

SP25.14: Queering Rasquachismo and the Politics of Chicanx Space in “Sitting on Chrome”

Overview

Queering Rasquachismo considers the multimedia exhibition titled, *Sitting on Chrome*, by acclaimed Chicanx artists, rafa esparza, Guadalupe Rosales, and Mario Ayala. The exhibition takes up lowriding, car culture, and queer kinship in Chicanx social spaces. *Sitting on Chrome* was exhibited at San Francisco MOMA in Spring of 2024 and brought together the artists' works in sculpture, installation, photography, performance, painting, and archives. Queering Rasquachismo seeks to unpack how the artists queer the paradigmatic form of Chicanx aesthetics known as rasquache, the “over-the-top taste of those making do” theorized by Tomás Ybarro Frausto (1989), specifically by thinking through queer desire and its relationship to gentrifying space. The three artists mobilize a queer, rasquache aesthetic of low riders to address and contest their East LA and San Francisco neighborhoods being consumed by white capital. The whitening processes of gentrification signal a crisis of desire, joy, pleasure, and social relation for Rosales, esparza, and Ayala as the influx of capital begins to literally disappear the peoples, places, and cultures of their hometowns. This project asks the question: how does queer politics of space and rasquache aesthetics converge in *Sitting on Chrome* to confront the consumption and destruction of people of color and working class urban spaces?

What the student will DO and LEARN

This project will be useful for students interested in visual analysis and methods, art criticism, and museum studies. Students will engage in archival research, helping to produce a literature review, conduct interviews with artists and curators, and the process of writing a journal article. In doing the literature review the student will read academic studies in Chicanx art and visual culture and queer theory and write annotated bibliographies on those studies. We will research and explore what archives exist of Chicanx art and if possible make a research trip together to visit the archives. Students will learn the basics of IRB, how to conduct artist interviews, and help to conduct interviews themselves. The student intern will help co-write the final product and gain experience in submission to journals, peer review, and revision. The student will earn co-authorship on a peer-reviewed academic article in the humanities through this process.

Additional benefits

In the process of learning fundamentals of humanities research and criticism, students engaged in this project will also learn important skills in academic and intellectual collaboration, how to articulate and advocate for artistic and cultural value, hone writing skills, image descriptions and close reading, social and historical contextualization, and how to navigate cultural settings like museums, exhibitions, archives, and conference spaces. These are skills that are relevant to all students interested in academic research, but would also benefit students interested in working in multicultural environments and universities, arts production or advocacy, and culture industries (like filmmaking, journalism, museums, etc.). Students can expect to gain comfort and competency in talking about art, why it matters, and making cases for its inclusion into different kinds of spaces.

Additional qualifications

Interest in art and visual media, familiarity with Chicana/o/x culture, and comfort reading Spanish.

Time commitment

4 hrs/week for 30 weeks