and later Candido Portinari portrayed social realities such as coffee workers, carnival, and urban women on canvases and on murals in the national library.

In 1934, an Uruguayan returned to Montevideo after 43 years of residence in Spain, France, and the United States. Joaquin Torres-Garcia had studied and worked in Barcelona, where he met the young Picasso and other cubists. He also met Mexico’s Diego Rivera in Paris. The two Latin Americans began a long friendship and correspondence which lasted throughout their lives. While living in New York and Paris, Torres-Garcia developed his own approach, which he called Constructivism, a presentation of reality in geometric, flat, drab-colored paintings. Both his book, *Universalismo Construtivo*, and the artworks created by his followers at his workshop, Taller Torres-Garcia in Montevideo had a strong impact upon artists throughout Latin America during the 1940s and 1950s. Together with the muralists of Mexico and the artists of Sao Paulo’s Modern Art Week, Torres-Garcia is a significant leader in the first generation of Latin American artists in this curriculum.

Two transitional artists whose works span all three periods of contemporary Latin American art are Rufino Tamayo and Carlos Merida. Their artworks, which are done in various media including oil, acrylic, mosaic, and sculpture, reflect the struggle and interaction of abstraction and realism. Both artists integrated pre-Hispanic themes, Hispanic identity, and European cubist influences during their long and prolific careers. “Rufino Tamayo is the predominant transitional figure who combined personal and social consciousness. Though rooted in the revolutionary period, he changed his themes to the investigation of inner myths and mysteries of his land. Masterly use of color and luminosity are striking characteristics of his work. He became increasingly interested in the simplification of forms which evolved into surrealism, cubism, and abstract art” (Nora Wagner, Introduction to the History of Mexican Art, *Mexican Museum Catalog of Selections*, San Francisco, 1981). Tamayo’s works continue to win
international acclaim as well as a special place in the history of Mexican art. Geometric abstraction is also expressed in the paintings and world famous mosaics of Carlos Merida. Born in Guatemala, Merida died at his Mexico City home in 1984 at the age of 93. His paintings have been exhibited internationally for seven decades. Many of his important early artworks, mosaics, are located in Guatemala City. His wall decorations are said to reflect his Maya heritage, while many of Merida’s other paintings are structural, geometrical, and abstract.

Decoration and realism were also visual themes during the post-war generation (1945-1970) as is demonstrated by the works of Maria Izquierdo and Juan O’Gorman of Mexico. The highly decorative mosaics which cover some high-rise building of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) were designed by O’Gorman, who was also an architect. Surrealism and fantasy encouraged portrayal of dreams and imagination as seen in paintings done by Dr. Atl (a member of the Syndicate), Frida Kahlo (Diego Rivera’s wife), as well as O’Gorman and Izquierdo.

Other artists and aesthetic styles of the post-war generation are found in South America. The Peruvian, Fernando de Syzlo, has exhibited throughout Latin America, the United States, and Europe for thirty years and is remarkable in that respect. He used Peruvian ceramics and pre-Columbian masks as his inspiration, yet created dense, colorful, and solid abstract images. Damian Bayon, Latin American art critic and writer, has called de Syzlo’s works “abstract indigenism” because of the contemporary interpretation of pre-Columbian themes. Another group of artists in Argentina produced a new interpretation of space and shape with the “New Figuration” exhibitions of the 1960s. Romulo Maccio and Antonio Sequi, and others re-interpreted the violent lines and colors of the action-paintings of Willem de Kooning in the United States, and of European Expressionists.

In sculpture, new directions were begun in Argentina and later in Caracas with the work of Mexico’s Mathisas Goeritz, Helen Escobedo, Manuel Felguerez and Sebastian. Their aesthetic style, sometimes also called Constructivism, is expressed in painting and sculpture, occasionally on a monumental scale. Some of these artists and their followers are today utilizing computers to create images as well as designs for sculpture.

During the post-war generation, the biennial exhibition of Sao Paulo was begun. This regular art exhibition has continued since 1951 and sets international aesthetic styles. It has spawned other exhibitions, which add to the vigor of the fine arts throughout Latin America.

Artists of the contemporary generation (1970-present) have benefited by the change in transportation and communication throughout the Americas. The 1960s and 1970s brought about wider distribution of art and publications through use of jet airplanes. Travelling exhibits linked Latin American artists with their international public. Now artists are able to travel widely, and many reside outside of Latin America although they are still considered “Latin American” due to their countries of origin. Other artists, such as Carlos Merida and Fernando de Syzlo, have travelled widely but always returned to Latin America to live and work.

Among Latin American painters today, both oils and acrylics are widely used despite their high import costs. Romulo Maccio is an Argentinean, whose neo-figurative art is known for monstrous shapes, violent lines, bold textures, and disrupted forms. By contrast, Fernando Botero of Medellin, Colombia, began paintings in a European and classic style. He later painted obese figures whose solidity reminds one of pre-Columbian statues, yet whose message is contemporary and Latin American.

Mexico’s Jose Luis Cuevas is a graphic artist and engraver who held his first exhibit at the Pan American Union in New York when he was twenty years old. His deformed but recognizable figures are subtle messages of social criticism. There is a fantastic quality in his engraving, which links him to expressionism and surrealism. Gonzalo Cienfuegos of Chile also uses the human figure as not only a fact but a symbol of human experience. His art background includes architecture, publicity, and graphic design. Like Jose Luis Cuevas, Cienfuegos intentionally distorts human figures from ideal norms to suggest the feelings of the artist for the subject and its human characteristics.
Realism, social commentary, and ‘pop’ art styles are represented through the artwork of Brazilians Antonio Henrique Amaral and Joao Camara Filho as well as Valentina Cruz of Chile. After student days in Brazil and painting in New York, Amaral returned to Sao Paulo, where he adapted pop techniques to Brazilian themes. For many years, he painted images of bananas, an attempt to symbolize growth and decay in Brazilian culture. Another Brazilian, Joao Camara Filho, also uses pop realism and social commentary with collage and caricature to portray well-known Brazilian politicians and individuals. Of course, the artistic style also conveys the feelings of the artist toward his human subjects. Valentina Cruz of Santiago, Chile also expresses personal feelings and political dissent in her artwork, which includes words and images. A strong social message is embedded in her art.

The realistic artwork of Argentine Ricardo Garabito has psychological characteristics, yet the relationship of figures and their setting is expressive, often revealing. In the example included in this curriculum, the feeling one gets is isolation and alienation despite the realistic techniques. A young Japanese-Brazilian, Lydia Okumura, also uses realistic lines and forms. The emphasis in her artwork, however, is on illusions of space and ambiguities in three-dimensional effects. Monochromatic colors, angular lines, and geometric shapes create depth and dimension in her paintings.

Pastels as well as oils are used by Arnoldo Coen, Mexican painter and son of an Italian opera singer. His artwork includes advertising designs, sets, and films. In his paintings, he attempts to find melodic equivalents in color and movement. Geometric abstraction is the result. He completed landscapes based on color themes during his stay in Tanzania as an envoy of Mexico. Now a university professor in Texas but formerly from Argentina and Mexico City, Kazuya Sakai also uses chromatic color, design, and curvilinear shapes in his acrylic paintings. Of Japanese descent, Sakai studies in Japan until 1951 and today resides in Dallas, where he is chairman of the Art Department at the University of Texas, Dallas.

The final group of artists, who works are presented in this curriculum, are either sculptors or three-dimensional collage artists. Luis Tomasello, an Argentine who lives in Paris, has interpreted planes and geometric shapes into “atmosferochromoplasmique,” a series of collages using white wooden cubes painted in varied colors on their reverse sides, presenting the effects of reflected light and color in space. The Mexican sculptor Sebastian also uses geometric forms to construct large and small sculptures. Some are designed to change their shapes, since they move on hinges. He calls these “geometric transformables.” Eventually, he hopes to set sculpture in motion using solar energy.

All of the artists included are of origin from a Latin American country. Together their works present unique interpretations of the themes of reality, structure, expression, dissent, decoration, and pop. In every case, the artists struggle to present artwork is not imported, regional, or alien to the Latin American scene. The two pitfalls which may separate fine art from mediocre art are the latter’s tendencies toward political propaganda and picturesque folklore. Each of these fine artists struggles to avoid these pitfalls in an effort to portray the complexities of contemporary society in Latin America. In every case, there are diverse interpretations of different environments, yet commonalities are “invention, intense personal expression...and tough research” (Donald Goodall, Living Masters of Latin America, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1980).

Rationale

The following five lessons introduce teachers and students to the main themes and key artists of the visual arts in Latin America today. As explained in the introduction, the artworks presented in this curriculum for pre-collegiate classrooms are drawn from the fine art tradition of over twenty Latin American countries. Their unifying element is the fact that each of these painters and sculptors were born in a Latin American country where Spanish, Portuguese, or French are predominant languages. In every case, one cannot help but become intrigued by the diversity or aesthetic style.
If there is a single concept which this curriculum emphasizes then it must be Diversity – of style, originality, and expression. Younger students will have the opportunity to learn about Latin America through its art, while teachers and older students may alter preconceived notions about Latin American visual arts. Students are asked to search each slide for clues as to themes, subject matter, and aesthetic style in order to encourage critical thinking skills and the ability to hypothesize.

Each set of slides has been organized with a single concept or issue to prompt inquiry. Lesson One: Latin American Visual art teaches the concept of diversity as different artists’ perceptions of similar subjects (men, women, dancing) are contrasted. Lesson Two: Main themes in Latin American Art presents six unifying concepts which may be identified in contemporary art from Latin America as well as other urban societies: reality, structure, expression, decoration, dissent, and pop. Lesson Three: Ways in Which Latin American Artists Portray Nature provides four differing interpretations of Landscape, a concept easily adapted to art instruction. Lesson Four: Ways in which Latin American Artists Express Dissent explores the subtleties of social criticism through the fine arts in Latin American societies, such as Mexico, Brazil, and Chile. Finally, Lesson Five: Ways in which Latin American Painters and Sculptors Portray Structure introduces concepts such as abstraction, perspective, two-dimensional, and three dimensional. The culminating activity, Make your own Hexahexaflexagon, teaches skills such as measurement, while students learn terms of geometry (equilateral triangle, hexagon, and Mobius strip).

As a follow up to the lesson on structure, a recent videotape on a young Mexican artist, Sebastian, entitled *Geometric Transofmables*, stimulates students’ imaginations about cubic solid shapes. Sebastian is a positive role model for students of every heritage and his genius in the field of mathematics, engineering, and sculpture is impressive.

**Objectives**

**Knowledge:**

Students will:

- Define visual arts as paintings, sculptures, or graphics which are an effort to create beauty;
- Define the terms of reality, structure, expression, decoration, dissent, and pop

**Skills:**

Students will:

- Adopt the artist’s perspective in order to decide what to include, exclude, or change in the scenery;
- Contrast three different styles of landscape: realistic, surrealistic, and abstract;
- Categorize paintings according to their predominant theme;
- Examine three examples of social dissent: pop, satire, and political

**Attitudes**

Students will:

- Expand their notions about visual arts in general and Latin in general and Latin American visual arts in particular.
Lesson One: Latin American Visual Art

Introduction: Although students may know little about specific Latin American countries, they do have mental images which they associate with Latin America. This introductory lesson elicits those stereotypic images, offers new images, and challenges students’ expectations.

Objectives: Students will…
- Brainstorm and list images of Latin American Art
- Define visual art as paintings, sculptures, or graphics which are an effort to create beauty
- Read one artist’s story, “I am an Artist” by Jose Chavez Morado
- Gather new impressions of Latin American visual arts today by viewing slides of artworks by living artists

Time/Materials
- One class period (30-45 minutes)
- Butcher paper
- Slides 1-21

Procedure
1. Explain the lesson and its objectives
2. In small groups of five, students should take butcher paper, draw two columns and add the headings: What do you expect to see? What do you actually see?
3. Ask each group to brainstorm their expected images of Latin American art and list in the first column. Their lists might include examples of folk or popular art. One person is chosen recorder. Suggestions might be: what plants, animals, types of people, scenery, or buildings?
4. After posting ideas on butcher paper, the students should quickly view the entire set of slides to gather new images. List these in the second column. Make the distinction between popular visual art and fine visual art.
5. Recorders should report to the entire group the words which appear on their lists. What words are repeated on lists of more than one group? Try to allow students to validate their shared preconceptions of Latin American art and to contrast their actual images of contemporary Latin American art from the slides.

Discussion: Diversity of expression is apparent after students view the images of paintings, graphics, collage and sculpture. Ask the class to account for the diversity within Latin American visual art today.

Follow up: Cultural identity is more apparent in the works of different artists. Read and discuss the article “I am an Artist” by Jos Chavez Morado. What is Mexicanidad? How does an artist interact with culture?
Lesson Two: Main Themes in Latin American Art

Introduction: The six themes: reality, structure, expression, decoration, dissent, and pop are common in fine arts in Latin America. An artwork might reflect one theme or more than one. However, it is useful for students to analyze each artwork to see which theme is most apparent. The slides are arranged in pairs to contrast two artists’ depiction of a similar subject including people dancing, men and women.

Objectives: Students will...
- Categorize six paintings according to the predominant theme
- Define the following themes:
  - Reality: people, places, and things as they appear without distortion.
  - Structure: Lines, shapes, color, or spaces are geometric or free-flowing;
  - Expression: The artist’s emotions are expressed through color, shape, or line;
  - Decoration: A pleasing design or composition is intentionally arranged;
  - Dissent: The subject or intent is to comment on or criticize society;
  - Pop: Urban realities, derived from advertising symbols, may or may not convey a message.

Time/Material:
- One class period (30 minutes)
- Slides 1-6

Procedure:
1. Explain the themes. Ask students to try to categorize the following paintings according to the theme they feel is most apparent. Some disagreement is expected as students’ are interpreting what they think was the artist’s intent.
2. Present the slides in pairs so that students contrast two artists’ depiction of a similar subject. Not every pair will be a clear-cut example of two opposing themes.
3. Images of People Dancing:
   a. Slide 1: Jose Clemente Orozco, The Dance Hall (Mexico, 1941). What parts of the painting are realistic? Does some distortion make the painting less realistic?
   b. Slide 2: Gonzalo Cienfuegos, Couple Dancing (Chile, 1978). What changes in reality do you see? Do the distortions express feelings through art?
4. Images of Men:
   a. Slide 3: Runfino Tamayo, The Smoker (Mexico 1939). What shapes can you identify in this painting? What is most important the face or the structures (shapes)?
   b. Slide 4: Fernando Botero, El Cardenal (Colombia, 1978) What changes in reality do you see? What do you think the artist thinks about his subject?
5. Images of Women:
   a. Slide 5: Maria Izquierdo, El Otoño (Mexico 1943). What is the relationship between the subject and the composition? Why did the artist arrange the images? Does the distortion convey meaning or is it decorative?
6. Suggested categories for the slides (in order 1 through 6): reality; expression; structure; dissent; decoration; reality/expression. No images of pop art which uses advertising and commercial art techniques were presented.
Discussion: The lives of these artists spanned the twentieth century. Only four countries are represented, yet the diversity of expression is apparent. Additional information about the lives and works of the artists are presented in the following biographic sketches.

Biographical sketches

Jose Clemente Orozco (Jalisco, Mexico, 1883-1949) As a student at the Academia de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, Orozco received rigid training in perspective and anatomy. He was influenced by the engravings of the cartoonist Posada and the teachings of Dr. Ati, an admirer of Michelangelo (Renaissance Italian sculptor and painter). In 1922, he created his first mural, an art form which was to later distinguish him among the great artists of the twentieth century. In Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Jiquilpan (Pomona and Dartmouth colleges in the US) he left vast works considered to be among the best of modern artwork.

Rufino Tamayo (Oaxaca, Mexico, 1899 - ) Tamayo did not respond to the social realism of his contemporaries, the muralists, but chose an individual path, painting still-lives, portraits, and a few themes of revolutionary ideals. His art reached maturity in the 1950s in a style that successfully fused modern European with ancient and contemporary Mexican traditions. Explosive abstract forms in blues, reds, and earth colors evoke his birthplace, Oaxaca.

Fernando Botero (Medellin, Colombia, 1932 - ) Fernando Botero began his studies in Colombia and later continued them in the United States, Italy, France, and Spain. He has exhibited all over the world and has received eight major awards. His style is of distinctively massive forms in which emphasis on the grotesque is relieved by gently humorous satire.

Maria Izquierdo (Mexico, n.d.) Little is known about this painter of the 1940s whose friendship with Diego Rivera and his wife, Frida Kahlo, and Rufino Tamayo brought her into the mainstream of the Mexico City art world. Her painting, El Otoño, is realistic; nevertheless, it is composed in a decorative fashion. Maria Izquierdo’s painting reflects romantic realism.

Ricardo Garabito (Argentina, 1932- ) A student of Horace Butler, Garabito presented his first exhibition in 1963 in Buenos Aires. His style is realistic; however, his colors express emotions and alienation between people. He has received awards in 1964 and 1978. Today he lives in Buenos Aires.

Gonzalo Cienfuegos (Santiago, Chile, 1944 - ) After studying in Chile and Mexico City, Cienfuegos devoted himself to graphic design, publicity, and architecture. Like his contemporary, Jose Luis Cuevas, the figures are distorted to express the artist’s feelings about the subject.
Lesson Three: Ways in which Latin American Painters Portray Nature

Introduction: As an introduction to the lesson on landscapes, ask students to draw a picture of natural scenery in their community. Afterwards explain that their drawing is called a landscape and not, for example, a seascape or portrait. In Spanish the word is paisaje, the title of all four paintings in this lesson.

Objectives: Students will...

Understand that paisaje, landscape, refers to a painting of natural inland scenery;
Contrast three different styles of landscape: realistic, surrealistic (fantasy), and abstract (not a pictorial representation, only line, color form)
“Get into the artist’s shoes” in order to decide what to include, exclude, or change in the scenery.

Time/Materials:
One class period (30-45 minutes)
Drawing paper, crayons or pens
Slides 7-10

Procedure:
1. Explain the definition of landscape (paisaje in Spanish). Ask the students to draw a landscape from memory. After the drawings are completed, students should compare the similarities and differences among their landscapes. What decisions did each student make about their drawing? What was included, excluded, or changed in their scene?
2. Explain that each of the following paintings are entitled paisaje, the Spanish word for landscape or countryside. Compare and contrast the ways each artists painted a landscape:
   a. Slide 7: Dr. Atl (Geraldo Murillo), Paisaje (Mexico, no date)
      i. What kind of mountain is this? (a volcano)
      ii. Does the painting look like a specific country?
   b. Slide 8: Antonio Berni, Paisaje (Argentina, 1955)
      i. How is this painting realistic?
      ii. Does this painting look like a specific country?
   c. Slide 9: Juan O’Gorman, Paisaje Recuerdo (Mexico, 1966)
      i. What is not realistic in this painting?
      ii. Does this painting look like a real or imaginary place?
   d. Slide 10: Arnoldo Coen, Paisaje (Mexico, 1974)
      i. How does the artist suggest a landscape?
      ii. Can you tell that this was painted in Africa?
3. Students should guess which of the paintings were realistic, which were abstract, and which were fantasy. Although the answers are open to discussion, Dr. Atl’s painting is realistic; Berni’s landscape is also realistic; O’Gorman’s is surrealistic; Coen’s is abstract.

Biographical sketches

Geraldo Murillo (Dr. Atl): Murillo was educated at the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City and became well-known for his use of light in landscape paintings. He inspired younger artists such as Diego Rivera and was active as a leader of artists between 1900-1930. This was a very turbulent time in
Mexico’s history with the revolution and Constitution of 1917 as important turning points for young artists. Geraldo expressed the spirit of the times by changing his name to an Aztec word, atl, which means water in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. His landscapes of volcanoes are well known.

**Antonio Berni** (Rosario, Argentina, 1905-1982): Berni’s earliest paintings were landscapes in a style influenced by French impressionism. Later he studied in Paris and adopted a cubist style which was abstract. He received special funding to travel throughout South America and to paint pre-Columbian and “American” themes. He emphasized the life and concerns of common people in his paintings.

**Juan O’Gorman** (Mexico, 1905-1982): Since his father was a painter, Juan O’Gorman became interested in art as a young boy. He chose the career of architect, however, and painted for pleasure. The three major themes of his paintings are landscapes, allegory (symbolic), and portraits.

**Arnoldo Coen** (Mexico, 1940): Coen was educated to become a commercial artist; however, in 1963 he held his first solo exhibition and since then has dedicated himself to a career as a professional artist. He uses colors and shapes to stand for moods. Music offers inspiration for his art. His mother was a well-known opera singer. During 1977-78 he lived in Tanzania (Africa) as a diplomat and his landscapes in pastels are of African inspiration. His other activities include set design and film-making.
Lesson Four: Ways in which Latin American Artists Express Dissent

Introduction: Rapid urbanization, uneven distribution of wealth, and political struggle create an environment in which visual artists must criticize society and its values through their art. The Mexican muralists began the tradition of social themes which is well established throughout Latin America today.

Objectives: Students will...
- Examine three examples of social dissent: pop, satire, and political
- Understand pop as realities derived from advertising images; satire as the use of derisive wit to attack folly or wickedness; and political as a comment on government or politics.
- Locate or illustrate examples of social dissent.

Time/Materials:
- One class period (30-45 minutes)
- Slides 11-14
- Art paper, crayons, pens

Procedure:
1. The slides selected in this lesson represent different types of social dissent. Ask students the following questions to begin discussion of each slide:
   a. What type of dissent – subtle or obvious – do you find?
   b. What factors might influence the artist’s statement of dissent?
   c. Are there symbols in the paintings? What are they?
   d. What is the message of each painting?
2. Social dissent which is satire:
   a. Slide 11: Jose Luis Cuevas, Personaje (Mexico, 1980)
      i. How does the artist express his emotions about the subject?
      ii. What might this person represent in society?
   b. Slide 12: João Camara Filho, Caravana Viva (Brazil, 1979)
      i. How does the artist express something about this personality?
      ii. What clues might help identify this politician?
      iii. What might this person represent in society?
3. Social dissent which is political:
   a. Slide 13: Valentina Cruz, Censorship (Chile, 1974)
      i. How is newspaper used in this painting? Why?
      ii. What is the artist saying about her society?
4. Social dissent which is pop:
   a. Antonio Amaral, Banana Moment South (Brazil, 1972)
      i. Do you notice a change in the banana? Why?
      ii. How does the artist use the national colors of Brazil? Why?

Activity: Students should either draw or locate example of each type of social dissent: satire, political, or pop.
Biographical Sketches

Jose Luis Cuevas (Mexico, DF, 1934- ): Jose Luis Cuevas is a controversial artist whose works are engravings and sketches in white, brown, or black tones. His themes are social and strongly satirical: bizarre behavior, subconscious images, and alienation. At the age of twenty he exhibited at the Pan American Union in Washington, DC, and his career has led to international prominence ever since.

Joao Camara Filho (Paraiba, Brazil, 1944- ): This artist from Pernambuco, a state in Brazil’s northeast, is known for his polemical paintings about local and national politics. He has done many lithographs which reflect the influence of cartoon and collage. He was educated as a psychologist.

Valentina Cruz (Chile, n.d.): Little is known as yet about this artist from Santiago, Chile who lives in Rome. Her collage-like works carry a strong social message.

Antonio Henrique Amaral (Sao Paulo, Brazil, 19350): Until 1967 Amaral, trained as a lawyer, was principally an engraver and printmaker. His subject is Brazilian society, yet he uses symbols such as bananas or violent jungles and plant forms to express his social viewpoints.
Lesson Five: Ways in which American Painters and Sculptors Portray Structures

Introduction: Structure in the visual arts has been defined as lines, shapes, color, or spaces which are angular (geometric) or free flowing. In these paintings, structure is more important to the artist than reality or meaning. We call these aesthetic styles abstract because the image does not represent any realistic object, person or place. Collage (glued wooden blocks) and sculpture are two other ways to express structure.

Objectives: Students will....
- Identify structure in paintings, collage, and sculpture by describing shapes, lines, colors, and use of space.
- Contrast flat two-dimensional art in which depth is created with perspective, and three-dimensional art such as collage and sculpture.

Time/Materials:
- One class period (30-45 minutes)
- Slides 15-21
- Paper, ruler, pencils.

Procedure:
1. Explain that structure in the visual arts is expressed by angular (geometric) or free-flowing lines, shapes, and colors. What unites the paintings and sculpture in this lesson is the fact that artists were more concerned with structure than reality.
2. As each slide is projected, ask students to decide whether the image is flat (only two dimensions: height and width), whether perspective is used to create an illusion of depth, or whether the artwork is actually three-dimensional.
3. Paintings in which the image is flat and geometric:
   a. Slide 15: Joaquin Torres-Garcia, Pintura Constructive (Uruguay, 1932)
      i. What shapes does this artist use to portray structure?
      ii. In what ways is the painting balanced? Side to side, Up-down?
   b. Slide 16: Carlos Merida, Cosmic Eye (Guatemala, n.d.)
      i. What parts of the painting appear flat?
      ii. How does the artist give the appearance of depth (two dimensions)?
4. Paintings which are flat with free-flowing lines:
      i. Cabezote means ‘pumpkin-head’ Can you see it?
      ii. How would you describe the lines: free or restricted?
   b. Slide 18: Kazuya Sakai, Atmospheres (Argentina, 1979)
      i. How are curves used in this painting?
      ii. How is color used in this paintings?
5. Paintings which use Perspective to suggest depth:
   a. Slide 19: Lydia Okumura, Somewhere Beyond and Behind (Brazil, 1978)
      i. How does the artist suggest depth? Height?
      ii. How is color used (or not used) in this painting?
6. Three-Dimensional artworks (height, width, depth):
i. Can you tell how this collage was made? (Cubes glued on one point)  
ii. What gives the added depth to the collage? (Shadows) 

b. Slide 21: Sebastian (Enrique Carbajal), Octaedro Amarillo (México, 1979)  
i. What angles, shapes, and cubic figures can you find?  
ii. What might look similar to this shape? (Crystals, puzzles)

**Activity: Hexahexaflexagon** (see activity sheet);  
Students of all ages (grade 6 – adult) will enjoy building a three-dimensional structure called a hexahexaflexagon. Start with a Mobius strip – 3” side- and measure equilateral triangles along its surface. By twisting along the scored lines, the Mobius Strip becomes a three-dimensional flexible shape.

**Biographical Sketches**

**Joaquin Torres-Garcia** (Montevideo, Uruguay, 1874-1949): Although born in Uruguay, Torres-Garcia received his art education in Spain, where he lived until 1932. After studying with the Impressionists, Art Nouveau, and the Cubists, Torres-Garcia tried mural painting, designed stained glass windows, and decorated churches and tapestries. He returned to Montevideo to establish taller (workshop) Torres Garcia, where he taught younger artists.

**Carlos Merida** (Quezaltenango, Guatemala, 1891-1984): Merida’s lifetime aim was to incorporate the rich artistic heritage of his native country with the modern aesthetics which he learned abroad. His paintings reflect a cubist influence and adapt well to become murals. Merida designed and executed a number or important murals in painting, cement, and mosaic.

**Romulo Maccio** (Buenos Aires, 1932- ): A self-taught painter, Maccio first exhibited in 1956 and has shown his works in Paris, London, Rio de Janeiro, New York, Caracas, and Buenos Aires. Although he lives in Paris and in Spain, his art has received awards in Buenos Aires from Instituto Torcuato di Tella. His style is reminiscent of the action-paintings of Pollack and de Kooning, yet is called “neofigurative” because of the struggle to release lines from conformist images.

**Kazuya Saki** (Argentina, 1927 - ): Born in Argentina, Sakai was educated in Japan during the Second World War and returned to Buenos Aires in 1951. Since 1965, he has lived in Mexico and the United States. He is chairman of the art faculty of the University of Texas, Dallas. Damian Bayon, art critic, calls Sakai’s art ‘shaped canvas’ which invades the third dimension with vivid color, geometric and sculptural shapes.

**Lydia Okumura** (Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1948- ): Lydia is of Japanese ancestry and has studied in Sao Paulo and in New York’s Pratt graphic Art Center. He is concerned with the mysteries of interior spaces and forms. She also constructs three-dimensional works of paint and string which create two kinds of space: that which we know exists and those spaces which we imagine.
Activity: A hexahexaflexagon

**Step 1:** Use tag board strips. This figure is made up of 19 equilateral triangles. Number the surface shown. Be certain that the first ‘1’ triangle has the ‘z’ on its undersurface and that the last ‘6’ corresponds to the ‘A’ surface.

![Diagram of numbered triangles](image)

**Step 2:** Crease all interior lines by scoring with a compass point (don’t cut through!). Cut strip out along exterior lines.

**Step 3:** Fold the strip so that the same under surface numbers come together. 4 on 4, 5 on 5, 6 on 6 and so on.

**Step 4:** Fold back along the imaginary line ‘ab.’ After the first set of two ‘1-1’ triangles.

![Diagram of folded strip](image)

**Step 5:** Fold back on the imaginary line cd. Turn the ‘A’ triangle under and paste it to the ‘Z’ triangle. If you have done the job properly, the triangles on one face of the hexagon will be numbered ‘1’ and on the other face will be numbered 2. If this is not the way yours turned out, re-fold and if that doesn’t work check to see if you numbered your triangles exactly like those shown. To open the faces of your Hexahexaflexagon, pinch one corner while pushing the opposite corner. Keep flexing, sometimes alternating corners, until all 6 faces appear.

![Open hexahexaflexagon](image)
Notes on: Hexahexaflexagon

1. The key to this activity is the folding directions;
2. Be sure that scoring is done lightly;
3. The hexahexaflexagon faces are changed by opening as a flower opens. From the bottom up and the top out;
4. Try it yourself a few times;
5. Make up from equilateral triangles with about 2 inch sides;
6. Question: Where does the name Hexahexaflexagon come from?
List of Latin American Artists by Birthdate:

Dr. Atl (Geraldo Murillo) (Mexico)
Maria Izquierdo (Mexico)
Valentina Cruz (Chile)
Joaquin Torres-Garcia (Uruguay, 1874-1949)
Jose Clemente Orozco (Mexico, 1883-1949)
Carlos Merida (Guatemala, 1893-1984)
Rufino Tamayo (Mexico, 1899-)
Antonio Berni (Argentina, 1905-1982)
Juan O’Gorman (Mexico, 1905-1982)
Luis Tomasello (Argentina, 1915-)
Kazuya Sakai (Argentina, 1927-)
Romulo Maccio (Argentina, 1931 - )
Ricardo Garabito (Argentina, 1932 - )
Fernando Botero (Colombia, 1932-)
José Luis Cuevas (Mexico, 1934 - )
Antonio Amaral (Brazil, 1935 - )
Arnoldo Coen (Mexico, 1940 - )
Joao CAMara Filho (Brazil, 1940 - )
Gonzalo Cienfuegos (Chile, 1944 - )
Sebastian (Enrique Carbajol) (Mexico, 1947 - )
Lydia Okumura (Brazil, 1948 –)
List of Latin American Artists by Country

Argentina
Antonio Berni
Ricardo Garabito
Rómulo Maccio
Kazuya Sakai
Luis Tomasello

Brazil
Antonio Amaral
Joao Câmara Filho
Lydia Okumura

Chile
Conzalo Cienfuegos
Valentina Cruz

Colombia
Fernando Botero

Guatemala
Carlos Mérida

Mexico
Dr. Atl
Arnoldo Coen
José Luis Cuevas
María Izquierdo
Juan O’Gorman
José clemente Orozco
Sebastián
Rufino Tamayo

Uruguay
Joaquín Torres-García
I AM A PAINTER

'[There is] something that doesn’t exist in Mexico: people that have the training and the concepts to create culture where they live. That is why I have helped start schools and museums. That’s the kind of life we have to live here. In some countries you can be only an artist. But in Mexico, in my time, we have had to labor for the creation of a culture.'
By Christopher Swan

Guanajuato, Mexico

"I am a painter."

The words stand 10 feet tall, like the murals. They are old, like the antiquity the paintings portray. They are proud, like the man who utters them.

But they are only words. And you cannot fully find José Chávez Morado, the 75-year-old follower of Diego Rivera and contemporary of Rufino Tamayo, in words. You must look for him in images.

Images such as those you find spread across one giant wall in the Mexican National Museum of Anthropology.

The museum's creators asked Señor Chávez Morado to portray three great periods of pre-Hispanic Mexican history — the preclassic, classic, and postclassic — in this mural. And he did, in sweeping images of savage bloodshed, dark oppression, and the struggle to be free.

He is a painter of the heroic school that sprang from the Mexican Revolution. His images, massive and sculptured, mingle primitive brutality and modernist abstraction. They are mostly the images of Mexican history.

Here is a more contemporary, image.

It is 10 o'clock on a Tuesday morning at El Museo del Pueblo de Guanajuato — one of the small museums that Chávez Morado has spent his life organizing and consecrating. He is at work on a scaffolding a good 18 feet up. Wearing a red bandana and loose-fitting jeans jacket, he is hunched over, working a pencil across a stretch of white plaster.

Around him, in varying stages of completion, loom three murals more than 19 feet tall and 4 feet wide. They are hieroglyphic reflections on history. The umbers and siennas impart a burning sense, mingled with the white ash of priests' and judges' robes. The evil figures in Mexican history look almost Dracula-esque; the typical heroes, the peasants, have a childlike beauty.

In these murals, Chávez Morado is practicing a kind of craft that has all but disappeared from Mexican painting. He had to stop work on them for a year because there is only one fresco plaster specialist in all of Mexico, and this specialist had to work on a project in another part of the country.

On a deeper level, too, he has seen the fundamentals of his craft disappear from the art world here. Almost no one is interested in painting the great Indian-Gothic forms and subject matter — borrowed from the dark side of the Indian and European cultures — that he and his contemporaries were concerned with.

While he feels that something wonderful was lost in the rush toward abstraction, he still has hope.

"I am not so pessimistic," he observes. "Culture is like a pendulum. We have had a long time of abstraction. There is an uprising of neo-realism, but still just at the surface. They have not gone very deep. But I think the return to realism in painting will be very important. Because you cannot be insensitive to what happens around you.

"You have the tools. You have to have the commitment to something. After all, we are communicators."

You see what he hopes to communicate in this chapel-like room with its rugged wooden doors opening onto Mexican mountaintops: a sense of the fire and turmoil in his country's history.

The paintings will be a central attraction in this tiny museum, down a bending side street in bustling old Guanajuato. They represent, he says as he draws, "the cutting up of Mexico by the United States, by the French, by the wealthy families."

At the bottom of one "there are faces in the flames, suggesting the restlessness of the Revolution." He wants to be careful in painting these faces, he says, "because they are people I knew in my childhood."

That childhood saw the Revolution rage through Mexico. It led to an era when Mexican thought erupted with nationalistic fervor, the dream to create all things Mexican. And this dream gave birth to Diego Rivera, a whole school of painting, a way of looking at the world, and José Chávez Morado.

"I am proud of that," he had said on an earlier evening, sitting with his wife, Olga Costa, in their home crammed with antiques. "In 1921, when Rivera started painting murals... there was a social
shaking of the country. It produced a school of painting that includes not only the cultural arts of Mexico, but also the influences of most of the world. "There were the Italian muralist influences. Rivera also brought the influence of Paris. We're all interconnected."

Maybe so. But the Mexicanidad (Mexicanness) of Chávez Morado and his work is inescapable. Nowhere else in art do you see such mingling of Moorish, high-Spanish, European, and American realism and abstraction. That province belongs to the school that these men fashioned.

Chávez Morado was not the important founding figure in this school. Nor is he the best known. He is a regional painter with a large national reputation (he designed the important central pillar of the Museum of Anthropology's spreading courtyard.) "He doesn't have Tamayo's international reputation; but, then, who does?" comments Leonard Brooks, a Canadian painter who lives in nearby San Miguel de Allende. "José Chávez Morado is, however, the best fresco painter in Mexico. He is highly regarded as a proponent of that social-realism school."

"My murals [deal with] the subject matter in a very open way," Chávez Morado muses. "Most are didactic. They tell you who and when. These things are not so strong, now," he goes on. "There is a crisis of identity in most young painters. They look more from the outside than from the inside. . . . I am perhaps one of the last artists representing the fundamentalist movement. Many others have died. Only two or three are left with something in common."

The "something in common" is all around him as he speaks.

It is part of this house, which he and his wife built from an antique-stone water tower, with its old wooden statues of monks, colonial silver artifacts, the art and ethos of a country. And it is part of this man, aristocratic and articulate, with dark, tawny skin, long silvery hair falling over his collar, looking at the world through the eyes of Mexico. He treasures the things of beauty that Mexico has produced and the sense of culture he yearns to see cherished here.

"[There is] something that doesn't exist in Mexico: people that have the training and the concepts to create culture where they live. That is why I have helped start schools and museums. That's the kind of life we have to live here. In some countries you can be only an artist. But in Mexico, in my time, we've had to labor for the creation of a culture.

"We have had to push against the indifference of the people. The people have been neglected."

Chávez Morado is concerned that "we don't lose our identity." Lest the mingling of histories and cultures on this continent is lost in what he calls "this great wheel of internationalism," he says that "we have to reinforce the identities that create this beautiful mosaic of cultures, which is now in danger. You go to a city, and it looks so much the same as other cities. We are destroying the parks, the trees. It's a madness. We have been losing so much. You have to conserve the essence of the indigenous country; and you should find and be yourself.

"That's what I do in painting. And my wife, too. We are Mexican painters."

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