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**Artists United!**  
**An Online Community for Latina/o Visual Artists**

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**ABSTRACT**  
(from MIT site)

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**Artists United!: An Online Community for Latina/o Visual Artists**

This presentation discusses and illustrates the challenges and solutions arrived at in creating an online community to network hundreds of Latina/o visual artists and their works in the U.S. and elsewhere. On behalf of the Inter-University Program for Latino Research (IUPLR), the Hispanic Research Center (HRC) at Arizona State University has received funds for and is in the process of establishing a creative exchange portal for the Latina/o visual arts community both in the continental United States and elsewhere including Central America, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The project uses communication technologies including the evolving broadband environment of Internet2 to provide an Internet-based home for Latina/o artists who are creators of both still and moving visual images, as well as art organizations, museums, and art history and art education scholars.

Many Latina and Latino artists around the United States and even more generally in other areas of the Hispanic world have publicly expressed their concern that they are being left behind by high technology. They suffer from a lack of resources to transcend the barriers of language, of a rural or inner city home, of limited access to the Internet, or no access at all. For example, one of the most famous Chicano muralists, residing in San Diego where he has successfully completed numerous public art commissions, is reduced to receiving emails through a friend with a local business who commands a computer with access to the Internet. Another Mexican-American artist, residing in the Mexico City metropolitan area, is frustrated because she suffers continually from power failures or brownouts and constant disruptions and turnover by marginal Internet access providers who go bankrupt. Artists constrained by geographic limitations and the lack of information-technology resources can now interact with their peers and benefit from a host of

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services available to them through a newly developed website, the Latina/o Online Art Community at <http://www.latinoartcommunity.org> (Note: The website is operational but it is under intense construction with several components still unavailable. We anticipate the full complement of services will be available in September 2002.)

With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, Arizona State University's Hispanic Research Center (HRC), has created an online arts community that provides cost-free an Internet-based creative exchange portal for communication among Latina/o visual artists, art organizations, and others committed to Latina/o visual art. The portal provides services to the worldwide community of Latina/o artists via the Web, and provides education and outreach activities to encourage greater recognition of these artists. It also facilitates sales by individual artists and contributes to the growth of the market for Latina/o art by providing an extensive but single, consolidated site where many Latino artists can be accessed and their works of art and biographies perused. From the portal website, these artists' own websites can be accessed by anyone interested in further exploring their work.

For the artists themselves, the website is a valuable resource, and one that they can participate in at no cost. Artists are able to learn about the work of their peers, visit each other's websites, interact through listservs, engage in discussions, and announce events including conferences and exhibitions. The HRC is working with artists and art organizations to build a strong informational and educational base by creating lists of museums, art organizations, websites, calendars, and online events. The site is also offering Web page templates so artists can create their own Web pages and exhibits for display on the portal.

This online community facilitates sales of Latina/o art by providing a virtual exhibition space on the site that highlights a different artist or gallery every three months. Artists chosen for the exhibits receive honoraria, as do the curators. Exhibits will feature striking images of artwork, and special attention will be dedicated to three-dimensional objects in the exhibits, permitting them to be viewed from all angles. The first exhibit on the website is scheduled for September 2002 and it is titled *Iconography, Music, and Songs of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and Their Legacy in Current Art, Music, Poetry, and Social Movements*.

The portal site will be linked to galleries handling the work of Latina/o artists. In exchange for linking to their sites, the galleries will provide the HRC with sales data that will be used to develop a public database tracking the market. This will permit artists and gallery owners to know the changing market value of their own and similar works in different regions of the country. The HRC has also established a curated online sales gallery on the site growing out of the collection of art it has already commissioned and marketed over the Internet. Collectors are able to view and purchase work and communicate with the artists.

In sum, the Latina/o Online Art Community serves the national and international communities of Hispanic artists by:

- Providing an Internet-based home for Latina/o artists, artwork and art organizations.
- Introducing Latina/o artists to the Internet as an important exhibition and networking venue.
- Providing artists with access to advanced Web-based applications for creating their own Internet exhibits. The creation tools and resulting exhibits are seamlessly networked to allow users to view artists' work in an intuitive environment, making it easy to navigate and accessible to users with all levels of experience and technology.
- Providing artists and institutions with access to a Web-based scheduling application for announcing events, organizing and participating in online events, as well as enhancing the market for their work.
- Creating a virtual gallery where renowned Latina/o art scholars will be invited to curate exhibitions to feature the works of important Latina/o artists, including video interviews with the artists.
- Creating a linked database of museums, art organizations, Web sites, resources, and funding opportunities.
- Permitting collectors and the general public to view a wide variety of art in a range of media and prices readily, learn about the artists themselves, and purchase art with ease and confidence in the authenticity and the market value of the work that they purchase.
- Promoting Latina/o art in the evolving broadband environment through the use of Internet2 consortium. Applications include real time multiple-location interactive exhibitions and

educational presentations. Internet2 will also allow HRC to expand the Latino Art Community online project to include performance art, cinema, and theater.

The online community will also key on specific themes. For example, themes related to key dates in the Hispanic calendar, such as *El 16 de Septiembre* and *El Día de la Raza*, which are celebrated during Hispanic Heritage Month, *Cinco de Mayo*, and *El Día de los Muertos*, will be regularly posted. Moreover, we will vastly expand the general public's awareness of key dates of the Hispanic calendar. The project will highlight numerous dates, notable figures, and celebrations around the Spanish-speaking world. Thus, by way of illustration, the project will key on such figures as the founding of the American G.I. Forum, the accomplishments of astronaut Franklin Chang-Díaz and baseball notable Roberto Walker Clemente. We will profile the contributions respectively of Spanish artist Salvador Dalí, Catalan Joan Miró, Costa Rican/Mexican Francisco Zúñiga, and Colombian artist Fernando Botero. We will explain the significance of the Puerto Rican Grito de Lares, the birthday and achievements of Cuban patriot José Martí, and the birthdate of San Salvador's archbishop, Oscar Romero.

We anticipate future Internet exhibits on our website on Malintzín and Malinchismo; the formation of the popular image of Hispanics in the United States beginning with post-Civil War pulp fiction and going through film of the silent era; the art and iconography of the U.S.-Mexico border; *Mujeres por Mujeres y Mujeres e hijas* (art by Latinas that depicts Latinas and/or mothers and daughters); and the iconography of Vatos, Cholos, and Pachucos. A specialized glossary of Latina/o art and culture will also be available to the public. All special events, videotaped interviews, and exhibits will be archived on the site for future reference and study.

Participation in the online community is open to all individuals who produce or are interested in Latina/o art and to all art organizations. The project will open communication between as many individuals and organizations as possible. The virtual gallery is curated by nationally known scholars and art professionals, thereby ensuring the artistic excellence of the exhibits.

To access the site, visit <http://www.latinoartcommunity.org>. Users may join the directory, enter the chat room, check out local and national Latina/o art events, list an event, view the artists

gallery and read about individual artists, link to museums, or purchase art. The HRC anticipates that as many as 1,000 artists and 150 art organizations will participate in the community within a year.

Latina/o Online Art Community has an international reach via the Internet. The project is housed at the Hispanic Research Center at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. Metropolitan Phoenix is an excellent location for this project to grow because of the large Latina/o population there and in the surrounding states. Recently released census figures show that 32.8 million Latinos live in the United States and that 45% of them live in the 11 western states. In four years, Latinos will be the largest minority group in the United States, making this project is timely and relevant.

The HRC is an interdisciplinary unit dedicated to research and creative activities. The center performs basic and applied research on a broad range of topics related to Hispanic populations, disseminates research findings to the academic community, engages in creative activities and makes them available to the public, and provides public service in areas of importance to Hispanics.