The Art of Malaquías Montoya
Malaquías Montoya

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I am much more articulate and able to express myself more eloquently through my art. It is with this voice that I attempt to communicate, especially to that silent and often ignored populace of Chicano, Mexican and Central-American working class, along with other disenfranchised people of the world. This form allows me to awaken consciousness, to reveal reality and to actively work to transform it. What better function for art at this time? A voice for the voiceless.

My personal views on art and society were formed by my being born into that silent and voiceless humanity. Realizing later that it was not by choice that we remained mute, but by a conscious effort on the part of those in power, I recognized that my art could only be that of protest—a protest against what I felt to be a death sentence.

As a Chicano artist, I feel a responsibility that all my art should be a reflection of my political beliefs: an art of protest. The struggle of all people cannot be merely to be intellectually accepted. It must become part of our very being as artists, otherwise we cannot give expression to it in our work. I am in agreement with Pedro Rodrigues, former Director of the Guadalupe Cultural Art Center, San Antonio, Texas, when he said, “Fundamentally, artistic expression, or culture in general, reaches its highest level of creation when it reflects the most serious issues of a community, when it succeeds in expressing the deepest sentiments of a people, and when it returns to the people their ideas and feelings translated in a clearer and creative way.”

Through our images, we are the creators of culture and it is our responsibility that our images are of our times—and that they be depicted honestly and promote an attitude towards existing reality; a confrontational attitude, one of change rather than adaptability—images of our time and for our contemporaries. We must not fall into the age-old cliché that the artist is always ahead of his/her time. No, it is most urgent that we be on time.
Malaquías Montoya, La Madre, silkscreen, 22 x 15 in., 2000