

ARTS2F History of Art, Multicultural Arts in US
 Summer 2022, De Anza College
 Extra Credit 1 Assignment- Group Exhibit, July 25, 2022
 TANG, Frank Yung-Fong / ftang@google.com

The “Bay Area Walls” Group Exhibition at SFMOMA

In the free space of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (aka SFMOMA) lay the group exhibit “Bay Area Walls”^[1], a group of four large indoor murals made by local artists to retort to recent political unrest, racial injustice, polarized society, and social crises while our country are just start slowly moving out from a two-years long pandemic-related closures.

Conjuro para la sanación de nuestro futuro (A spell for the healing of our future) (2020)^[2], the work of Liz Hernández, a 29 years old Mexican artists based in Oakland, California^{[3][4][5]}, is a wide mural painted in two colors, Raven Black and Chili Pepper Red, on an Ivory White background. In some cells of this work, the artist uses halftone, grids, and thin radiational lines to create brighter colors in our illusion and a sense of nostalgia, reminding us of old comic books. She uses a thin border to frame the mural as a newspaper classified page. She depicted a center column, by vertically stacking up drawings of lung, sun, helping hand, eyes and star polygons, to divide the canvas into two halves, each with cells of a Milagro^[2] or text in Spanish. SFMOMA provides English translation^[6] for non-Spanish speakers to appreciate the art better. Some texts are short labels for a Milagro, while others carry the message by itself. Some longer phrases layouted up to five lines. All texts are drawn in a consistent san serif typography, *capitalized*, painted in only straight lines, and mostly with right angle joints without forming curved bowls or pointed apexes. Such design makes the ‘O’ and ‘D’ indistinguishable, as the readability issue demonstrated in the word “SOLIDARIDAD” and also makes the shoulders of ‘M’ and ‘N’ squared and wider, resulting in an archaic taste.

Many Milagros in this mural came from what Hernández perfected in her earlier works: The Sun from her *El templo sumergido en el aroma secreto de Urania*^[7] is now shown in the center columns. The feet, cone, mouth, octagram, Monterey cypress, keys, house, and “hand showing love” from her Aluminum works^{[8][9][10][11]} and painting^[12] also appear. Translations of these early works help us to understand her logic behind: *The Temple immersed in the secret scent of Urania*^[7], *The Souls*^[8], *The Seven Steps*^[9], *My sacred symbols*^[10], and *My Grandmother's sacred symbols*^[11]. One type of Milagro is obviously special: The “eyes” or “eye masks”, depicted in eleven cells totaling 23 eyes, including one with two pairs of “eye masks” and one with a single eye. The depiction of eyes is personally very important to Hernández and appeared in most, if not all, of her works. She also suffixes her name with an Emoji of eyes on her site^[3]. It is her self-identity, as explained in the introduction to her *Talismán* exhibition, that she discovered her “Gift of Seeing”^[13] at a young age. According to Jovanna Venegas^[2], the curator, Hernández also uses it to symbolize the use of cameras and cellphones for truth seeking and justice witnessing. Other noteworthy milagros are “lung”, in two big cells as “health”; “Monterey cypress”, in three cells, as “healthy environment”; “helping hand” in the center, as the proposed solution to cure our raging world. The “lung” leads us to another mural *Our Ancestors' Wildest Dreams* (2020)^[14] by Twin Walls Mural Company, and the heavy use of text connects to *REPARATIONS* (2007/2021)^[15], work of Emory Douglas.

Overall, Hernández's mural is full of symbols and cultural references. Her primary focus is to communicate to Hispanic community^[4] but we can all enjoy the composition of her Milagros and her artistic presentation of this large scale work. Her typography design in this work is not perfect but creates an interesting effect. The emphasis of “Seeing” and other important messages are obviously communicated by the use of repetition.

Bibliography:

- [1] “Bay Area Walls, Mural commissions by Twin Walls Mural Company, Michael Jang, Emory Douglas, Liz Hernández, and more.” www.sfmoma.org/exhibition/bay-area-walls *SFMOMA* online 20 Jul. 2022
- [2] Venegas, Jovanna. “Liz Hernández - Conjuero para la sanación de nuestro futuro, 2020.” Jul. 2021 www.sfmoma.org/read/bay-area-walls-liz-hernandez *SFMOMA*, online 21 Jul. 2022
- [3] Hernández, Liz. “About Liz Hernández.” liz-hernandez.com/About , liz-hernandez.com online 21 Jul. 2022
- [4] “A Conversation with Liz Hernández.” www.sfmoma.org/event/a-conversation-with-liz-hernandez *SFMOMA*, online 21 Jul. 2022
- [5] “Liz Hernández on Mural Making and Memories of Mexico City.” 28 Jan. 2021 www.sfmoma.org/read/works-process-liz-hernandezs-sources-of-inspiration *SFMOMA*, online 21 Jul. 2022
- [6] “Translation: Conjuero para la sanación de nuestro futuro.” www.sfmoma.org/read/liz-hernandez-mural-translation *SFMOMA*, online 21 Jul. 2022
- [7] Hernández, Liz. “El templo sumergido en el aroma secreto de Urania (The Temple immersed in the secret scent of Urania)” Clay and vinyl paint on paper; www.artscenepc.com/episode-54-liz-hernandez *The (art)scene Podcast* online 22 Jul.
- [8] Hernández, Liz. “Las ánimas (The Souls) (2020)” Aluminum www.artsy.net/artwork/liz-hernandez-las-animas-the-souls *Artsy* online 22 Jul. 2022

- [9] Hernández, Liz. “Las Siete Escalones (The Seven Steps) (2020)” Aluminum
www.artsy.net/artwork/liz-hernandez-las-siete-escalones-the-seven-steps *Artsy* online 22 Jul.
 2022
- [10] Hernández, Liz. “Mis símbolos sagrados (My sacred symbols) (2020)” Aluminum
www.artsy.net/artwork/liz-hernandez-mis-simbolos-sagrados-my-sacred-symbols *Artsy* online 22
 Jul. 2022
- [11] Hernández, Liz. “Los símbolos sagrados de mi Abuela (My Grandmother's sacred symbols),
 2020 (2020)” Aluminum
www.artsy.net/artwork/liz-hernandez-los-simbolos-sagrados-de-mi-abuela-my-grandmothers-sacred-symbols *Artsy* online 22 Jul. 2022
- [12] Hernández, Liz. “Materializada” www.artscenepc.com/episode-54-liz-hernandez *The*
(art)scene Podcast online 22 Jul. 2022
- [13] Hernández, Liz. “Talismán” liz-hernandez.com/Talisman , liz-hernandez.com online 21 Jul.
 2022
- [14] Joo, Eungie and Erin O’Toole “Twin Walls Mural Company - Our Ancestors’ Wildest
 Dreams.” Jul. 2021 www.sfmoma.org/read/bay-area-walls-twin-walls *SFMOMA* online 20 Jul.
 2022
- [15] Joo, Eungie “Emory Douglas - REPARATIONS, 2007/2021.” Aug. 2021
www.sfmoma.org/read/emory-douglas *SFMOMA* online 20 Jul. 2022