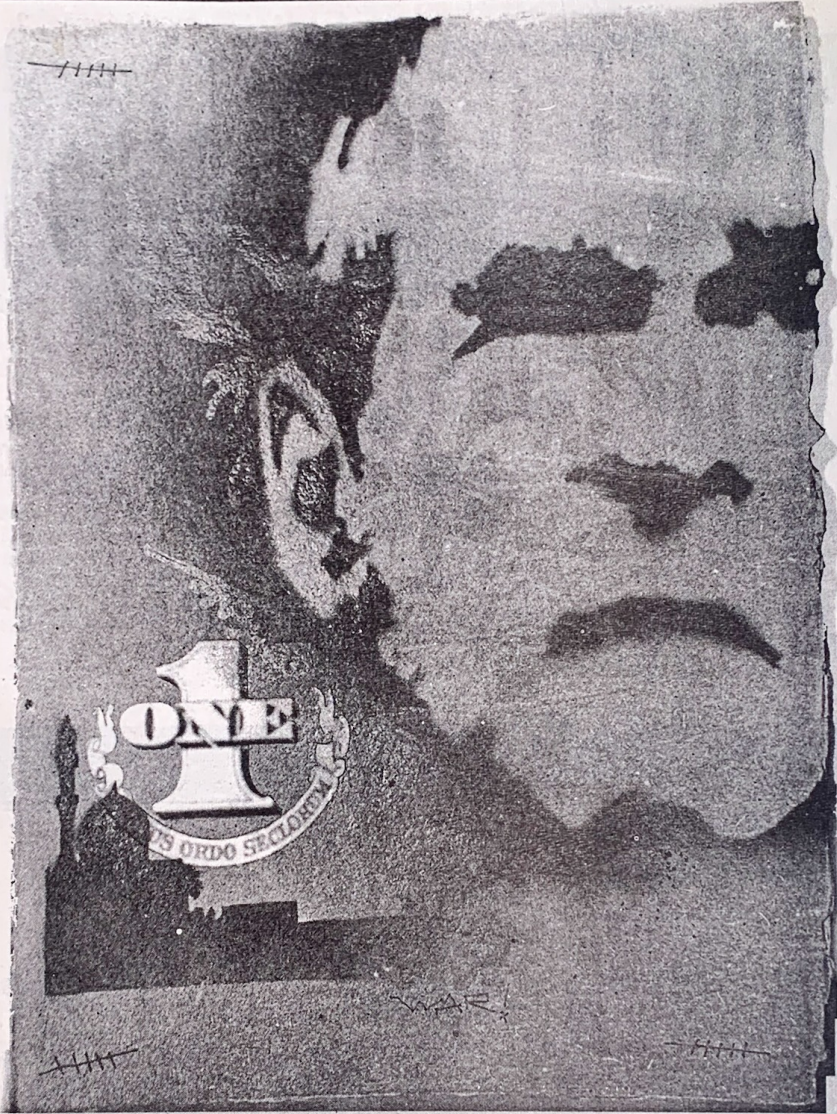




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LEARN SPANISH AT THE ICC: OAXACA'S BEST LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Oaxaca's Graffiti Scene

Exciting and far reaching urban art

By Fabien Goa

You don't have to visit a gallery to experience Oaxaca's famous progressive and innovative art scene; all you have to do is step outside. A leisurely stroll through Oaxaca's cobbled streets can become a fascinating tour into the heart and soul of the city. The blossoming graffiti scene contributes to the unique character and vibrancy of Oaxaca's rich artistic tradition, and is attracting a new wave of hugely talented and diverse young artists from all over Mexico.

Late night walks may bring about a chance meeting with Ana Santos' lonesome, shoe-gazing silhouettes, sulking their way along the walls. Santos is widely considered the pioneer of Oaxacan graffiti, sharing her refreshingly human touch with all who come across her work.

During the day, satirical cartoons condemning politicians, slogans bearing fierce anti-globalisation polemic and depictions of the inequalities suffered by Oaxaca state's large indigenous population spark discussion and debate among locals and raise curious eyebrows. The authors of the pieces mask their identities behind the monikers of "Aler", "Vain" and "Shuero", a rising trio promoting their work collectively as "StencilZone". Another pair providing these urban murals go by the names of "ArtJaguar" and "Oral".

Gustavo Fricke brings to this diverse scene a fresh aggression harnessed with



compassion. Originally a successful graphic designer in Mexico City, Fricke, disillusioned with many aspects of his career, decided to escape the capital's claustrophobic madness in favor of the famed art scene of Oaxaca. Fricke addresses controversial topics such as the war on terror, global exploitation and border relations between the US and Mexico. His honesty and compassion distances his work from empty sloganeering, perhaps best displayed in his simple yet heartfelt canvas depicting both the horrors of 9/11 and his own mind "caving in" while watching the events unfold.

Fricke comes to Oaxaca with great respect for the ground-breaking artists who have brought the city into the limelight, in particular the "three maestros": Francisco Toledo, and the late Rufino Tomayo and Rodolfo Morales. With this respect he brings his desire to ensure Oaxacan art continues to evolve and push boundaries, rather than stagnate in its own reputation. Both in technique and vision Fricke makes use of the tools and skills learnt from his previous career in graphic design and marketing. While also using more traditional methods, he also fully embraces the use of technology in art, describing the computer as his generations' pencil. His understanding of the age of mass media and the power and influence of marketing makes his art immediate and direct, attention-grabbing with thought provoking substance. Ultimately, much of Fricke's work can be viewed as a cross-signal sent out to intercept and combat the influence of advertising, marketing and consumerism by using his commercial training to promote and provoke thought.

Veronica Glezqui, on the other hand, brings a fidgety childlike energy and spontaneity to the streets. Glezqui traveled to

Oaxaca from her home state of Tijuana, bringing with her an impressive portfolio of Warhol-style "Pop Art". This attracted the attention of the manager of "La Suite," who mounted Glezqui's series of portraits inspired by "The Doors" to compliment the bar's cosy alternative atmosphere.

While based in Oaxaca, Glezqui explored three personal artistic obsessions: birds, traffic lights and Charlie Chaplin. These seemingly limited subjects, when combined with her relentless passion, produced hypnotic works of the imagination. Glezqui has an infectious, energetic personality which screams out of her work and seems to be catching on fast. Following her productive stay in Oaxaca, Glezqui returned to Tijuana to resume college, but not before receiving a great honor: an invitation to exhibit her work alongside established artists at an annual festival in Tijuana.

Homegrown talents, such as "ArtJaguar", "Oral" and the members of StencilZone, as well as newcomers like Fricke and Glezqui are just a handful of the many evolving young talents who have been inspired by this special art scene. Their contributions keep Oaxacan art exciting and far reaching, and the streets filled with life and color.

The Stencil Zone collective's images can currently be accessed at www.stencilzone.tk

Gustavo Fricke is in the process of designing his website, in the meantime those interested in his work can contact him at gusfricke@hotmail.com

Veronica Glezqui while exhibiting in Tijuana in the near future, for further information please contact her at vro_glezqui@hotmail.com She also has a portfolio at www.ofoto.com available for viewing. ■

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¡Viva México! ¡Viva!

The myth of history

by Rafael Bucio

September is called "El Mes de la Patria," which, translated, means Month of the Motherland. During this time, government buildings, plazas and public areas are traditionally decorated with green, white and red banners, lights and ornaments. The whole month spins around the night of the 15th, when Mexicans commemorate the first and most significant episode of the country's history: independence.

According to legend, on Sept. 15th, 1810, a Catholic priest tolled the bells of his parish, inciting people to fight against the oppression of the colonial empire. That is considered the beginning of the country's independence, even though the treaty that officially declared Mexico a sovereign nation was not signed until over a decade later. Every year, people gather in town squares all over the country to witness a dramatization of the bell tolling and the call to arms in which the president, governor or mayor impersonates priest Miguel Hidalgo, "Father of Independence."

Perhaps the most symbolic image of the independence is that of father Hidalgo and Costilla holding a banner of the Virgin Guadalupe, initiating the fight for freedom on a remote September night. Independence didn't mean a return to the pre-conquest ways; practically speaking, it was just a locally administered continuation of the same regime. The transformation of identity, however, was total. Independence meant the birth of a nation and a new tradition. On that fateful night, Mexico began writing its own history, forward and back-

ward.

Despite what they teach in textbooks, history is more than a dead collection of facts, dates, names and episodes. It is a



living thing, an active matrix in which myths are created and socially validated. It is constantly revisited and modified by newer ideas, in reflection of the myths themselves. As such, history is always a subjective construction, a growing, time-traveling collaboration. Historian Alberto Pigna says that historic objectivity is unattainable, as every historian must discriminate among the sources he uses to write his version of history. Looked at another way, one could say that two people experiencing the same thing at the same time will nonetheless always differ somewhat in their perceptions and descriptions of the event - let alone people who were not there, but who still attempt to report what happened.

Collectively speaking, history is a sort of common ground in which the members of a group (such as citizens of a country) identify with a common origin or version of events, and therefore share feelings of belonging and identity. These feelings are renewed by the social acknowledgement and remembrance (often via symbolic reenactments) of the events that make up history (or specifically, a particular version of these events.) Governments generally shape and strengthen the favored version of the collective myth through the institution of holidays, honoring heroes by naming

streets, towns and football stadiums after them and of course, through conventional education.

Many tour guides and textbooks refer to ancient Mexican civilizations, contributing to the idea that Mexican history is centuries old. In fact, it is less than 200 years old. The common belief that Mexican history includes the pre-Hispanic period is flawed; what was lost during the conquest was never regained, and what came after the independence was something new, something that amalgamated the pre-Hispanic and the Spanish, the pagan and the Catholic, the old and the new, the past and the future. This mixture is what created the concept, culture and historical construction we now refer to as "Mexico," a package that current inhabitants inherit, add to and pass on. Both the past and future, therefore, are intrinsically linked with the present. Think about that as you pass the banners and hear the bells, about what you would see and hear, or forgotten. ■

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