Fusión de dos Culturas: The Pre-Columbian Symbol’s role in forming Mexican National Identity in Contemporary Art and the Post-Colonial Landscape

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Abstract
An exploration of various examples of the role of Pre-Columbian symbology in the formation of a Mexican National identity, as applied mostly to modern and contemporary art, but also to various other forms of Media such as advertising, campaigning, signage, craft, and silversmithing industries. The atavistic resurrection of these symbols will be analyzed within a postcolonial framework and their contemporary utilizations in popular culture categorized as politically, socially, or aesthetically motivated. Whether they be, primitivist, iconoclastic, decolonial, or even a combination of all the aforementioned. Questions pertaining to the debate of transculturation vs. cultural imposition, national identity, conquest, colonization, the blurring of national / ethnic identity with indigeneity, and the repossession and repurposing of Indigenous image, heritage, art forms and cultural practice will be touched on as well.
In July of 1991, Grupo Financiero Probursa S.A. de C.V, a Mexican company specializing in the controlling and management of subsidiaries in financial leasing and foreign exchange, announced that they would be commemorating five centuries of Mexican History, the upcoming year (which would mark 500 years since of “La fusión de dos culturas” (“the fusion of two cultures) in 1492 through the release of an exclusive collection of medals, as a part of their campaign, “MÉXICO: NACION DEL AGUILA” (“MEXICO: NATION OF THE EAGLE”) (Fig. 1). Claiming to grant its clients, “la oportunidad de tener en casa la Historia de México,” (“The opportunity to have the History of Mexico in your home.”)\(^1\) the Grupo Financiero Probursa aimed to appeal to the sensibilities of nationalistic pride for the Quincentennial were achieved via the employment of perhaps one of the greatest weapons in their arsenal —the visual evocation and subsequent marketization of ancestral forms.

In this case, the company’s atavistic approach to the campaign would visually manifest itself as perhaps one the most ubiquitous and easily recognizable symbols of Mexico’s visual lexicon: the coat of arms, featuring an eagle swallowing a snake, a mythic and ubiquitous national icon, visible in the centre of the flag and reference to an Ancient Aztec patrimonial foundation myth. Chronicling the eagle’s evolution in coinage from the

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\(^1\) Grupo Financiero Probursa. “Valiosa Colección De Medallas De La Fusión De Dos Culturas.” *Excélsior, IBEROAMERICA, UNA COMUNIDAD*, 18 July 1991, pp. 25-33. Unless noted otherwise, this and all other translations are by the author.
moment of Mexico’s inception\textsuperscript{2} to the present day, the five medals offered by Probursa, would represent the form in five different iterations, divided by historic period, beginning with first century Mexico, and ending at the then contemporary fifth (Fig.2) To further expound upon their historic significance, the medallions were accompanied by a small booklet, narrating the history of Mexico in relation to the original appearance of each coin. We may center our analysis on the first of the five, that of the “Aguila del Códice Mendocino.” (“Eagle from the Codex Mendoza”) (Fig. 3) A direct replica of the introductory page from the Codex Mendoza (Fig.4), the medallion’s design consisted of the eagle rendered in the pictographic conventions of the Pre-Colombian\textsuperscript{3} manuscript, featuring

\textsuperscript{2} This event—at least through the eyes of the advertisers—seems to be demarcated by Columbus’ arrival in the Caribbean in 1492 as the tagline of the campaign, “CINCO SIGLOS DE HISTORIA 1492-1992” would suggest. Though this event would not denote the recognition of Mexico as a nation-state (an event that would not occur until much later in 1821). In keeping with Camarena’s vision of Mexican nationalism, the arrival of Columbus would mark a start in the establishment of permanent Spanish settlements in Mexico, spawning miscegenation and transculturation and could arguably be viewed as an event integral to the formation of Mexican ethnic identity.

\textsuperscript{3} For the purposes of our analysis, I will be referring to Barbara Braun’s definition of the term Pre-Colombian, as outlined in her book “Pre-Colombian Art and the Post Colombian World”: “Although the term encompasses all the indigenous arts of the Americas before Columbus, it commonly refers to the cultures of Mesoamerica (Mexico and Guatemala) and the Central Andes (Peru and Bolivia) as well as Central America and the Northern Andes (Ecuador and Colombia) from roughly 1200 B.C to the time of the Spanish Conquest about A.D 1500. Except for Maya hieroglyphic writing and sixteenth century Spanish eye-witness accounts of the Aztecs and the Inkas, Pre-Colombian Art is known through archaeological excavations. The large-scale complex, theocratic societies of the Maya, Toltec and Aztec civilizations in Mesoamerica and the Inka in the Central Andes...are popularly identified with Pre-Colombian Art.” Braun, Barbara. Pre Colombian Art and the Post Columbian World . Harry N. Abrams , 1993. pp 11-12. Though, this definition will broadly serve the purposes of this essay, for reasons to be delved into later we must be cautious of conflating the indigenous with the Mesoamerican, though in many cases indigenous art practices and handicraft may be classified ‘Pre-Colombian’
Aztec pictograms such as the glyph of Tenochtitlán (Fig. 5) (the once largest city state of the Mesoamerica) and several figures divided by an X shape (in a reference to the shape formed by water canals in the original image) depicted in profile and stacked one on top of the other, visually reminiscent of a Pre-Colombian manuscript, in which figures were often foreshortened—rendered flatly in two dimensions and positioned horizontally in registers.

Despite the obvious chronological sequencing of the images, we may opt to interpret Grupo Probursa’s decision to begin their collection on a medallion of Pre-Colombian design as less a pragmatic one and more a conceptual one. After all, it is notable that “MÉXICO: NACION DEL AGUILA”, unlike the many campaigns that had both preceded it and been realized concurrently with the quincentennial, chose to stay true to the historical chronology of the medallions, rather than opt for reverse chronology—beginning with the contemporary and tracing its origins: a vastly preferred template for commemorative events. Thus, the sequencing of the medallions in the campaign was not just of note visually, but also emblematically and ethnographically, telling of a larger movement in the contemporary Mexican visual tradition, commencing with the ancestral as a means of charting contemporary national heritage. Though many would assume what Grupo Probursa were visually enacting in their campaign was an advocation for the return to ancestral forms, this is a reductive misreading of their intent. Probursa’s campaign was distinct in that it instead argued for the Pre-Colombian symbol’s place within the modern world, cementing its transition into present day life by visually mapping how it had adapted
through the years but nonetheless remained a fixture of Mexican national identity, five whole centuries later.

It is not surprising that Grupo Probursa would choose such a symbol as their starting point for a campaign about national identity. Pre-Colombian revivalism had already been established as a popular visual shorthand demarcating Mexican patrimonial heritage in advertising and commerce as far back as the late 1800s when Mexico was selected to appear in Paris’s world renowned 1889 World’s Fair Expo, the *Exposition Universelle*. Though Antonio Peñafiel, the architect chosen to design the Mexican pavilion and Antonio M. Anza, the engineer that would execute it, ultimately settled on an amalgam of several styles for the final structure (including nods to the Beaux Arts architectural style of the event’s host country) a key component of the Pavilion would be its attempts to represent Mexico globally not by highlighting the country’s Modernity or transculturally acquired Hispanic ‘Europeanness’ post coloniality —which no doubt would have appealed to the sensibilities of the primarily affluent European or at the very least Eurocentric public attending the expo —but rather through the emphasis of its ancestral, archeological Pre-Colombian origins. These would express themselves through the final structure, aptly titled “*El Palacio Azteca*” (“The Aztec Palace”) (Fig. 6) a construction rife with neo-Aztec elements, including intricate geometric reliefs, an ornate pediment crowned by an Aztec Calendar-esque disk, stone caryatids in the style of Aztec idols and niches in the façade containing Aztec *tlatoanis* and a multitude of other pre-colonial Mexican figures cast in bronze.
This visual conflation of the Pre-Colombian with Mexico had aided to further the construction of Mexican National Identity since the reign of dictatorial President Porfirio Diaz who would continuously attempt to incite Mexican nationalism via public education and the overlapping arts sphere, to further his image and political agenda. Diaz’s endeavours would aim to homogenize the public under a uniform national identity, visually coercing them into identifying themselves with him as Mexicans through the evocation and idealization of their shared Pre-Colombian origins. Mexico’s 1910 centennial would prove the perfect vessel for his aims, giving him the opportunity to enact them, through a multitude of public ventures including debuting monuments and of course, investing federal funding into arts, renovating a great deal of Museums and other cultural institutions. Notable among these efforts would be his attempt to remodel the Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnología.

Diaz’s unveiling of the Museum would prove a colossal failure, that would reveal the faults of utilizing Pre-Colombian revivalism to rouse Mexican Nationalism. Showcasing several of the Pre-Colombian relics housed at the museum and introducing some newly acquired ones, such as a stone sculpture of the Aztec Water deity Chalchiuhtlicue, there were several problems with the launch. Not only were several the displays inaccurate, such as a carved Aztec sacrificial altar erroneously identified as the ‘Aztec Calendar’ but more

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4 Diaz’s affinity for the arts would also result in a longtime friendship and alliance with artist Jesús Contreras who had previously designed some of the figures for the 1889 Pavilion.
troublingly the exhibit would feature contemporary Indigenous people dressed in ancient Aztec attire.

In visually equating the Pre-Columbian with the Mexican, and more heinously the Indigenous with the Pre-Columbian, Diaz would attempt to homogenize Mexican national identity, compounding and thus erasing the countries complex multiethnic and primarily indigenous identities and regional differences, actively disregarding significant geopolitical conflict (conflict that would ultimately culminate in a violent revolution later that year that would last a decade).

Diaz’s attempts to popularize this ideological national culture were flawed in two pivotal ways. Firstly, their aims to assuage the civil conflicts of the public by uniting them under a Pre-Columbian identity which at that point was arguably obsolete would neither account for the country’s post-colonial transcultural identity which was no longer exclusively Pre-Columbian or the factionalism that had developed in Mexico post coloniality, in which growing racial, socio-economic differences and the subsequent political conflicts they spawned were germinating radically past the point of alleviation. Second, was the issue of commingling the continual identity and strife of Mexico’s omnipresent Indigenous population, with a long extinct civilization that was no longer culturally or politically relevant, reducing pertinent identity issues to relics of an ultimately obsolete past. A strategy which failed to pique the interest of both socio-politically dissatisfied Mexicans and the European elites he was attempting to impress, who at that point were looking forward towards the sensibilities of modern urbanity.
Diaz would give the semblance that he the oppressor not only identified with the Indigenous oppressed, on the basis of a shared ethnic identity but also on a mystical ancestral level through their once shared patrimonial origins, while also permitting in a particularly patronizing display, the othering, marginalization and even active exclusion of indigenous peoples from contemporary global discourse, censuring them from Mexico’s public image by suggesting they were literally of another time and thus extinct to the Contemporary World altogether. As Michael J Gonzalez states in his work, “Imagining Mexico in 1910: Visions of the Patria in the Centennial Celebration in Mexico”, “Porfirian elites wanted observers to connect ancient greatness with contemporary Mexico, without associating Pre-Columbian natives with contemporary Indians. Beyond displaying Indian models in Aztec costumes as living manikins (or as historical props in the Desfile Historico), the Centenario organisers attempted to hide them.”\(^5\)

This constructed identity in would continue in art and contemporaneity into the 19\(^{th}\) century into the mid 1930s, wherein the Casta concept of mestizaje or racial mixing, would be re-entered into national discourse by then president Lázaro Cárdenas in an attempt to extract agrarian labour and resources from the rural marginalized Indigenous populations of Mexico under the guise of implementing them into mainstream society. As such, in order to mitigate the racially motivated ostracization of such populations Cárdenas would heavily

promote the doctrines of Indegenism or a return to ancestral, aboriginal values and signifiers, which of course encompassed Pre-Colombian symbolizers. As scholar Anne Doremus recapitulates in her piece “Indigenism, Mestizaje and National Identity in Mexico during the 40s and 50s”, “Indigenism formed an integral part of the state’s economic development plans. It was also critical to the nationalist project… According to Mexico’s 1940 census, Indians composed 20 to 25 percent of the nation’s population…most lived in abject poverty, isolated from the rest of Mexican society, and lacking any sense of citizenship. Integration would provide access to Indian land and labor and help create an adequate domestic market necessary to supporting the nation’s economic growth. It would also strengthen national unity by compelling the Indians to begin identifying themselves not with an isolated community but with the nation as a whole. In other words, it would encourage the Indians to regard themselves as Mexican rather than as members of a particular indigenous group. Ultimately, the Mexican state hoped that integration would stimulate racial mixing or mestizaje.”

These principles would be integrated into the construction of Mexico’s national identity to give a semblance of a public harmonized under a uniform national character, especially in the wake of the Revolution of 1910, Mexico’s most brutal civil conflict to date, and would be continually administered in the wake of the Revolution even up until the present day.

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Indigenism, the Pre-Colombian symbology closely tied to it and the associations of both with Mexican National Identity would prove powerful principles to explore within a visual sphere at the turn of the century and engaging the forms that were being peddled to the masses in social critique via the lens of modern art would become an attractive notion to several Mexican artists during the Post-Revolutionary Period. The Muralist Movement in Mexico in particular, in redefining the visual arts— which had previously been thought of as forms for the consumption of the elite in privatized spaces— as public property, free for all to view, would prove instrumental to the visual perpetuation of Indigenism in the public sphere and the ubiquity of the Pre-Colombian Symbol as a signifier of Mexican National Identity in art and the Contemporary landscape.

Muralists like Diego Rivera would produce several works, which engaged contemporary aesthetics with the Pre-Colombian symbols of fabled Mexican Antiquity. Rivera’s murals, though centered around the urbanization and modernity of the Mexican landscape in the 40s—primarily compositionally focused with mechanized production and the industrial landscape— were often replete with a number of subtle references to the countries ancestral Pre-Colombian origins. In several murals by Rivera industrial workers are presided over, by the concealed yet still recognizable Aztec forms and deities. The outline of Earth and fertility Goddess Coatlicue, (Fig.7) is mechanized as an almost anthropomorphic stamp press in both the transportation mural of the west wall of his 1933 “Detroit Industry” Murals (Fig.8) and again in the central panel of a later frescoe titled Pan-American Unity (Fig. 9), while in some of the lower registers of the North wall on his
production Mural also a part of Detroit Industry (Fig.10) a cluster of abnormally large and formidable engine spindles resemble the pillar-like forms of Atlantean Toltec warrior statues (Fig.11) found across Mesoamerica in sites like Tula and Chichen Itza.

We can assume that this visual equation of the fantastic omniscience of Pre-Colombian creation gods and militia figures with modern technological machinery and implementations was not unintentional, despite the possible influence that we can attribute to the political imposition of Pre-Colombian images at the time. Rather we can interpret these parallels to be conscious anachronism on the part of the artist. As Barbara Braun states in her book “Pre-Colombian Art and the Post Colombian World” “[In Detroit Industry] Scientific and Technological Power serves as the secularized equivalent of the unlimited potency and cosmic unification once provided by ancient religion. Technology, Rivera proposes, has irrevocably altered the human relationship to nature; rationality has replaced superstition as a means of mastering the material world.” Ergo by visually likening the formidable cosmic supremacy of the ancient powers of Aztec figures to the then unfathomable wonders of contemporary technology, Rivera would successfully engage the world of the contemporary, with the Pre-Colombian symbol but successfully incorporating it into Contemporary urbanity and modern discourse.

Other painters would attempt to integrate the two, outside the medium of murals. Rufino Tamayo, one of the most prominent and prolific Mexican painters of the 20th

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century would utilize a similar approach in his compositions, which were both a testament to the time he spent copying pre-Columbian artifacts by hand while employed at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City and an acknowledgement of his indigenous Zapotec heritage. As such, his body of work would infuse his Modernist paintings with the visual configurations and characteristics of Pre-Colombian artifacts, and composition wise his pieces usually consist of androgyne human figures with fragmented faces with almond shaped eyes that resemble Aztec masks, geometric forms like the discs, squares and bordering seen in the deco rational motifs of Mesoamerican manuscripts and finally a preference for an earthy usually red or brown tinged color palette in a possible reference to tezontle, a rusty hued oxidized volcanic rock, whose popular usage as a construction material in Mexico can be traced back to Mesoamerican architecture.

As art critique Dorothy Odenheimer notes in a 1943 issue of the “Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago”, the elements Tamayo employs reference the sensibilities of both Pre-Colombian and Ancient Zapotecan art, architecture, sculpture, and ceramics. In her review of his 1943 work “Woman with Bird Cage” (Fig. 12) she references and visually compares the composition of the painting to a fragment of a wall painting discovered in Mitla in Oaxaca (Fig. 13), a historic burial site for Zapotecan elites. Claiming in the caption of the

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8 This would eventually culminate in Tamayo becoming a private collector of Pre-Colombian artifacts himself, many of which are housed in and can be viewed at the eponymous Museo Rufino Tamayo, located in Oaxaca. Tamayo began collecting objects on his many travels through Mexico and would curiously often select his pieces upon the basis of their aesthetic merit rather than historical value, viewing them not as antiquities but as sources of inspiration for his art in contemporaneity.
reference photo that, “The abstract quality of this and similar Pre-Colombian work has
influenced Tamayo more than the paintings of Europeans like Braque and Picasso.”⁹ Indeed,
the references are plausible, as in the wall painting Tamayo’s woman figure is represented
in profile, her face masklike and her body framed by a red tiered structure behind her that
could draw reference to the orthogonal qualities of decorative motifs in either
Mesoamerican architecture or manuscripts. Paintings like 1943’s “Woman Spinning” (Fig.
14) which features a bare-chested female figure, spinning blue thread on her knees at a
wheel, visually highlight this theory as well, calling on both the visual lexicon of both the
modern art world and the Mayan and Aztec archaeological figures of Mexican tradition. The
figure’s abstracted body, geometricity and partial nudity all visually associate her to icons of
Pre-Colombian deities and through her occupation we can draw connections between her
and the Mesoamerican goddess Tlazolteotl (Fig. 15), considered the patroness of spinners
and weavers. Through this insistence on drawing influence from Pre-Colombian sources
rather than looking to the Eurocentric influence of his contemporaries Rufino’s body of
work’s reasserted that the Pre-Colombian symbol could be and was Modern not primitive.
As such Tamayo’s imagery demonstrated that Pre-Colombian motifs were still a vital force
for Mexican artists working contemporarily.

⁹ Dorothy Odenheimer. “Woman with Bird Cage by Tamayo.” Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago
These visual evocations of the Pre-Colombian as a means of representing Mexican National Identity extended far beyond the arts sphere however and were present in mercantile industries as well. Dubbed the father of Mexican silver, American designer, and artist William Spratling, would be credited with the revival of the then faltering Silversmithing Industry in the small town of Taxco in Guerrero, Mexico. An ancient artform, Indigenous people had been mining and working silver in the town prior to the arrival of the Spaniards. Post Revolution however the silversmithing industry had grown stagnant, with unproductive mining practice and a lack of interest in silver making. Initially arriving to Mexico in 1931 as an architect, William Spratling aimed to document the wonders of Taxco’s colonial architecture. A skilled draftsman, upon learning of the defunct silver Industry, Spratling would take it upon himself to begin designing jewellery and holloware, with the aid of local goldsmiths who would provide him with simple designs, that he would use as blueprints of sorts, rekindling as necessary, and basing his own designs upon the ancestral forms the artisans provided.

Though Spratling’s pieces were imbued with the sensibilities of modern design, naturally, he would draw influence from the Pre-Colombian art, which was a major influence on craft and the arts in Taxco and throughout Mexico. Pre-Colombian construction materials such as jade, and the recognizable decorative motifs of Mesoamerican antiquity, such as meandering decorative motifs and mythic animals like jaguars, hummingbirds and serpents (Fig. 16) would serve as a primary source for Spratling and he would continually draw inspiration from both them and local elements indigenous
to Taxco in the design process. As authors Lucía García-Noriega Nieto and Ahmed Simeón state in their paper “Mexican Silver: William Spratling and the Taxco Style.”, “Spratling’s profound knowledge enabled him to use Aztec and Mayan details and elements in the design of his art pieces. He also used elements found in objects made on farms in the area as a starting point for several designs. In other words, he adapted these forms to different materials; thus, the new designs based on traditional ones acquired novel and elegant shapes. The challenge lay in creating something uniquely Mexican in flavor.”

Later the same year Spratling would establish a workshop “Las Delicias” that would employ up to 150 local artisans by 1938, and would produce not just jewellery but, furniture, tinware, and textiles. After Spratling’s death in 1967, a number of the artisans

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11 Arguably it would be these artisans employed under Spratling who we can attribute a great deal of his success to. Despite being considered a master draftsman, Spratling would not physically execute his own designs. It can be suggested that his policies in the workplace—which included a lax, laissez faire approach to executing designs and delivering products— may have been a form of extracting unaccredited labour from his artisans, while ensuring the final products would be in his name. In fact, several of the Mexican silversmiths working for “Las Delicias” or in other workshops during the same time, had been award winning silversmiths independent of Spratling. As Mario Alberto Velazquez Garcia states in his article, “Los norteamericanos que reinventaron a los pueblos de Mexico: Los emprendedores extranjeros en la redefinicion de la cultura y el turismo.” “...the recognition that Taxco's silversmithing began to receive is not only attributable to Spratling’s designs; Mexican master silversmiths such as Antonio Pineda, Hector Aguilar and the Los Castillo workshop won awards for their work. Silversmithing became an employment alternative for the people of Taxco (Buhalis and Cooper 1998).” Garcia, Mario Alberto Velazquez, and Helene Balslev Clausen. "Los norteamericanos que reinventaron a los pueblos de Mexico: Los emprendedores extranjeros en la redefinicion de la cultura y el turismo." Latin American Research Review, vol. 55, no. 1, Wntr 2020, pp. 49+. Gale Academic OneFile. Despite this, none of the other men would be singlehandedly credited with the revival of the Taxcan Silversmithing Industry as Spratling was.
that formerly worked for him began to establish their own silversmithing businesses, in a
revival of industry the likes of which had not been seen before. This new generation of
silversmiths would successfully integrate patrimonial motifs of Pre-Colombian antiquity
with the contemporary visual qualities of Spratling’s design approach, emphasizing both
Aztec decorative motifs and the organic, flowing abstracted forms of modernity taking an
almost sculptural approach to jewellery designing. Through his implementations of Pre-
Colombian forms in design, Spratling would both revive interest for ancestral forms in
Mexican commerce\textsuperscript{12} and visually redefine Taxcan national identity, via the reinstitution of
an ancient Pre-Colombian form of craft.

The complex trans culturalisms of Mexican National identity, visually synthesized
through the Pre-Colombian symbol would also be harmoniously integrated, decades later
for the design of the 1968 summer Olympic games hosted in Mexico City, wherein the
attempts of both to visually represent national identity of both the Porfiriato and the
\textit{Exposition Universelle}, would curiously be both evoked and subverted. It would be only
during this campaign that Olympic games graphic designers Eduardo Terrazas and Lance
Wyman would successfully attempt to visually synthesize ancestral Pre-Colombian
aesthetics with the then nascent stages of attempted Industrialization in Mexico. In the
minds of the event designers and Mexican public alike, this event and its concurrent

\textsuperscript{12} A recent visit to Taxco myself last year would be a testament to the endurance of pre-
Colombian forms in the silversmithing industry, as while in one of the many \textit{joyerías} I paid visit
to noted several available designs recalling Aztec forms, including a pendant in the shape of a
Teotihuacan Xayacatl or funerary mask (Fig.17)
marketing would prove their humble, third world country a modernized nation capable of economic competition with the European Elite. As Olympic games organizer, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, would state “The rest of the world has taken a long time to forget an image of Mexico, that of a figure covered by a poncho and a sombrero sleeping soundly beneath the shadow of a tree.... The new international image of Mexico is being created this Olympic Year. It is, of course, entirely different, but by no means is an effort being made to create a false image.”

The forethought of Terrazas and Wyman would attempt to reconcile both Mexico, within both the context of global perspectives: primitivized and lauded for its archaic Pre-Colombian archaeological wonders and indigenous pre-colonial past, with its peoples’ own perceived sense of national identity, nuanced and multifaceted with aspirations for Mexico to be viewed as a modernized nation of the first world.

As such, the efforts of the design team behind the 1968 Olympic Games would be notable and their evocation of Pre-Colombian forms, executed slightly differently. Their approach to integrate such seemingly incongruent visual elements would be a simple yet effective one: to create a visual interplay between the archaic and the contemporary, entering the Pre-Colombian symbol within a discourse with the world of Contemporary Art, graphic design, and urban technological innovation. Information would be distributed at the games via totem structures (Fig.18) resembling those found at a Mesoamerican

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archaeological site of Tula in Hidalgo (see figure 11) and ideograms in the tradition of Aztec writing systems (Fig. 19) would be featured in game programming, the Olympic village and even throughout the campaign’s merchandising, appearing on stamps (Fig.20), Matchboxes (Fig.21), posters, stickers and even signage (Fig. 22) The latter of which would later be inspiration for Wyman’s implementation of similar ideograms (Fig. 23) in the signage of the Mexico City Metro, constructed a year later, symbols which would synthesize the modernity of a rapid transit system with the Pre-Colombian inspired ideograms of antiquity, many of which would draw direct reference to iconic Pre-Colombian objects nationally recognizable to the Mexican riders, regardless of their regional differences, such as Pyramids and even Moctezuma’s headdress.

Indigenous folk art—specifically Nierika, an art form done by the Huichol people of the Sierra Madre which consisted of the creation of images in yarn (Fig.24)—would not merely serve as framework but rather as a direct template for the verticality, abstracted forms and rich color composing a large part of the campaign’s design was composed of. Wyman would work directly with the Huichol people himself and recounted the experience in a 2014 interview with the Walker Art Center, “As we proceeded, we had the opportunity to work with Huichol artists, brought in from the state of Jalisco, and learn from their unique sense of color. In one case, we made plywood square tablets [(Fig. 25)] (emulating traditional nierika), silkscreened the ’68 logo on them, and then gave them to the Huichol artists. The artists covered these templates with wax, into which they pushed strands of
colored wool, creating beautiful color illustrations of birds and other traditional imagery. We used these tablets as an aid in developing our color programing.”

While Wyman’s vision of Mexican urbanism and national identity did attempt to include indigenous identities and artforms, we cannot forget that it also did so by filtering them through the lens of White, Eurocentric aesthetics and presumably, without crediting or at the very least adequately compensating the Huichol artisans who aided in the design campaign. Wyman’s utilizations of Indigenous motifs may speak to the then popular principles of Primitivism in modern Mexican art and design spheres, wherein typically pastoral indigenous identity was romanticized as unsophisticated and “authentically” ethnicized. This tended to manifest itself as a commodification of the indigenous body and subject by non-indigenous artists.

Nahua woman, Doña Luz Jiménez from Milpa Alta, served as an art model / muse for several Mexican artists including Ramón Alva de la Canal, Fernando Leal, Francisco Díaz de León, Tina Modotti and Diego Rivera. Though her body and image were integrated into their works, her identity and efforts remained uncredited, and she is largely unknown to many even to this day. Killed in a traffic accident on her birthday January 28th in 1965, at the time of her death Jiménez had not seen any royalties for her time spent modeling and


15 Jiménez famously served as Rivera’s model for pieces like 1942’s “The Flower Carrier”.

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worked mostly menial jobs as a cook or servant. Rivera’s wife Frida Kahlo would make the conscious decision to begin donning Indigenous garments as “a sartorial endorsement of postrevolutionary ideology.”\textsuperscript{16}, a fabricated image and adoption of indigenist practice that was highly at odds with her affluent background and half-European mestiza heritage.

Rebecca Block and Lynda Hoffman-Jeep highlight the limitations of adopting indigenous aesthetics in their article, “Fashioning National Identity: Frida Kahlo in ‘Gringolandia.’” stating, “Appropriating lo indígena, however, was an ambiguous undertaking for the rest of Mexican society, as Villoro correctly pointed out in 1949. For while lo indígena embodied, both biologically and spiritually, the root, essence, or core of all "true" Mexicans, most indigenous people were isolated, both socially and economically, from the mainstream of Mexican society.” As such Block and Jeep Emphasize the problem that arises when falsely equivocating the archaic and Mesoamerican with deep-rooted Indigeneity that remains a veritable and continuous identity in the Contemporary world.

Though it can be argued that Terrazas and Wyman were able to negotiate Mexico’s flourishing Modernity successfully visually, with the idyllic remnants of its Pre-Colombian past and nods to Indigenous heritage, we may read this visual implementation of both Indigenous and Pre-Colombian aesthetics may as holding an insidious ulterior motive—a

choice made performatively with deliberation to unionize a public under one uniform identity

and make them forget about the horrors of the then recent massacre of hundreds of student protesters by government forces at the historic site of Tlatelolco, named for an Aztec word meaning Plaza of the Three Cultures. Tlatelolco, Constructed in 1964 and designed by Pedro Ramírez Vázquez (former World’s Fair architect and future Olympic Organizer), was home to three structures, each of a different historical period, coexisting with one another concurrently: Aztec ruins of Pre-Colombian antiquity, a Colonial 16\textsuperscript{th} century Franciscan church and a modernist housing project designed by architect Mario Pani, representative of contemporary urbanity.

Though built independently of the 1968 Olympic games Tlatelolco would become a large fixture in their marketing campaign, even listed as an Olympic venue. This coexistence of a multitude of cultures pre-colonial and post within one space would serve as a major touristic selling point for the games, as Luis Castañeda states in his piece “Beyond Tlatelolco: Design, Media, and Politics at Mexico ’68”, “Photographs of Tlatelolco were also disseminated as part of the mass-media promotion of the Olympics. In advertisements designed by Mexico’s Ministry of Tourism and published in major world newspapers, photographs of the plaza were presented to potential tourists as a condensation of the
country’s history, all available in a single place”\textsuperscript{17} the synchrony of the three, representative of patrimonial design trends for Mexican national structures at the time.

By 1968 Mexican archaeology of Aztec and Maya artifacts was intrinsically woven into the fabric of nationalism, particularly in the field of modern architecture, as Claudio Lomnitz writes in his book, “Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism”, “The institutional infrastructure of Mexican anthropology is one of the world's largest and its political centrality within the country has been remarkable. This is linked both to the critical role that Mexico's archaeological patrimony has played in Mexican nationalism and to anthropology's prominent role in shaping national development... Mexican anthropology has provided Mexico with the theoretical and empirical materials that were used to shape a modernist aesthetics, embodied in the design of buildings such as the National Museum of Anthropology or the new campus of the National University.”\textsuperscript{18} Hence, the design efforts Wyman and Terrazas, in addition to employing the archaeological patrimonial elements of Pre-Colombianism into their design campaign through their integrating indigeneity into the aesthetics of modernism, whether consciously or not were also furthering the all too prevailing dogmas of Indigenism that had been previously been implemented by President Cárdenas. As Lomnitz states subsequently, “It was charged with the task of forging Mexican


citizenship both by "indigenizing" modernity and by modernizing the Indians, thus uniting all Mexicans in one mestizo community. In Mexico, this is what was called indigenismo.”

In the wake of a government issued massacre of student protestors, several members of the Mexican public were angered to see design principles which were so closely aligned with agenda of the state which aimed to mollify their cries of injustice. As such, several subsequent student protestors visually engaged with Terrazas, and Wyman’s Olympic games designs directly. Besides appropriating the design of Wyman’s famous Olympic Games logo (Fig. 26) for a series of self-produced prints denouncing the Mexican militia (Fig. 27), the student protestors would also reference the conglomeration of figures one of Wyman’s stamp designs, featuring blacked out figures running in silhouette (Fig. 28) for another graphic depicting police brutality against protestors (Fig. 29) Most iconic among the artistic response, would be student protestors’ vandalizing of The Olympic peace dove symbol (Fig. 30). Intended as the iconographic embodiment of the game’s slogan “Todo es posible en la paz” (“Everything is possible in peace”), Wyman’s abstracted design of a white dove would be plastered around Mexico City in preparation for the games, visible on banners and even distributed to business owners for display in shopfronts. Protestors would lobby against these public displays of nationalist propaganda, by enacting a simple but effective iconoclasm: a spatter of red paint over the heart (Fig. 31) Representative of how hollow claims of peace attempts to unite them under a homogenized patrimonial identity and ingratiate them were in the face of such inexorable violence.
This active disassociation of past and present created even by well executed Pre-Colombian revivalism in the arts may lead one to ask, Why the push for the visual language of anachronism: depicting the ancestral in contemporaneity, which in perpetuity, reinforces the idea of both national identity and in the case of a country like Mexico indigeneity as homogenized? Wouldn’t it seem more reasonable for artists working contemporarily to abandon all references to the politically imposed symbols of antiquity and start anew, creating their own visual neologism? A possible explanation for the preference for visual anachronism in Mexican Contemporary and Modern Art is the restoration of agency it provides to artists regarding national narratives. As author Serge Gruzsinki proposes in his essay “Cannibal Images”, “anachronism led to an awareness of difference and change by revealing diversity in traditions and by highlighting the breakdown of styles and models. The deliberate choice of archaic references —either supposed or assumed archaic—was destabilizing the dominant forms and breaking routines. By multiplying the anachronic proximities and interacting with a constantly reinvented antiquity, lags, leaps, and shortcuts propelled ... art along the path toward the Renaissance and modernity...”¹⁹ highlighting anachronism in art’s ability to allow for a break in tradition by subverting customary visually conventions in form.

Similarly, museologist and scholar Mariana Castillo Deball argues that visual anachronism is prevalent because of archaeology’s intrinsic, continued historical impacts on

the ever-developing narrative of the contemporary landscape, in other words—its incontrovertible bond to the present. “The various layers of our historical past are forever present, giving rise to continual interpretations, reconstructions, demolitions, and annexations...” she states, “archaeology is resolved in the present and our history is being modified like city landscapes, public policies, and textbooks...the representation of [it] has been spread through copies, illustrations, textbooks, models and souvenirs. The meaning and the authenticity of archaeological material are involved in this chain of infinite representation”. We can extract several conclusions from the following quotes, viewing anachronism as having three operative functions: as a medium to subvert pre-established visual conventions, as a method by which to reexamine and recontextualize prior historical events and regain command of a narrative or as a method by which to re-evaluate previous forms and redefine their significance in a contemporary framework. These philosophies have been continuously employed in a visual sphere in more recent years through the work of contemporary Mexican artists of the present century.

In his 2017 exhibition “Distopías” at the Museo Universitario del Chopo, contemporary artist, Gabriel Garcilazo from Morelos, would utilize anachronism of the Pre-Colombian symbol in a myriad of interesting ways. A recreation of the Azcatitlan Codex—which narrates the story of the Mexica peoples’ migration until their settlement in the

20 Ilbargüengoitia Jorge, and Mariana Castillo Deball. *These Ruins You See Mariana Castillo Deball; Part of the Project These Ruins You See; Exhibited at the Museo De Arte Carrillo Gil from November 8, 2006 to February 28, 2007.* Sternberg Press, 2008, p. 165
present-day Valley of Mexico—Garcilazo appropriated the visual format of the Aztec codex
and others like it, for his piece “Códice Mágico Distópico” (“Magic Dystopian Codex”) (Fig.
32). Composed of thirty-four separate charcoal-and-ink drawings on paper, each panel
comments on Contemporary socio-political issues in Mexico, including Mexican migration
to the United States, drugs, human and arms trafficking. Depicting all of the
aforementioned in the pictographic conventions of the original document, intentionally
aging his paper yellow and replicating the color palette of the ancient codices for his
drawings which are rife with earthy reds and jade greens. The figures depicted by Garcilazo
though clad in antiquated Aztec dress are grounded in the world of the contemporary
through elements like cameras, airplanes, semi-automatic guns, and trucks.

Other pieces such as an installation based on a map of Tenochtitlán (Fig. 33) engage
the world of the contemporary through the Pre-Colombian in subtler ways. These sculptural
pieces visually remind us of the Templo Mayor, featuring two teocallis (Aztec truncated
pyramids) an observatory. Garcilazo’s structures, constructed simply of balsa wood appear
to be armatures, consisting of only the basic skeleton of these iconic structures and
appearing not fully realized. This was done deliberately to visually evoke to the self-
constructed homes of several impoverished communities in Latin America, as the
construction materials are, in the words of the artist “The same tools of the informal
construction of the poverty belts that exist in almost all the cities of Latin America.”

Referring to a time which is neither of the present or of the past, “Distopías” visually
correlates the omni present physical violence of the Aztec empire, to the traumatic
intergenerational violence and poverty Mexico and particularly the Indigenous descendants
of Mesoamerica have inherited as their nation was ravaged by colonialism. “My work is a
contraposition of the heroic part of this pre-Hispanic architecture and a look at how the
heirs of that culture live in those belts of misery today.” Garcilazo explains, “I am also
interested in the loss of the historical memory of Mexicans, although I believe it is a global
phenomenon.” The anachronism employed by Garcilazo in his pieces makes them read as
futurist and dystopian realities, asking the public to analyze current events and
Contemporary violence within a space, which despite its Pre-Colombian references is
neither rooted in reality nor history. Through an integration of Contemporary aesthetics
with the Pre-Colombian, he attempts to visually call attention to the matrixes of power
created in the aftermath of settler-colonialism via the utilization of familiar ancestral forms
ingrained in the fabric of Mexican National Identity.

Similarly self-described “mechanic artist”, Betsabeé Romero works primarily in the
mediums of sculpture, photography, and installation to create a visual interchange between

contemporary industrial urbanized Mexico, which she chooses to represent automobilistically and the Mexico of antiquity, manifesting itself through Aztec and Pre-Colombian symbology. In the words of Romero, the automobile and the various parts that encompass it reflect, “the contradictions of the consumer society in countries like Mexico....The automobile is a mass produced object, typical of industrialization, high technology and globalizing corporations, and is closely associated with the American way of life.”

Opting to visually represent these contradictions of consumer society, Romero enters the automobile, a contemporary mechanized object of consumerism that looks towards future modernity into dialogue with Pre-Colombian symbology, which although similarly capitalized on, aims to evoke remnants of the past in a duality between the old world and the new: a contradiction.

Her installation “Hanging from a Thread” would consist of glyphs and figures from the Templo Mayor, an archaeological wonder of Mesoamerica, displayed as “10 anemones of light”

While works like 2003’s “Feathered Serpent” (Fig. 34) would draw direct reference to iconic Aztec forms of antiquity and engage them with contemporary social issues. A three-tiered sculptural piece consisting of three used tires of different sizes. “Feathered Serpent” would


feature the carved image of the Mayan creation god *Quetzalcoatl*, the feathered serpent, a figure prevalent on a number of Pre-Colombian art objects and architecture including vessels (Fig. 35) and the decorative reliefs of the Teotihuacan Temple of the Feathered Serpent (Fig. 36). Utilizing Hevea Brasiliensis—a natural rubber, indigenous to Brazil which supplies 30% of annual global rubber production—in her construction, Romero would enter Pre-Columbian history in discourse with present-day environmentalism, forming a visual bond between the ancient and the contemporary.

Several of these references to Pre-Colombian antiquity were dually referencing contemporary commerce and industry. Gum, one of Romero’s preferred mediums for several of her installations is of ancient historic significance in Mesoamerica, possibly drawing its current name in Spanish: *chicle* from either the Nahuatl word *tzictli* meaning “sticky stuff” or the Mayan word *tsícte*. Later prized by the Spaniards and subsequently marketed, chicle was a traditional staple in Pre-Colombian societies, chewed by both the Aztecs and Mayans as a hunger suppressant and dental hygiene aid. Pieces like “Cities that Leave.” (Fig. 37) From 2004 and 2006’s “White Tracks” (Fig. 38) Artist’s collection reference the patrimonial Pre-Colombian heritage of this now manufactured and mass produced good, created by pressing gum into Mesoamerican shaped incisions in used strips of tire rubber.

In 2004’s “*Piel de Azúcar*” (Fig. 39), Romero utilizes tires to print sculptural indentations in sugar, reminiscent of glyphs from the Pre-Colombian Caribbean civilization of the *Taínos*, drawing reference to the Sugar Cane industry in Puerto Rico. In these ways
she shows nationalism as dialogue with manmade and also highlights the oppressiveness of nationally imposed pre-Colombianism, by depicting it as a physically imposing force, capable of leaving a physical imprint on the fabric of Latin American Industry and Commercialism. Both Romero and Garcilazo, adhering to the principles of anachronism as defined by Gruzsinki, utilize anachronism of the Pre-Colombian symbol as a means of reconfiguring historical events to regain command of their narratives in the present day, re-evaluating previous forms and redefining their significance in a contemporary framework.

Despite the decolonial efforts of anachronism in contemporary art, we must ask ourselves, are these forms not to be retired and rendered defunct? Several artists would certainly seem to think so. A great deal of contemporaries take an iconoclastic visual approach to Pre-Colombian forms, calling into question their sacrality and relevance within the contemporary landscape. Through a similar interplay between the Pre-Colombian and the tenants of contemporary art, several artists working in the 21st century, argue against the current prevalence of these imposed symbols within the present-day art sphere.

Colombian artist Nadín Ospina’s sculptural works, co-opt the visual aesthetics of Mesoamerican archaeological artifacts, to recreate the likenesses of recognizable figures in American pop-culture like Mickey Mouse or Bart Simpson, in the style of Aztec / Mayan icons and deities (Fig. 40). In doing so, Ospina irreverently calls into question the veneration of such Pre-Colombian idols in the present day, while also referencing their contemporary commercialization and entering into a capitalist market. As Patrice Giasson summarizes in the introductory essay of the book “Pre-Colombian Remix”, “The appearance of
superheroes and friendly comic characters such as Superman, Mickey Mouse, and Bart Simpson within a pre-Columbian or colonial landscape implies that the pre-Columbian past is as mythical or falsely close as Disneyland. On one hand, archaeological sites in Latin America have been converted into tourist destinations not so different from the Magic Kingdom.”

These reproductions are almost farcical and are presumably met with a great deal of comic reception, we can view them as a challenge to the reverence and almost solemnity with which such archaeological artifacts are typically met as objects perceived as holding intrinsic historical value.

In an interview for the book “Cantos Cuentos Colombianos” Ospina would summarize responses to his work and his preference for such figures stating, “When I produce these pieces, I know that many people find them amusing. They do have this amusing element with a double meaning; ... Mickey Mouse is one of the most culturally recognizable images that exists globally and produces a sense of recognition, which in my case I use in a perverse sense as an artistic strategy. That is, I use a recognizable cliché that makes my work very powerful as an image, because it uses an element that is established in the cultural medium. On the other hand, it is the recognition of this pre-Colombian past

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that for many people also implies a sense of Cultural identity, of value, of recovery...”

Though not Mexican himself, Ospina questions the power such objects hold as tools for nationalization, choosing to visually equate the grasp mythic Pre-Colombian figures hold on the Mexican (and more broadly Latin American) consciousness to the stranglehold American pop cultural icons hold over the masses in the United States, believing both to be tools of ethnicization. For Ospina modern icons of the contemporary landscape visible in television, commerce, pop-culture and ethnic identity like the Simpsons or Mickey Mouse serve as counterparts to the ubiquitously recognizable figures of Pre-Colombian antiquity which permeate all the same spheres with their influence.

Comparably, in a stranger case of flouting the notions of authenticity and worth congenitally ascribed to Pre-Colombian objects by archaeologists and artists alike, artifact forger and arguable artist Brigido Lara, created forgeries of Pre-Colombian artifacts (Fig. 41) with such expertise, that he was nearly incarcerated for fraud, being arrested by Veracruzian police for being in possession of a collection of supposedly looted Pre-Colombian ceramics. From his jail he would request clay be brought to his cell. Once received, Lara would proceed to hastily create identical reproductions of the ceramics that he had been accused of looting. These replications would be so masterful that once taken from the jail

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and shown to experts from INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia) were determined to be ancient pieces yet again.

Despite this, Lara would defend and holds his forgeries in the same regard as an artist would hold his pieces, believing in them as resulting from his creative talents, expressive technical proficiency, and conceptual ideas. Because of the aforementioned he would deem his forgeries “originals” as they were hand crafted by him and derived of his own invention. While seemingly a radical notion, it can be argued that Lara’s refusal to define his pieces’ value based upon the dictums of Pre-Colombian archaeology— which valued iconography and symbolic signifiers rather than craftsmanship and raw materials—is a politically motivated artistic statement meant to critique the status Mesoamerican archaeological object’s hold as national treasures in the public imagination by physically demonstrating that their likeness is easily replicable and thus their concept of value completely fabricated.

In a public art response that would mirror the Muralist Movement that had long preceded it, public engagement of federally imposed national symbols through the medium of Contemporary Art, like that which had occurred at the Olympics would be evoked decades later by radical contemporary art collectives such as Tercerunquinto. Formed in Monterrey, Mexico, in 1998, the collective is composed of artists Julio Castro, Gabriel Cázares and Rolando Flores, the group are highly controversial, interfering with public and private spaces in a physical dismantling of institutions of power. As such, they enact perhaps the most substantial forms of artistic iconoclasm— proposing the dismantling of
several federal institutions, including the office that divides the Mexican Cultural Institute and the Consulate and committing public acts of vandalism such as he perforating one of the walls of a Hong Kong art venue with an inscription reading “Anarchitecture” (an amalgam of the words anarchic and architecture) in such a way that the resulting cavities would give way to a view of the progressing urban development outside of them.

In 2008, Tercerunquinto would execute their performance art piece, “Desmantelamiento y reinstalación del escudo nacional” (“Dismantling and reinstatement of the national coat of arms.”) (Fig. 42), which could almost read as a direct response to campaigns like “MÉXICO: NACION DEL AGUILA”, wherein Mexico’s national crest was glorified and visually equated to national identity as part of a commemorative campaign. Instead to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the 1968 student movement in Mexico, which ended in the massacre at Tlatelolco, Tercerunquinto, would dismantle the patrimonial signifier, stripping six marble slabs bearing the national insignia from the façade of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs building designed by architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and located next to the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco Housing Unit, leaving a temporary recess in its place for the ensuing 24 hours after the dismantling, depowering the pre-Colombian derived patrimonial symbol by creating a physical vacancy in the federal structures architecture.

Tercerunquinto would then reinstate the symbol for a gallery space, irreverently cutting photographs of both the original symbol in place and the later cavity left in its absence into pieces to create a collage of each photograph taped on paper, displayed side
by side as a diptych of sorts (Fig. 43) This performance art would make a statement about how physically imposing the national crest was in its occupation of public space, something that was made far more palpable by the massive void left in its absence, while dually as Student protestors had done with Olympic game symbology, visually protesting the imposition of Pre-Colombian symbols as agents of nationalization and government complacency with sociopolitical injustice, via a contemporary iconoclastic engagement with them.

Finally, we may also view anachronism in Mexican contemporary art as a visual allegory for the transcultural identity Mexico acquired gradually post-coloniality. Though possessing a rich Pre-Colombian heritage prior to Colonization, the Spaniards’ arrival to the Aztec Empire in Mexico in 1492 and the subsequent establishment of early Spanish settlements, were events that would catalyze the creation of Mexican ethnic identity as we know it, as miscegenation and cultural consensus would lead to a number of complex multiethnic, biracial heritages in Mexico and ultimately catalyze the formation of a distinct national identity birthed from the mélange of two disparate cultures, in a “fusión de dos culturas” (“fusion of two cultures”). Like Mexico’s transcultural identity, visual anachronism merges constituents of past and present, combining them to form a distinct cultural gestalt, distinct from the sum of its parts.

We may return to Grupo Financiero Probursa’s “MÉXICO: NACION DEL AGUILA” campaign, to analyze the relationship between anachronism and trans culturalism further as the visual motifs being employed on their medallions were dual fold. The back of each
one held another emblem, an engraving of the mural "La Fusión de dos culturas", by Mexican artist Jorge Gonzalez Camarena (Fig. 44). Camarena opts to metaphorically represent the violence of the conquest through the interaction between two figures: A Spanish Conquistador clad in armour on horseback, representative of Colonialism and imposed European identity and the eagle warrior, (a visual counterpart for the eponymous eagles composing the front of the medallions) representative of an indigenous Mesoamerican and Pre-Colombian identity prior to conquest. While both cultures embrace and merge to form one entity of tangled limbs and plumage, the collision is a violent one wherein the two figures are linked by way of impalement, destroying one another. In physically grouping this image with the Pre-Colombian references to the “Códice Mendocino.” that adorn the first medallion in the series, we may interpret the campaign as referencing another pivotal dimension that comes with the visual evocation of the Pre-Colombian in a Contemporary World. Probursa’s inclusion of “La Fusión de dos culturas”, would itself form an allegory for the challenges and limitations that would arise out of the attempt to visually represent Mexico through utilizations of the Pre-Colombian as national signifiers. Depicting them as only one side of a dual sided coin, a testament to the multifaceted nature of Mexican National Identity, more nuanced and difficult to visually synthesize. In an attempted reconciliation of the two, the Pre-Colombian symbol finds itself constantly wrestling for a place in the Contemporary World.

The continual presence of the Pre-Colombian Symbol in Contemporary Art and the Post-Colonial Landscape Speaks to both the ideological construction of a Mexican identity
and the ethnographic significance ascribed to the Pre-Colombian symbol both for what it represents and has represented pre- and post-coloniality. The easily recognizable Pre-Colombian symbol, be it Mesoamerican or indigenous, has been rendered iconographic in contemporaneity, the visual shorthand for a nascent country which paradoxically encompasses rich pre-colonial roots while touting a distinct contemporaneous transcultural identity. While many argue that the integration of such a symbolizer is truly effective given Mexico’s progress, neologisms are certainly in order. Notwithstanding its various critiques and misgivings— the instrumental role it has played in furthering political agendas and the insidious ubiquity with which one finds it across not just time, but commerce and political propaganda included— it is only the Pre-Colombian symbol which miraculously, not yet defunct or lost to time has been able to continually reappear within all spheres of Mexican visual contemporary culture. To impact and transmogrify as necessary, taking leaps across time whilst still retaining the essence of what it once was. In short — to remain continually present in the contemporary world: the perfect anachronism. The Pre-Colombian symbol, be it Indigenous or Mesoamerican through its paradoxes— its malleability and monolith—is the neologism we seek, binding past and present incontrovertibly.

Its evolution from popular signifier for a nascent country with rich pre-colonial roots to transcultural symbol capable of visual synthesis with Modern and contemporary art, are testament to the Pre-Colombian symbol’s unique ability to develop a completely distinct identity post coloniality, to represent the fusion between art and archaeology, between the
ancestral and the contemporary, between pre-colonial and post-colonial: *la fusión de dos culturas*.

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