

# Deus ex Machina:

## Tradition, Technology, and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martinez

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**ABSTRACT:** *This essay examines the visual art of Marion C. Martinez. Her mixed media sculptures and wall hangings of Catholic images are made from discarded computer components, some of which she acquired from a dump at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Through technology, Martinez reproduces and transforms traditional Indo-Hispanic art forms and, at the same time, underscores New Mexico's history as a dumping ground for technological waste. In doing so, she challenges nostalgic and romantic visions of the "Land of Enchantment," interrogates the parameters of Hispana and Chicana cultural identity, and offers work emblematic of what I term Chicanafuturism.*

*There can ... be no simple "return" or "recovery" of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present: no base for creative enunciation in a simple reproduction of traditional forms which are not transformed by the technologies and identities of the present.*

—Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities"

In February 2001, the Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, launched *Cyber Arte*, an exhibition of visual art fusing "elements traditionally defined as 'folk' with state of the art computer technology."<sup>1</sup> The show, which was housed in the Changing Gallery of the museum's Hispanic Heritage Wing, consisted of works by four artists: Teresa Archuleta-Sagel, Elena Baca, Alma López, and Marion C. Martinez. With its subtitle *Tradition Meets Technology*, *Cyber Arte* simultaneously counterposed and collapsed "tradition" and "technology" and, by extension, the old and the new. The artists used computers to create "traditional images," such as those of religious figures (Van Cleve 2001, F1). Yet some of these



Fig. 1. *Our Lady* (1999) by Alma López. 14" x 17.5" digital print on canvas. Reprinted with permission of Alma López, who thanks Raquel Salinas and Raquel Gutierrez.

so-called traditional images, most notably López's 1999 *Our Lady* (see fig. 1), had a distinctly contemporary twist. This 14" x 17.5" iris giclee on canvas portrays the Virgin of Guadalupe as a young, physically fit, self-confident Latina. Unlike more customary representations of the mother of Christ, López's Virgin does not wear a long robe or star-spangled cloak. Instead, she sports a cape (consisting of a portion of the stone relief of the Aztec goddess Coyolxauhqui found at the Templo Mayor in Mexico City). Her chest and

hips are covered with garlands of roses, and her sleek abdomen and slender legs are bare. Additionally, her hands are not folded in prayer nor are her eyes downcast. Rather, with her hands on her hips and her head held high, López's Virgin leans her weight solidly on her right leg as she confronts the viewer. Beneath her exposed feet, the artist has replaced the angel that appears in conventional renditions of Our Lady of Guadalupe with a young, bare-breasted, short-haired Latina. She, too, looks directly at the viewer and behind her extended arms emerge the wings of a butterfly.

Like López and numerous other Chicana feminist artists, such as Ester Hernández and Yolanda López, Marion Martinez offers fresh visions of an old religious icon. But, in contrast to Alma López, she does so using computer hardware, as opposed to computer software. For example, in *Oratorio a la Virgencita* (2000), a 20" x 12" x 4" mixed media wall hanging, Martinez culls an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe from circuit boards (see fig. 2). Like *Our Lady*, Martinez's work testifies to the dynamism and malleability of Chicana art and cultural identity (especially in, of, and for New Mexico). Yet, whereas López's work sparked controversy and garnered national attention, Martinez's was overlooked for the most part.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay, I revisit *Our Lady* and the debates it prompted as the context for an examination of Martinez's resplendent visual art. A self-described "Indio-Hispanic," Martinez was born and raised in northern New Mexico in the shadow of Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), birthplace of the atomic bomb and one of the most important nuclear weapons research centers in the United States and the world. Her mixed media sculptures and wall hangings of Catholic images, nine of which were included in *Cyber Arte*, are fashioned from discarded computer components such as circuit boards, disks, wires, and chips, some of which the artist acquired from a dump at LANL. Using the technology of the present, Martinez reproduces and transforms traditional Hispano art forms and, at the same time, underscores New Mexico's history as a dumping ground for the remnants of twentieth-century technology. In doing so, she challenges nostalgic and romantic visions of New Mexico as the "Land of Enchantment," interrogates the parameters of Hispana and Chicana cultural identity, and offers work emblematic of what I term Chicanafuturism.<sup>3</sup>

## Between Heaven and Earth

Both *Our Lady* and *Oratorio a la Virgencita* illustrate the prominence of the Virgin of Guadalupe (also known as Our Lady of Guadalupe) in con-



Fig. 2: Oratorio a la Virgencita (2000) by Marion C. Martinez. 20" x 12" x 4" mixed media wall hanging. Reprinted by permission of the artist.

temporary Chicana art. This in part reflects the significance of the Virgin Mary in Catholicism: in the Catholic celestial hierarchy, she is second only to the Trinity (that is, God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit). While there is only one Christ and one Blessed Virgin, both have numerous appellations (names or titles). For instance, the former has appeared as the Holy Child of Atocha and Infant Jesus of Prague, the latter as the Virgin of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Lourdes.

Saints also play a significant role in Catholicism. They are “holy individuals who once lived and worked on earth” and who have entered heaven (Frank 2001, 19). However, they still respond to “earthly needs,” and thus are generally considered more approachable than God (19). As a forgiving mother, Mary is deemed one of the most approachable of the holy figures. Similarly, the infant Jesus is thought to be more approachable than Jesus in his adult form. Numerous Mexican and Mexican American Catholics revere and rely upon saints and the Virgin Mary, not as deities but as benefactors, protectors, and intercessors between earth and heaven. Many worship and petition them, along with various manifestations of Jesus Christ, in the belief that these holy personages have “personalized functions or powers ordained by God that they [can] use at their own discretion” (17).

The *santo* (image of a saint or other holy personage) is one of New Mexico’s most scrutinized and highly marketed art forms. New Mexican *santos* are generally classified into two types: *bultos*, or figures in the round (see fig. 3), and *retablos*, or panels (see fig. 4). Traditionally they are carved from wood, such as aspen, cottonwood, or pine, coated with gesso, then painted with tempera or other water-soluble, vegetable- or mineral-based pigments (Boyd 1998, 42; Briggs 1980, 10; Espinosa 1967, 51–52; Frank 2001, 26; Steele 1994, 4–6). Additionally, *bultos* are sometimes dressed in clothing similar to that of a doll. The 1700s until the late nineteenth century is considered the “golden age” of *santo* production in New Mexico (Briggs 1980, 7). During this period, *bultos* and *retablos* were used to decorate churches, chapels, and home altars throughout what was once the northern frontier of the Spanish empire and Mexican republic. Because of New Mexico’s relative isolation and resulting shortage of priests, *santeros* (producers of *santos*), along with the *Penitentes* (members of a lay religious fraternity), played an important role in creating and maintaining religious devotions until the late nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The arrival of the railroad in 1879–80, combined with church officials’ disapproval and removal of locally produced religious art from churches, allowed many New Mexicans to acquire *santos* from sources other than their local *santero* (Frank 2001, 36; Gavin 1994, 24, 50).<sup>5</sup> Today, *santos* can still be found in numerous New Mexican homes, although they are usually made of plaster, tin, or plastic (including a glow-in-the-dark variety).

Beginning in the 1920s, members of Santa Fe’s Anglo intelligentsia initiated what they perceived as a revival of the *santo* tradition (Briggs 1980, 46–64; Nunn 2001, 28–39). Inspired in part by the arts and crafts and primitivist movements, they turned not only to resuscitating what



Fig. 3. La Virgen de Guadalupe/The Virgin of Guadalupe (circa 1830) by Santo Niño Santero. 45.7 x 21cm tempera and gesso on wood. Photo by Blair Clark. Reprinted by permission of the Fred Harvey Collection, Museum of International Folk Art, Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe.

they deemed the traditional arts of New Mexico’s “native cultures,” but to preserving them in the face of the drastic technological changes of the early twentieth century (Nunn 2001, 28). As Tey Marianna Nunn notes, “the atrocities of World War I,” along with the rise of mass culture, helped facilitate a “burgeoning interest” in “folk” art—that is, cultural production regarded as simple, authentic, unique, and rustic (28). According to Lucy Lippard, “folk art has been defined as art that reflects its surroundings” (1990, 77). However, “those surroundings are understood to be ‘outside’ everyday modern urban life, and therefore the objects are valued as artificial

Fig. 4. Angel de la guardia/  
Guardian Angel (1825) by  
Jose Aragón. 22" x 11 1/4" gesso  
and water-soluble paint on wood.  
Photo by Blair Clark. Reprinted  
by permission of the Museum of  
International Folk Art, Museum  
of New Mexico in Santa Fe.



bonds to an idealized past” (77). To many art patrons in and beyond Santa Fe during the early twentieth century, the wood carvings, textiles, baskets, and metalwork of New Mexican Hispanos and Indians became emblematic of preindustrial society, of a less complicated and more innocent time, place, and people, and of a “folk culture deemed to be in danger of disappearing” (Nunn 2001, 28).

Charles Briggs’s 1980 study of the wood carvers of Córdoba, New Mexico, and their customers illustrates that, well into the twentieth century, santos were still regarded as links to “an idealized past.” Since the revival period of the 1920s and 1930s, art patrons and aficionados have flocked to Córdoba, approximately thirty-five miles northeast of Santa Fe, for its wood carvings, including santos. Briggs’s study shows that numerous people who purchased Córdovan wood carvings in the 1970s claimed to do so because they found both the objects and their producers “primitive,” “simple,” and “crude” (1980, 146). Briggs observes that Hispano communities in northern New Mexico are commonly stereotyped

as “remote,” “backward,” and “quaint,” and he says the carvings appeal to outsiders in part because they are viewed as an encapsulation of an agrarian, preindustrial, premodern society (146–47). For some, santos in particular are emblematic of the “precivilized” because they appear pagan (147). According to art historian George Kubler, santos are of the past, for they constitute “an idiom of antiquated symbols and forms” (1985, 63). He maintains that santeros continued to produce “a corpus of simple and powerful religious expressions long after the same impulse had disappeared in the originating centers of Europe” (63).<sup>6</sup>

### The Land of Poco Tiempo

Indeed, to some, New Mexico itself represents lag: it is of and in the past. One scholar asserts that its Hispanic settlers “were only lightly touched by” the Renaissance (Steele 1994, 6). In addition to appearing temporally distant, the inhabitants of what novelist Charles F. Lummis (1893) described in the late nineteenth century as “the land of slow time” have been regarded as spatially remote and physically isolated. Colonial New Mexico (1598–1821) has been described as “a lonely outpost of Spanish settlement,” “the fringes of civilization,” and “the farthest and most ragged rim of Christendom” (McWilliams 1990, 63; Espinosa 1967, 82; Steele 1994, 6). Undeniably, the Spaniards who colonized the upper Río Grande valley beginning in the late sixteenth century and their descendants found themselves on the edge of empire and nation “with little help from and often ignored by a distant governmental authority” (Espinosa 1967, 82). Unlike Texas and California, New Mexico was not accessible by sea or any easy route. Trade and communication between it and Mexico were slow and difficult. Nonetheless, New Mexico has acted as a contact zone for the empires, nations, and peoples who have claimed, settled, and traversed it for the past 400 years at least. The Comanche raids, Santa Fe Trail, and extant Catholic missions are but a few examples that testify to this.<sup>7</sup>

Real and imagined isolation continue to play an important role in defining New Mexican history and culture. “Geographic isolation,” as Carey McWilliams has observed, “bred social and cultural isolation; isolated in space, New Mexico was also in time” (1949, 63). Even in the postcolonial twenty-first century, the state continues to be regarded as both physically and temporally distant from the “forces of modernity,” as represented by capitalism and industrialization (Pulido 1996, 35). In her study of Ganados del Valle, a community development group in rural northern New Mexico,



Laura Pulido demonstrates how economic “development and disinvestment patterns create sociospatial categories ... such as North and South, [and] Core and Periphery,” as well as particular places considered marginalized, notably Appalachia, the rural South, and northern New Mexico (36). For better and for worse, such places have been

bypassed by the forces of development, leaving them to continue on in precapitalist forms of production and social relations, often creating regions of deep poverty. Because they have been relatively exempt from the homogenizing forces of modernity, such communities often carry the illusion of a traditional lifestyle, one that is considered quaint by outsiders. This is the case in northern New Mexico, where Hispano poverty is historically entrenched and due to uneven development (coupled with some maldevelopment) and racialized local economic activity. (35)

Despite Los Alamos National Laboratory’s prominent role in establishing and maintaining the dominance of the so-called free (that is, capitalist) world and its superpower champion, the United States of America, New Mexico remains relatively underdeveloped economically. According to the 2000 census, it ranks thirty-ninth in the nation for gross state product and fortieth for average annual pay. Moreover, New Mexico has the fourth-highest unemployment rate in the country and 19.3 percent of its population lives in poverty (compared to 13.3 percent of the national population).<sup>8</sup> Its physical distance from imperial, national, and global centers of commerce has stunted its economic growth. Meanwhile, external and internal forces have shaped it as an economic and social space, rendering it “remote,” “isolated,” and “on the fringe.”

As various scholars have argued, the logic of colonialism and racism maintains the existence of a spatial-temporal spectrum, with dark, “superstitious,” precapitalist peoples occupying one end (the primitive), and white, “enlightened,” capitalist nation-states occupying the other (the modern) (Fabian 1983; McClintock 1994). As denizens of the metropolis move to the periphery, they appear to move backward in time. By virtue of hailing from, occupying, and/or representing the periphery, Hispanos—especially poor, rural, Catholic Hispanos—have been barred from the present and future and fixed in a racialized past. They appear to have changed very little over the centuries and seem to occupy a world older than and separate from the white, capitalist, mechanized, and/or digitized world of modernity and postmodernity. In particular, by virtue of being associated with the preindustrial and predigital, they are often deemed incapable of understanding, mastering, or even living with science and technology, signifiers of the

present and future. This image persists even though generations of rural and urban Hispanos have managed to irrigate the desert with acequias and have controlled the temperature of their homes with adobe bricks—not to mention the fact that, since the last century, many have enjoyed indoor plumbing, swamp coolers, and, the digital divide notwithstanding, home Internet access, among numerous other technological amenities.

In short, Hispanos have been excluded from the world of science, technology, and reason, and confined to the domain of superstition, mythology, and intuition. One observer recently remarked that the community of Los Alamos is an “anomaly” in New Mexico not only because it is predominately wealthy and white (in a state that is mainly poor and brown), but because “its lifeblood is data—the concrete, observable information that is science—while it is surrounded by Indian cultural traditions whose roots are held in place by powerful, intuitive mythologies” (Shroyer 1998, 2–3). Although New Mexico is largely rural, Hispanos, unlike Native Americans, generally are not closely linked with a “sacred land concept,” nor have they been stereotyped to the same extent as having an essential, mystical connection to and harmonious relationship with nature or the land (Rodríguez 1987, 320). Nonetheless, like Native Americans (as well as other people of color and women in general), Hispanos, especially those in rural areas, are reputed to be closer to nature than white people, especially urban, middle- and upper-class white men. That is, they are associated with the wilderness, as opposed to civilization; with the organic or crude, as opposed to the artificial or refined; with the carnal, rather than the cerebral; with intuition, rather than intellect; and with mythology, rather than data. Even though land has functioned as a powerful ethnic symbol in Hispano struggles for social, economic, and environmental justice, the various racist, classist, and sexist assumptions that romanticize Hispanos’ relationship to their physical surroundings also serve to primitivize them, as well as obfuscate the history of ongoing, often violent competition over natural resources that has indelibly marked New Mexico and the U.S. Southwest.<sup>9</sup>

## Welcome to the Machine

Without a doubt, the tourism industry in New Mexico is responsible in great part for manufacturing many romantic myths about the state. These tout New Mexico’s putative temporal and physical distance from the hustle and bustle of the modern world while glossing over its demographic, socioeconomic, and environmental realities. For example, the

state Department of Tourism proudly promotes “the spicy mix that is New Mexico”—that is, its racial and ethnic diversity.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, however, it practices what Sylvia Rodríguez has termed “selective ethnophilia” and perpetuates the myth of triculturalism, for this “spicy mix” consists of the Anglo, Hispanic, and Native American cultures exclusively (Rodríguez 1987, 321).<sup>11</sup> The Department of Tourism further asserts that the so-called Land of Enchantment epitomizes multicultural harmony, for it is “a mosaic where various cultural ingredients intermingle and complement each other, while each retains its basic identity.”

Tourism capitalizes on tradition as it produces, maintains, and markets ethnic identities in colonial or postcolonial situations, that is, in situations in which intergroup relations are asymmetrical and exploitative (Rodríguez 1987, 324). Tourism boosters in New Mexico have emphasized a Hispano ethnic identity that is, by and large, “Spanish” (as opposed to “Mexican”), rural, and of the past.<sup>12</sup> Glossy brochures and magazines at visitor information centers throughout the state seek to lure tourists to “Spanish villages,” assuring them that little has changed in such places over the past four centuries. For example, an online brochure about Santa Fe County promises that in the “Spanish villages” just beyond the state capital, “traditions live on” and “you can find artisans practicing their centuries-old crafts.”<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, an advertisement in *The New Mexico 2002 Vacation Guide* for Tierra Wools of Los Ojos in northern New Mexico features a Hispana working at a rustic spinning wheel. Surrounded by colorful rugs and balls of yarn, she wears what appears to be nineteenth-century attire, including a lace mantilla on her head. In a study of the community development cooperative Ganados del Valle, of which Tierra Wools is a subsidiary, Pulido points out that the cooperative’s members have strategically cultivated a “Hispano pastoral identity” as “a source of personal and group fulfillment” and as a means of “achiev[ing] both political and economic power” (1996, 128). In short, cultivating such an identity has enabled the workers of Tierra Wools to foster economic growth in a region of great poverty and high unemployment and, thus, allowed them to challenge local asymmetrical and exploitative intergroup relations.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, by highlighting New Mexico’s “natural wonders” (also touted in the *Vacation Guide*), the tourism industry accentuates the state’s alleged distance from the modern, urban, and artificial, that is, the manufactured and technological. The Department of Tourism’s website and the magazines and brochures for visitors entice tourists with dramatic photographs of deserts, mountains, and rivers as they market New Mexico as a

site of leisure, serenity, and spiritual fulfillment (“Put Yourself in a State of Enchantment,” the website suggests). In addition to glossing over the state’s socioeconomic woes, the image of New Mexico as a place of natural beauty obscures its history and current role as a repository for radioactive waste. New Mexico became such a dumping ground at 5:29 a.m. on July 16, 1945, when scientists from Los Alamos National Laboratory detonated the world’s first atomic explosion at the Trinity Test Site. The blast in south-central New Mexico left a depression on the desert floor 2.9 meters deep and 335 meters wide. The heat it generated was so intense that it melted sand into a green glass now known as Trinitite. Fifty years later, radiation levels at the test site were ten times that of the background radiation levels (derived from naturally radioactive rocks and cosmic rays). Although New Mexico is internationally known for helping to usher in the nuclear age, and although its atomic history is celebrated at the National Atomic Museum in Albuquerque and the Bradbury Science Museum in downtown Los Alamos, the Trinity Test Site is rarely featured in state-sponsored tourist literature. In fact, it is open to the public only two days per year.<sup>15</sup>

New Mexico is also home to the nation’s first subterranean storehouse for defense-generated, transuranic waste. Located near Carlsbad Caverns, a popular tourist destination, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant began operations on March 26, 1999 with a network of “disposal rooms” located 2,150 feet underground. Waste contaminated with trace amounts of manmade radioactive elements, such as plutonium, is stored in these rooms. Radioactive and hazardous waste was also deposited from 1959 until the late 1980s at a landfill at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico’s most populous city, and is still stored at Los Alamos National Laboratory in northern New Mexico. The Los Alamos Study Group, a nonprofit nuclear disarmament organization based in Santa Fe, asserts that since 1944 LANL has disposed of at least 17.5 million cubic feet of radioactive and hazardous waste at its twenty-four onsite material disposal areas. According to the watchdog group, many of the disposal areas are located on hills, close to canyons, and/or in areas of relatively high precipitation. Like the dump at Sandia National Laboratories, they threaten to contaminate groundwater and, ultimately, the Río Grande. Already, the study group warns, flora and fauna on lab property exhibit abnormally high levels of radioactivity. Whether or not these claims can be verified, science and technology have had an obvious and profound impact not only on LANL and its surroundings, but on New Mexico’s physical landscape in general. Thus, in addition to suppressing histories of colonial exploitation and racial and ethnic

conflict, narratives of New Mexico as a place of unspoiled natural beauty ignore the forty-seventh state's legacy of environmental transformation and injustice.<sup>16</sup>

## Of Machines and Matachines

Challenging myths of and about the Land of Enchantment, Marion Martinez's nine works in *Cyber Arte* underscore the effects of science and technology on New Mexico's environment and people.<sup>17</sup> These works are made with computer parts, although some also incorporate wood and other materials. Four of the pieces are inspired by the *matachines*, "a ritual drama performed on certain saint's days in Pueblo Indian and Mexicano/Hispano communities along the upper Río Grande valley and elsewhere in the greater southwest" (Rodríguez 1996, 1). These pieces evoke the *cupiles*, elaborate headdresses worn by male dancers (*danzantes*) of the *matachines*. The *danzante's* cupil resembles a bishop's miter, with numerous bright, multicolored ribbons typically hanging from its front and back. In *Danza de la Matachine III, IV, V, and VI* (see fig. 5), Martinez has used circuit boards for the miters and cleverly replaced the ribbons with wires. Beneath each "miter" and behind the "ribbons" lies a second circuit board, which represents the dancer's face, complete with eyes, nose, and mouth.<sup>18</sup>

For approximately the past fifteen years, Martinez has incorporated computer parts into her visual art. In an interview I conducted with her, she informed me that even as a child she was fascinated with machines, such as television sets and radios, and was curious about how they were constructed and how they operated. During the mid-1980s, while making a video that incorporated computer-generated images, she pried open a computer. Martinez recalled that she was instantly struck by the "innate, almost architectural beauty and symmetry" of the circuit board. "From there, I haven't put it down," she remarked.<sup>19</sup>

Over the years, Martinez has collected an eclectic array of computer and machine parts. When gathering materials for her pieces, she has raided friends' basements and garages. She has also acquired garbage from the so-called Black Hole at LANL, "a repository for innumerable kinds of discarded electronic parts" (Van Cleve 2001, F2). Martinez refers to these castoffs as "discarded treasures."<sup>20</sup> "Among other things, my work makes a stand about recycling technology," she told a reporter from the *Albuquerque Journal* on the eve of the opening of *Cyber Arte* (Van Cleve 2001, F2). Indeed, Martinez's work points directly to New Mexico's history as a dump-



Fig. 5. *Danza de la Matachine II* (1998) by Marion C. Martinez. 19" x 9 3/4" x 3/4" mixed media wall hanging. Reprinted by permission of the artist.

ing ground for high-tech trash. Moreover, as the only artist in *Cyber Arte* to use computer hardware—as opposed to computer software, which three other artists used to create their pieces—she raises difficult questions about the ways in which we throw away the tools of the information age, many of which are obsolete as soon as they are made available to us, but few (if any) of which decompose rapidly or safely.

Because she draws inspiration and gathers materials from her surroundings, Martinez describes herself as a folk artist. “In traditional folk art, people gather objects found around them in the world. I’m doing the same thing,” she explained. Martinez was born in Española, New Mexico, in the midst of the Cold War on January 24, 1954 and raised in Los Luceros, a small, primarily Hispano agricultural community approximately forty-five miles from LANL. Before becoming a full-time artist, she worked as a psychotherapist for nearly twenty years. Her father was employed by the U.S. Postal Service in Española and also farmed and raised cattle on family land in Los Luceros. Her mother worked at a dry goods store and, for a while, in a dormitory at LANL (at the time, it was called Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory). As a college student, Martinez also worked at LANL, where she inserted tapes and punch cards into a computer. At the time of this writing, her sister was an employee of the lab. Another sister works at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to providing many residents of the Española Valley with steady jobs, LANL “broke the isolation,” Martinez observed. While such a remark may reinforce stereotypes of New Mexico as remote, it also offers a glimpse of the profound impact of LANL on the artist’s family and the people of the Española Valley in general. Martinez recalled that the lab proletarianized, urbanized, and anglicized many Hispanos by offering wage labor to replace the agrarian livelihood upon which previous generations had depended. This income enabled them to leave family land and move away from family, community, and language, while at the same time developing networks outside of Hispanic culture. Although it has offered them a modicum of physical and socioeconomic mobility, working at LANL has also left many of the people of Los Luceros with less time. “[We’re] too busy,” Martinez explained. “[We] can’t make tortillas anymore.” For better and for worse, she concluded, LANL enabled “us ... to move away from who we are.”<sup>22</sup>

Change is an important theme of much of Martinez’s work. Because folk artists’ surroundings have changed with time, folk art, she insists, is far from a static category. Martinez’s surroundings are filled not only with computer entrails, but with bultos and retablos as well. Like folk art in general, santo production in New Mexico has changed and Martinez’s work is evidence of this. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Robin Farwell Gavin writes, New Mexican santeros drew inspiration from “the illustrated missals and bibles, individual broadsheets ... devotional cards ... oil paintings, and sculptures brought up from Mexico on

the supply caravans to adorn the churches and missions. These prints and paintings in turn were based upon works by northern European masters ... and by Spanish artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (1994, 40).<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the santeros of this period, some of whom were Native American (and many more of whom descended from Native Americans), borrowed materials, forms, and techniques from local Indians, who used pine for tablitas (panels) and cottonwood root for kachinas (spirits depicted as figures in the round) (Steele 1994, 25). Furthermore, some, such as the Quill Pen Santero, incorporated patterns found in Pueblo pottery into their work (28). Centuries later, market pressures induced santeros to alter their techniques and the range of items they produced for sale. Briggs notes that until the late 1920s, the celebrated Córdovan santero José Dolores López generally finished items that he produced for friends and neighbors with house paints, but the bright colors “proved to be rather too gaudy for the Santa Fe market” (Briggs 1980, 53). López’s Anglo patrons suggested that he leave his work unpainted, which probably gave it more of a rustic and, ironically, “traditional” appearance. At the same time, they urged him to produce “non-traditional pieces such as lazy susans, record racks and, much later, screen doors, which he incorporated into his repertoire” (53). Clearly, santo production in New Mexico has never occurred in a cultural vacuum. It has been shaped by non-Hispanic and external forces—most recently, those of the market and tourism—and is thus very much a hybrid art form.

Although Martinez does not consider herself a santera in the “purest sense,” her work falls into, draws from, and transforms the already dynamic New Mexican santo tradition.<sup>24</sup> In terms of content, her pieces are clearly linked to this tradition: they depict holy personages, including el Santo Niño de Atocha and Our Lady of Guadalupe, both of whom are very popular among Catholic Hispanos in New Mexico and figure prominently in santo production there. *Oratorio a la Virgencita*, for instance, consists of an oratorio, a box containing an image of a religious figure, in this case the Virgin of Guadalupe (see fig. 2). Martinez’s wooden oratorio, which dates back to the nineteenth century, is decorated with carved and painted lunette top- and bottom-pieces, a typical feature of many New Mexican retablos.<sup>25</sup> Such retablos also often feature carved patterns and designs. In *Oratorio a la Virgencita*, the artist has replaced such carvings with two rows of embossed copper roses, one on the oratorio’s left side and the other on its right. Finally, with its multiple layers of ribbon cable and circuitry, the image of the Virgin inside the oratorio resembles a gesso relief—that is, a retablo in which “certain elements, such as the head, hands ... and



folds in the garments are built up with gesso to project from the surface of the panel, adding a three dimensional effect” (Gavin 1994, 81). While some of the materials that Martinez uses have been used by santeros for many generations (such as the nineteenth-century oratorio of *Oratorio a la Virgencita*), many are novel, unique, and unconventional. Nonetheless, in terms of both its content and form, her work is clearly situated in the New Mexican santo tradition.

*Oratorio a la Virgencita* shows how Martinez changes not only the materials she uses, but also the subjects of her pieces. The Virgin of Guadalupe, a hallmark of social and cultural transition par excellence, appears not only in this work but in several others as well.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Martinez’s matachines pieces signify change, for the matachines ritual itself is emblematic of social and cultural transformation and is located at the interface of the Old and New Worlds. While the ritual derives in part from medieval Spanish folk dramas symbolizing clashes between Christians and Moors, in Mexico and the southwestern United States it portrays the advent of Christianity among Indians (Rodriguez 1996, 2; Sklar 2001, 58). Several scholars assert that the dance itself is of Native American origin, but that “European concepts and elements were grafted onto” it (Sklar 2001, 202). Thus, Rodríguez describes the matachines as “syncretic Iberian-American” and notes that the dance as a whole is characterized by oppositions, as represented by the two rows that the *danzantes* form and the pairings of various dancers, such as the *monarca* and *malinche* (1996, 2, 35). Deidre Sklar points out that “embedded in the dance names *monarca* and *malinche* is a story of confrontation and conversion ... Some call Malinche a betrayer ... Others honor her for being the instrument of conversion” (2001, 59). Similarly, Our Lady of Guadalupe may be regarded as an instrument of conversion, for she simultaneously transforms and supplants Tonantzin, the Aztec goddess of motherhood. Sklar proposes that, in Tortugas, New Mexico, the matachines dance tells the story of the appearance in 1531 of the Virgin to the Christian Indian boy Juan Diego at Tepeyac Hill, site of a former temple to Tonantzin (61). She observes that the image of the Virgin is emblazoned on the front of the *danzantes*’ cupiles, as in *Danza de la Matachine II* (see fig. 5), and on the large apron-like scarves that hang from their waists. For each *danzante*, Sklar concludes, the portrait seems to proclaim, “I do this for her. This is who leads me” (39). Even though the Virgin of Guadalupe and the matachines ritual performed in her honor are reminders of European hegemony in the New World, they also signify flux and hybridity. That is, they underscore the dynamism and contestability of culture.<sup>27</sup>

## Ghost in the Machine

Like numerous Mexican Americans, Martinez was born and raised Catholic. As a child, she attended Catholic school at San Juan Pueblo. Later, she taught catechism and directed the youth choir there. Spirituality was and still is an integral part of Martinez's life and work, for she sees a close connection between human labor and the divine and maintains that her art is an expression of her love of God and life. Humans, she asserted, are conduits for the "divine spirit," which she believes emerges in and through our work. "We're all gifted and God has given us our gifts," she noted.<sup>28</sup>

In "Spirit Glyphs: Reimagining Art and Artist in the Work of Chicana *Tlaminime*," Laura E. Pérez defines the spiritual as the perception, belief, concept, and experience "that there is an essential spiritual nature, and thus an interconnectedness, of all beings, human and non-human" (1998, 37). Martinez seems to share a similar viewpoint: she maintains that "God" or the "divine spirit" links humans to one another, as well as to the nonhuman, and manifests itself in the material world via the human and nonhuman. According to Martinez, even a discarded circuit board is "pure God energy, it's spiritual energy" because of its beauty, order, and symmetry. When she salvages a circuit board from a basement or garage, cleans, sands, buffs, and polishes it, then shapes it into a gleaming bulto of the Christ child or a retablo of the Virgin Mary, she believes that she transfers her "essence and spirit" to the object through her labor. In doing so, she infuses what others might see as a cold, sterile thing or ugly piece of junk with life and meaning. This process of labor, of transference and transformation, she explained, is precisely what makes her work "spiritual."<sup>29</sup>

Just as saints, according to Catholic doctrine, mediate between heaven and earth, Martinez's work links science and spirituality, which have long been regarded and positioned as separate and mutually exclusive. Her remarks about spirit—about the intangible and unobservable manifesting itself in, creating, or becoming the tangible and observable—bear a strong resemblance to conversations among some scientists about the big bang (something that "made an entire cosmos out of nothing") and about "the emerging theory of the multiverse" (Easterbrook 2002, 166–67).<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Martinez's work reconciles putative opposites. It recognizes that the sacred and divine may be found in the everyday, material world, even in objects dismissed as trash, and blurs the line between science and spirituality.

Some of Martinez's pieces, such as *Oratorio a la Virgencita*, *Santo Niño de Atocha*, *Compassionate Mother*, and *Jesus con la Cruz*, merge the sacred and quotidian, as well as the organic and inorganic and the low-tech and



Fig. 6. *Jesus con la Cruz* (2000) by Marion C. Martinez. 20" x 13" x 4" mixed media wall hanging. Reprinted by permission of the artist.

high-tech. These four works are made with a combination of wood and computer parts. In *Jesus con la Cruz* (see fig. 6), Christ's profile is fashioned from a circuit board. His head is topped with barbed fence wire, which may represent the crown of thorns. As a symbol of Anglo-American encroachment upon and expropriation of land in New Mexico and the West, the fence wire may also be read as a technology of conquest. What's more, it invokes a technology of New Mexico's burgeoning prison-industrial complex. A disc represents Christ's halo and the two pieces of wood that constitute his cross are from an old toolbox—appropriate in light of the fact that Jesus was supposed to have been a carpenter. With its worn wood and shimmering computer parts, *Jesus con la Cruz* juxtaposes and bridges the low-tech (that is, the material and manually assembled) and the high-tech

(that is, the cybernetic and digital), as well as the old and new and past and present. And just as Christ, who Catholics believe is God made flesh, links the divine and earthly, the Pentium chip at the top of his cross merges the ethereal (qua cybernetic) and material and the local and global. Intel, maker of the Pentium chip, owns and operates a plant in Río Rancho, a suburb of Albuquerque. The chip illustrates that the local is often left behind by larger economic processes. Thus, in the case of New Mexico, the local is sometimes refuse—that which is physically left behind. Like many Third World factories that manufacture computers or computer parts, Río Rancho's Intel plant helps to sustain the country's high-tech economy by providing low-tech manufacturing jobs in an economically depressed and vulnerable region where wages are relatively low and environmental protection regulations are relatively lax.<sup>31</sup> The Pentium chip in *Jesus con la Cruz* locates New Mexico in the global economy, linking it to distant and not-so-distant places where information technologies and, subsequently, e-waste are produced. At the same time, it, along with the fence wire, speak of local histories of injustice and struggle.

In addition to locating the divine in both the tangible and intangible, Martínez sees it in men and women and in the masculine and feminine. A self-proclaimed feminist, she embraces what she describes as the “divine feminine within all of us.”<sup>32</sup> Like numerous Mexican and Mexican American Catholics, she reveres Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and female saints, such as Joan of Arc and Thérèse of Lisieux. The latter is the subject of *Blessings from the Little Flower* (1998), an 11.5” x 8” x 3.25” wall hanging (see fig. 7). Although this work was not a part of *Cyber Arte*, I discuss it here because it provides us with a glimpse of Martínez's universalist and feminist spirituality. Like the pieces included in the show, *Blessings from the Little Flower* is made of computer parts: circuit boards, fuses, and wire. It is faithful to photographs of the nineteenth-century French mystic in that it portrays her wearing the Carmelite habit. Furthermore, Saint Thérèse (also known as the “Little Flower”) is associated with flowers, specifically roses. In *Blessings from the Little Flower*, she holds a bouquet of roses; additional roses appear amidst the board's electrical runs. However, one prominent feature that distinguishes Martínez's Saint Thérèse from more conventional depictions is the label reading “700 PCB MOTHER BOARD” which appears in the center of her habit, precisely over her womb. In addition to reminding the viewer that the work is composed of twentieth-century circuit boards, this conspicuous label identifies Saint Thérèse as a female source of power from which all information, knowledge, or wisdom emanates (that is, a



Fig. 7. Blessings from the Little Flower (1998) by Marion C. Martinez. 11 1/2" x 8" x 3 1/4" mixed media wall hanging. Reprinted by permission of the artist.

motherboard) and as a sort of female deity (that is, the “divine feminine”). The roses in her arms and those interspersed throughout the piece further solidify her link to the Virgin of Guadalupe, another powerful holy woman associated with the flower.

Martinez uses the circuit board to express her spiritual beliefs and her spiritual beliefs to highlight the beauty of the circuit board. At the

same time, she demystifies this object. Like the Holy Eucharist, which is stored behind the protective walls of the tabernacle in a Catholic church, the circuit board is usually hidden inside a computer's shell and seems to function in complicated and mysterious ways. The majority of computer users probably never see the circuit boards that sit atop or underneath their desks. Nor do many of us understand the ways in which they work or give much thought to where they go when we throw them away. In fact, the only people who usually see and handle circuit boards are those who design, build, repair, or salvage them. With some exceptions, such as the women who assemble computers or sift through dumps in search of their parts, most of these people are probably men. And even though many women, especially in the Third World, build and recover circuit boards, those who truly understand how they function—those who design or repair them—are often men.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the circuit board, like science, technology, and institutionalized religion in general, has been gendered masculine. Similarly, the *santo* tradition has been gendered masculine. As a *santera*—that is, as a *woman* producer of *santos*—Martinez transforms and disrupts this male-dominated tradition (Lucero 2002, 35–36). Likewise, as an *Indio-Hispana* who actively works with computer components and finds use-value and beauty in e-waste, she challenges the myth of technophobia so often applied to women and people of color.

### Chicanafuturism

If “folk” art and practices are defined as “artificial bonds to an idealized past,” then Martinez’s work also merges some of New Mexico’s ostensibly competing narratives: those that pertain to its past, represented by Indo-Hispanic “folk” art such as *santo* production and the *matachines* ritual, and those that concern its present and future, represented by its role as a dumping ground for the detritus of twentieth- and twenty-first-century technologies. Additionally, her art locates *Hispanas* in narratives of science and technology and, at the same time, inserts science and technology into narratives of and about *Hispanas*. In doing so, Martinez’s work challenges racist, classist, and sexist stereotypes that primitivize *Hispanas* and exclude them from the domain of science, technology, and reason as it reshapes the tools of the information age.

In recent years, African American intellectuals and artists have examined the relationships of African Americans to science and technology using the concept of Afrofuturism. According to Alondra Nelson, Afrofuturism

reflect[s] African diasporic experience and at the same time attend[s] to the transformations that are the by-product of new media and information technology. [It] excavate[s] and create[s] original narratives of identity, technology, and the future and offer[s] critiques of the promises of prevailing theories of technoculture. (2002, 9)

Theorists of Afrofuturism stress a broad definition of “technology,” one that includes technological waste. Rather than limiting their focus to computer hardware and software, they strive to examine the myriad ways “people of color produce, transform, appropriate, and consume technologies in their everyday lives” (Hines, Nelson, and Tu 2001, 5). Such technologies include, but are not limited to, cellular phones, pagers, boom boxes, turntables, karaoke home systems, and low-rider cars and bikes.

In addition, Afrofuturism is concerned with humanism and posthumanism. It critiques theories of the liberal subject (that is, the “proprietor of his own person”) and proposes new definitions of the human and posthuman that engage the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and segregation and experiences of racism and sexism.<sup>34</sup> While Afrofuturism reconfigures subjectivity, some Afrofuturist texts—for example, the bulk of Octavia E. Butler’s science fiction—do not abandon altogether the promises of liberalism and humanism, of which human and civil rights are a part.<sup>35</sup>

Like African Americans, Chicanos have been barred from Western definitions of the human and denigrated as, to use Paul Gilroy’s term, “infrahuman” (2000). They, too, have been excluded from and objectified by discourses of science. And they are also generally associated more with a primitive and racialized past than with the technologically enhanced future. Yet, new technologies have transformed Chicanos just as much as they have transformed African Americans and they have enabled us to articulate (to enunciate and link) past, present, and future identities. This is evident not only in Martinez’s visual art, but in the work of numerous other Chicana and Chicano cultural workers, such as Teresa Archuleta-Sagel, Elena Baca, and Alma López (the three other cyberartistas); Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes, whose collaborative, “techno-rascuachi” performances as El Naftazteca and Cyber-Vato incorporate electronic communication and a motley assortment of machine parts; and Joseph Julian González, whose hypnotic composition “Los Vendedores Ambulantes” utilizes a computer loop to fuse the sounds of Latino street vendors peddling produce with the music of a string quartet.<sup>36</sup>

Drawing from Nelson’s definition of Afrofuturism, I define *Chicanafuturism* as Chicano cultural production that attends to cultural

transformations resulting from new and everyday technologies (including their detritus); that excavates, creates, and alters narratives of identity, technology, and the future; that interrogates the promises of science and technology; and that redefines humanism and the human. Martínez's work does not privilege science and reason over spirituality. Instead, it merges them and, thus, offers an ontological and epistemological alternative to that of the Enlightenment (or rational) subject. Moreover, while Afrofuturism reflects diasporic experience, Chicanafuturism articulates colonial and postcolonial histories. By linking New Mexico's Indo-Hispanic traditions (santo production and the matachines ritual) and its current role as a repository for high-tech trash, Martínez's work accomplishes this. Additionally, it comments on the ways in which technology—from Los Alamos National Laboratory in its entirety, to a single Pentium chip—has transformed Hispana cultural identity. In recounting the social, cultural, and economic changes that her family and community underwent as a result of the expansion of LANL during the second half of the twentieth century, Martínez remarked that technology forces a people to alter its ways. At the same time, she pointed out, technology and its remnants can be the vehicle for "hold[ing] on to who we are." "Change will happen. Change is constant," she observed, but "we don't have to lose everything." Martínez hopes her work captures the richness of her culture—in particular, its icons and rituals—albeit via new media.<sup>37</sup>

Technology, as Thomas Foster has pointed out, possesses a dual function: it "preserves at the same time that it mediates (or distorts) ethnic identities and cultural traditions" (2002, 59). In many ways, Martínez's work uses technology to preserve the santo tradition. If it deviated too far from this tradition—that is, if Martínez produced pieces that were not identifiable santos or were not sufficiently santo-like—she might not sell as many as she has.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, she might not be able to sell them at Santa Fe's Spanish Market, which, as she informed me in my interview with her, is an important venue for her work. The Spanish Market was founded by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society (SCAS), a "mostly Anglo preservationist organization," during the revival movement of the early twentieth century (Kalb 1994, 17–18). It is one of the largest outlets for the buying and selling of "traditional" Hispanic art in the United States (Nunn 2001, 29). In fulfilling its mission of encouraging, promoting, and maintaining "Hispano regional arts and culture," it has played a salient role in shaping (or, as some might contend, rigidly defining) the santo tradition, in cultivating New Mexico's mystique as remote and exotic, and in perpetuating stereotypes



of the primitive Hispano (29).<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the Spanish Market has also contributed to Martinez's income as an artist.

For some, Martinez's work may offer nothing new: it preserves the *santo* tradition of which it is a part. Others may see her work as original and argue that it breaks from and challenges this tradition. I maintain that it simultaneously preserves, breaks from, and challenges the *santo* tradition precisely because it is a legible part of it. In doing so, it transforms and complicates *Hispana* and, more generally, *Chicana* cultural identity and traditions by enabling us to enunciate the "who we are" of the past—or who we imagined ourselves to be in the past—using the tools of the present. Yet Martinez's work and observations beg the questions: Where does the "who we are" of the past sever from or blend into the "who we are" of the present and future? When do the "we" of the present stop being the "we" of the past? And when do the "we" of the present become the "we" of the future? That is, when do "we" stop being "us" and become something or someone else—perhaps "them"? In short, where do the boundaries of culture and identity lie? Are we still *Chicanas* if we no longer make (or *never* made) tortillas by hand? If we work at a computer, rather than at a spinning wheel? If we alter, drift from, or repudiate Roman Catholicism to shape our own feminist and universalist spirituality? Such queries are difficult if not impossible to answer. Still, clues to their answers may be found in the hybrid cultural products and practices that men and women have actively created and enacted over time, such as *santos* and the *matachines* ritual. These syncretic products and practices underscore the resilience and malleability of culture and cultural identity and reveal the simultaneity (as opposed to linearity) of past, present, and future. Above all, they pose new (and, in my opinion, more valuable) questions, such as: What does change mean, and to whom? Who benefits and who loses with change? Which changes do we struggle against and mourn? Which do we embrace and celebrate?

Just as the laborers of *Tierra Wools* have strategically cultivated a *Hispano* pastoral identity, Martinez strategically retains and redefines aspects of the old and embraces the new to forge an affirming cultural identity. Her work preserves what she sees as the beauty of Catholic icons and rituals linked to an Indo-Hispanic "ancestral past," while at the same time offering new meanings for them (Hall 1996, 448). Moreover, it demonstrates that such icons and rituals cannot be reproduced or recovered without being transformed by "the technologies and identities of the present" (448). In ascribing new meanings to long-standing forms and practices, Martinez

inserts what is generally regarded as the archaic or primitive into present and future technocultures. New Mexico's Hispanos have not only been excluded from the state's present by being viewed and described as backward "Spanish" villagers; they have been eliminated from its future as well. Nelson asserts that the "technologically enabled future is by its very nature unmoored from the past and from people of color" (2002, 6). That is, if science and technology have been racialized white, and if they are also associated with the future, then the future does not include people of color. Martínez's work claims both the present and future for people of color, specifically Hispanas, as it merges New Mexico's narratives of ethnic identity and "folk" art with its history of scientific research and environmental destruction. However, like the copper and nickel in her wall hangings and sculptures, the present and future may sparkle, but they are far from unproblematic. Her luminous pieces illustrate the beauty of change, but they do not naïvely celebrate it, for they offer a critique of technology's detrimental impact on the environment and human bodies. In short, Martínez's work, like the controversy surrounding López's *Our Lady*, reminds us that for someone somewhere, change comes at a cost and often with struggle.

### **Deus ex machina**

In the late winter and spring of 2001, *Our Lady* upset and offended some New Mexicans—most notably, a number of vocal Catholics and Hispanos—and sparked public debates concerning the value and purpose of art, the responsibilities of a public institution to its constituents, and, most interesting to me, the parameters of Hispana and Chicana cultural identity. Critics charged that the work not only was obscene and blasphemous, but constituted an "attack on Hispanic identity," and they accused the Museum of International Folk Art of cultural insensitivity and racism (Deanery of Santa Fe 2001, 7).<sup>40</sup> Protestors carrying banners of standard depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe and posters that read "Respect Our Cultural Identity" gathered outside the museum and at town hall meetings shouting "¡Que viva la raza!" and demanding the removal of the "digital tapestry" (Lee 2001b, A2; 2001c, A1). López was born in Mexico and raised Catholic in Los Angeles, where she still resides, and was the only artist in *Cyber Arte* who did not hail from New Mexico. She was therefore spurned as a "California artist"—an outsider with little if any understanding or respect for "Hispanic ... cultural history and its religious underpinning" and "the very peculiar culture that exists here [in New Mexico]" (Deanery of Santa

Fe 2001, 7; Lee 2001f, A2). Meanwhile, her supporters—many of whom are Chicano and Latina—called for the protection of free speech and argued that culture and cultural icons are malleable and dynamic.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, representatives of the Museum of International Folk Art stressed the museum's obligation to “document change in traditional cultural expression” (Lee 2001d, A2). *Cyber Arte*'s curator, Tey Marianna Nunn, explained that *Our Lady* was included in the exhibition “as an important example of the continuous transformation of Our Lady of Guadalupe” (Lee 2001a, A2). Ultimately, the Museum of New Mexico, the administrative body that oversees MOIFA, decided that the piece would remain on display, but that it, along with the rest of *Cyber Arte*, would come down in October 2001. In short, the museum provided a *deus ex machina* (a sudden and unexpected solution to an apparently insoluble difficulty) by closing the show four months ahead of schedule. While this decision was intended as a compromise that would appease both López's critics and supporters, it failed to solve the apparently insoluble difficulties presented by *Our Lady* and the storm it generated.

Although much of the criticism directed at López was blatantly sexist and homophobic (and, therefore, groundless), some of it revealed anxiety over very real demographic and economic changes that northern New Mexico—in particular, Santa Fe—has undergone in recent years.<sup>42</sup> For example, the *Albuquerque Journal* reported that *Our Lady* upset some “native New Mexicans” because, like “their ancestors [who] saw the land taken by invasion,” they “now ... are seeing Santa Fe invaded again by coastal elites, followed by Starbucks and skyrocketing real estate prices” (Gurza 2001, F2). Additionally, the newspaper quoted protesters at a march who said that they were “sick of newcomers disrespecting their culture.” According to Anthony Trujillo, deacon of Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Santa Fe and one of the most vociferous critics of *Cyber Arte* and *Our Lady*, the exhibit was “offensive to local Hispanics” and the “museum was insensitive at best by displaying [López's work] in Santa Fe, a historically Catholic town” (McKee 2001, B1, B5).

Clearly, criticism of *Our Lady* and *Cyber Arte* stemmed not only from outrage, but from injury and anxiety. This anxiety was about much more than what the Virgin of Guadalupe “really” looks like. Rather, it concerned competing meanings ascribed to a long-standing religious icon; the changing roles of women in Hispano culture; access to public space in state institutions; and the impact on New Mexico of the homogenizing forces of development (for which Starbucks has become a metonym). In

short, critics of *Our Lady* attempted to draw a clear distinction between what they saw as the local (that is, Catholic, Hispano New Mexico) and the superlocal (California, the world). As this essay should make evident, New Mexico is home to a rich and unique Hispano culture. At the same time, it is a site of cultural flux and exchange and has played a prominent role in global affairs, especially as related to the defense industry and the production and disposal of high-tech waste.

While I do not feel that they were justified in demanding the removal of *Our Lady*, I wish to stress that many New Mexican Catholic Hispanos assailed López and her work because they felt that their culture was under siege. In response, they attempted to impose a single, monolithic meaning upon Our Lady of Guadalupe, a complex, polysemic sign. What's more, they delineated a rigid, narrow, and static definition of Hispano cultural identity. This cultural identity was oppositional vis-à-vis the state (as represented by MOIFA and the Museum of New Mexico) and the metropolis (as represented by López, the "California artist"). However, it denied diversity among women who self-identify as Chicana, Hispana, Hispanic, and Latina by conflating these terms (all of which were used in the debate surrounding *Our Lady*) with Roman Catholicism, with subservience, and with heterosexuality, if not asexuality. In their effort to adhere to a conservative brand of Catholicism, many of López's Hispano critics tenaciously clung to an image of themselves that bore an uncanny resemblance to the stereotypes and caricatures that the dominant culture, including New Mexico's tourism industry, has imposed upon them for many years. While they embraced and defended what might be described as a "traditionalist" cultural identity, they also locked themselves in an imaginary, impossibly unchanging past.

Unlike López, Martínez was not condemned or harassed for her work.<sup>43</sup> Yet, like *Our Lady*, her Chicanafuturist art demonstrates the value, price, and necessity of change. It turns to the past by taking its inspiration from traditional forms and practices. At the same time, it distorts such forms and practices by locating them in the technologies of the present. And it dares to imagine new ways of being for the future, at which it takes a good, hard look by confronting the growing problem of e-waste. In doing so, Martínez blurs New Mexico's competing narratives; rejects hackneyed and nostalgic visions of the "Land of Enchantment" and its Hispano residents; expresses and transforms Indo-Hispanic traditions and Hispana-Chicana spirituality; and, finally, underscores the malleability, dynamism, width, and beauty of Hispana and Chicana cultural identity in the twenty-first century.

## Notes

Thanks to numerous friends, colleagues, and institutions for assisting me in producing this essay. First, I am grateful to Marion Martinez for creating such inspirational art, for talking to me about her life and work, and for providing the photos of her pieces that appear here; to Tey Marianna Nunn, Ree Mobley, and the Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA) for introducing me to Marion's work and for sharing some of the illustrations included in this article; and to Alma López for allowing me to reproduce *Our Lady* here. Thanks to my wonderful colleagues at the University of California, Santa Cruz—David Crane, Elisabeth Cameron, Jennifer Gonzalez, Jody Green, Amelie Hastie, and Radhika Mongia—for reading drafts of this essay and providing indispensable feedback; to Rosa Linda Fregoso and Rosaura Sánchez for commenting on a truncated version of this essay at the American Studies Association annual convention in November 2002; and to the attentive editors at *Aztlán*. A generous grant from the Center for Regional Studies at the University of New Mexico allowed me to complete this essay. Finally, I am indebted to Eric Porter for his sharp eye and invaluable support. While I could not have produced this essay without these individuals and institutions, all errors and oversight herein are mine and mine alone.

1. This description appears on a flyer distributed by the Museum of International Folk Art for *Cyber Arte*'s opening reception on February 25, 2001.

2. In fact, the controversy surrounding *Our Lady* eclipsed not only Martinez's work, but Archuleta-Sagel's and Baca's as well. López's piece and the storm it generated received national attention in the *New York Times* (Janofsky 2001). It was also featured in *Aztlán*, which published a statement by López in the fall 2001 issue along with several letters from her supporters, most of whom hailed from California (López 2001). The discussion of López and *Our Lady* continued well over a year after *Cyber Arte* closed, as illustrated by "Stabbed, Vandalized, and Threatened: Responses to the Digital Art of Alma López and Other Chicana Intellectual Work," a panel at the Modern Language Association convention in New York City in December 2002.

3. For the most part, I use the terms *Chicana*, *Chicano*, and *Mexican American* interchangeably in this essay. However, like numerous other scholars of New Mexico, I use *Hispana* or *Hispano* to refer to the subgroup of Mexicans and Mexican Americans of the upper Río Grande valley and adjacent regions of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado.

4. For more information regarding the Penitentes, see Weber 1982, Weigle 1991, and Wroth 1991.

5. Gavin attributes the decline of locally produced religious art in New Mexico in the late nineteenth century to "increasing pressure from church officials in Mexico—and later those in the United States—to replace handcrafted images considered unfit for use in the churches [in New Mexico] with those found in churches throughout central Mexico and the United States" (1994, 50). Steele asserts that "for more than two centuries priests born and educated outside the territory have been getting rid of the native santos from many of New Mexico's churches, especially those in the larger towns, to replace them with plaster 'bathrobe art' from Mexico City, from Saint Louis, or from Europe." He notes an incident in

1869 in which Italian Jesuits at San Felipe de Neri Church in Albuquerque collected money from their parishioners to purchase imported religious art, “then gave the old bultos away to those donors who wanted them” (1994, 33).

6. Regarding stereotypes of santeros as primitive, simple, and childlike, also see Nunn 2001, especially chapter 6.

7. From the early 1700s to around 1875, Comanche Indians kidnapped, then adopted, enslaved, and/or sold numerous Anglos, Native Americans, Mexicans, and Spaniards, most of whom were women and children from Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico (Marez 2001, 268). Many of the captives were bought and sold in Taos, New Mexico, site of an annual trade fair. The Santa Fe Trail, one of the West’s most famous trade routes, extended from New Mexico to Missouri from 1821 to 1880. It fostered trade between Mexico, of which New Mexico was a part from 1821 to 1846, and the United States. See Boyle 1997 and Connor and Skaggs 1997.

8. For census data on New Mexico, see <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/35000.html>.

9. Regarding the use of land as an ethnic symbol in Hispano struggles for social, economic, and environmental justice, see Blawis 1971, Chávez 1984, Gardner 1970, Jenkins 1968, Pulido 1996, and Rodríguez 1987. Regarding competition over natural resources in New Mexico and the Southwest, see Briggs and Van Ness 1987, de Buys 1985, Peña 1997, Peña 1998, Pulido 1996, Reisner 1986, SouthWest Organizing Project 1995, and Worster 1985.

10. Quotes attributed to the New Mexico Department of Tourism come from the department’s website at <http://www.newmexico.org>.

11. Members of these three groups do constitute the majority (96.3 percent) of the state’s population, yet it is important to keep in mind that they are not its only residents. The state Department of Tourism’s website acknowledges that “New Mexico’s cowboy culture also included many African Americans who wholeheartedly adopted the lifestyle after the Civil War,” but makes no mention of the black men and women who currently live there. While they make up only 1.9 percent of the population, we must ask ourselves where they and anyone else who is not Anglo, Hispanic (specifically Hispano), or Native American (in particular, Pueblo, Dine, or Apache) fit into the tricultural model. For more information regarding New Mexico’s demographics, see <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/35000.html>.

12. In fact, many Hispanos’ ancestors hailed from what is now Spain and settled in what is currently known as New Mexico long before Mexico was a nation. They self-identify as “Spanish” or “Spanish American,” rather than “Mexican” or “Mexican American,” in order to highlight New Mexico’s history of isolation from the rest of the Southwest and Mexico as well as to distinguish themselves from Anglos (English-speaking whites) and Native Americans. While the tourism industry in New Mexico did not fabricate the Spanish identity of the Hispanos, it has certainly promoted it. With their explicit connection to Spain, the labels “Spanish” and “Spanish American” are more palatable to some Americans, including some New Mexicans, because they connote a whiteness and exoticism not associated with “Mexican,” “Mexican American,” “Chicana,” or “Chicano.” For more information regarding these labels, see Acuña 1988 and Oboler 1995.

13. See <http://www.SeeSantaFe.org>

14. *The New Mexico 2002 Vacation Guide* is published yearly for the state Department of Tourism by *New Mexico Magazine*. Similar images also appear on the Tierra Wools website ([www.handweavers.com](http://www.handweavers.com)). For more information about Tierra Wools and Ganados del Valle, see Pulido 1996, especially chapter 4.

15. For more information about the Trinity test and test site, see "Fifty Years from Trinity," produced by the *Seattle Times*, at <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/trinity>.

16. For more information on New Mexico's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, see <http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us/>. Regarding the Sandia landfill, see Ludwick 2001. On the Los Alamos Study Group and material disposal areas at LANL, see <http://www.lasg.org>.

17. Martinez's nine works in *Cyber Arte* were: *Compassionate Mother* (1999), a 15" x 9" x 1" wall hanging made of circuit boards, wire, and wood; *Danza de la Matachine III* (1999), an 18" x 9" x 1" wall hanging made of circuit boards and wire; *Danza de la Matachine IV* (2000), a 16" x 9" x 1" wall hanging made of circuit boards and wire; *Danza de la Matachine V* (2001), a 19" x 9" x 1" wall hanging made of circuit boards, wire, LEDs, and a laser lens; *Danza de la Matachine VI* (2001), a 21" x 9" x 1" wall hanging made of circuit boards, wire, ribbon cable, and a memory chip; *Sacred Heart, Sacred Hands* (1997), an 18" x 11" x 1" wall hanging made of circuit boards and a holographic image; *Oratorio a la Virgencita* (2000), a 20" x 12" x 4" wall hanging made of circuit boards and wood; *Jesus Con la Cruz* (2000), a 20" x 13" x 4" wall hanging made of circuit boards, fence wire, wood, a disc, and a Pentium chip; and *Santo Nino de Atocha* (2001), a 15" x 9" x 9" sculpture made of circuit boards, wire, ribbon cable, wood, and a CD. Martinez's work may be viewed at <http://www.marionmartinez.com/>.

18. Although it was not a part of *Cyber Arte*, I have included an illustration of Martinez's *Danza de la Matachine II* (1998) in this essay because I do not possess a reproducible illustration of any of her matachines pieces that was a part of the show (see fig. 5).

19. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes from Martinez are from the interview I conducted with her on June 26, 2001 in Glorieta, New Mexico.

20. Personal communication with the author (January 10, 2003).

21. Martinez interview (June 26, 2001) and personal communication with the author (January 10, 2003).

22. Martinez interview with author. I stress that LANL has offered the people of Los Luceros a *modicum* of physical and social mobility because Río Arriba County, where Los Luceros is located, is one of the poorest counties in New Mexico, in turn one of the poorest states. For information regarding poverty and income levels in Río Arriba County, see <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/35/35039.html> and <http://tier2.census.gov/cgi-win/usac/table/exe>.

23. Some art critics emphasize the influence of the baroque tradition in particular on santo production in New Mexico during the eighteenth century. Steele, for example, enumerates its baroque characteristics, including the use of dark backgrounds, sgraffito (scraping away lines in moist paint to expose the different-colored surface beneath), and cartouche. For more information about the impact of baroque art on New Mexican santo production, see Boyd 1998, Steele 1994, and Wroth 1982.

24. Martínez interview with author. Works by Carlos Santistevan and David Avalos have a similar relationship to the santo tradition. Like Martínez, Santistevan and Avalos gather materials from their surroundings (for example, a hubcap, a saw blade, lipstick canisters, and shot glasses) and use them to create untraditional santos, but santos nonetheless. See Santistevan's *Santo Niño de Atocha* (1979) and Avalos's *Hubcap Milagro #3* (1983) in Griswold del Castillo, McKenna, and Yarbro-Bejarano 1991.

25. For example, see figure 4.

26. In addition to appearing in *Oratorio a la Virgencita*, the Virgin of Guadalupe is found in *Compassionate Mother* and *Danza de la Matachine IV*. She is also featured in *Danza de la Matachine II* (1998) (see figure 5), *Guadalupe Peep Show* (2001), and *La Virgen Morena* (1997). These three works were not included in *Cyber Arte*, but *Guadalupe Peep Show* was displayed at the show's opening. It has been purchased by the Museum of International Folk Art for its permanent collection.

27. Here, I define *hegemony* as "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Gramsci 1971, 12).

For more information regarding the matachines ritual, also see Bennett and Zingg 1976, Champe 1983, Kurath and Garcia 1970, Parsons 1939, and Spicer 1980. Regarding Malintzín (also called La Malinche) and Guadalupe, see Lafaye 1974.

28. Martínez interview with author.

29. Martínez interview with author.

30. According to Gregg Easterbrook, multiverse theory proposes that the big bang was not unique, that "universes bang into existence all the time, by the billions" (2002, 167). However, such bangs supposedly take place in faraway "dimensions" unobservable to those of us on earth. He compares the theory "to religion's proposal of a single invisible plane of existence: the spirit" (167). In other words, multiverse theory posits the existence of unobservable phenomena that affect the parameters of the cosmos, in much the same way that certain religions imagine the existence of an invisible spirit that has created and shaped life on earth.

31. On the environmental impact of the Río Rancho Intel plant, see SouthWest Organizing Project 1995. Further information is available on the organization's website at [http://www.swop.net/intel\\_info.htm](http://www.swop.net/intel_info.htm). On the environmental impact of e-waste (that is, discarded information technology tools, especially computers and computer parts) in the Third World and specifically China, see Schoenberger 2002a, 2002b, and 2002c. Also see the website for the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition (<http://www.svtc.org/>) and Peña 1997.

32. Martínez interview with author.

33. Regarding the salvaging of computer parts from Third World dumps, see Schoenberger 2002a, 2002b, and 2002c.

34. "Proprietor of his own person" is from C. B. MacPherson's *A Theory of Possessive Individualism*, which N. Katherine Hayles (1999) cites in her influential *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. For an Afrofuturist critique of MacPherson's liberal subject and Hayles's theorization of the posthuman, see Weheliye 2002.



35. Here, I define *humanism* as a viewpoint espousing “an optimism about human possibilities and achievements” (Edgar and Sedgwick 1999, 180). Although the concept dates back to the classical period, I am most interested in its Enlightenment-era associations with liberalism—that is, with the autonomy, agency, moral and political choice, and dignity of the subject, as articulated by human, civil, and political rights.

Regarding Butler’s reconfigurations of subjectivity, see Ramírez 2002.

36. For more information about Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes’s collaborative performances as El Naftazteca and Cyber-Vato, see Foster 2002. I was fortunate to see a performance of “Los Vendedores Ambulantes” by González and members of the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque on November 11, 2000. I am grateful to Reeve Love, director of performing arts at the center, for providing me with information about this performance.

37. Martinez interview with author.

38. Martinez successfully earns a living as a full-time artist. In addition to selling to private individuals, her work is in several permanent collections, such as those of San Juan Community College in New Mexico, Northern New Mexico Community College, Fidelity Investments, and the Nokia Corporation.

39. Kalb asserts that, for SCAS board members, “making traditional crafts means adhering to the Spanish colonial style developed by SCAS, that is, replicating nineteenth-century religious and domestic items found in museums, private collections, and some churches, and also perpetuating a revival style begun in the 1920s and in response to early Anglo patrons ... For some contemporary carvers, the SCAS notion of tradition ... is too limited. It does not embrace today’s carvers innovative stylistic preferences” (1994, 18).

40. Also see Kollasch et al. 2001, Lee 2001b, 2001d, 2001e, 2001f, Martinez 2001, McKee 2001, and Sálaz 2001.

41. See, for example, Allen 2001, Alley et al. 2001, Collins 2001, Janofsky 2001, Jojola 2001, Lee 2001b, López 2001, Nelson 2001, Rebolledo 2001, Rodríguez and Gonzáles 2001, Ross 2001, Witemeyer 2001, and Wood 2001.

42. By branding López a “California artist,” many of her critics drew a parallel between geographical difference and sexual difference. California, after all, has long been viewed as a bastion of so-called fringe politics and cultures, including feminist and gay subcultures. I believe that López was attacked not only because she was the sole non-Hispana to participate in *Cyber Arte*, and Californian at that, but because of the feminist and queer themes in much of her work, including *Our Lady*. In addition to underscoring the power and beauty of women’s bodies, *Our Lady* replaces the male angel that usually sits at the Virgin’s feet with a bare-breasted woman with short hair. By supplanting a male and sporting a short hairstyle, López’s angel occupies a male and masculine position.

Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe described *Our Lady* in sexist terms when he criticized López for portraying the Virgin Mary as “a tart or street woman” (2001, 7). On April 24, 2001, a Los Angeles group by the name of La Voz de Aztlán circulated a homophobic e-mail about López and *Our Lady* with the alarmist subject heading “Lesbians Insult Virgen de Guadalupe.” I possess a hard copy of this e-mail.

43 . Beyond its controversial content, *Our Lady* was thrust into the spotlight and received, in retrospect, much unwanted attention by being featured on the flyer that MOIFA distributed to the public to announce the opening of *Cyber Arte*.

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