

Why the Immigrants Come: Contemporary Maya Paintings & Textiles from Guatemala

A Proposal from
Maya Woman: The Helen Moran Collection



Why the Immigrants Come

Exhibition Statement

The provocative issue of immigration warrants a thoughtful and compassionate examination. This exciting exhibition of contemporary indigenous paintings and textiles from Guatemala can electrify students, inspire educators, and awaken the public to the plight of refugees. The works selected put a human face on the issue of immigration. They reveal the crises of violence, poverty, natural disaster, and displacement by multinational corporations, that impel waves of refugees from Mexico and Central America to the U.S. border.

The Maya people and their culture have survived 500 years of conquest and oppression. Numbering some six million people today, the Maya have intimate knowledge of the suffering caused by earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanoes and floods. In Guatemala alone they have survived a 36-year genocidal war, and now face brutal evictions of whole communities by multinational corporations seeking profits from mining and hydroelectric plants—as well as violent incursions by drug cartels. They are struggling against forced use of genetically modified crops, wanton pollution of their lakes and rivers, and much more. Maya women, like their sisters throughout Central America and Mexico, are fighting against rape, domestic violence, and femicide. Maya communities continue to struggle for their human rights to land, food, water, and education. The vision of these contemporary Maya artists can powerfully educate and influence the American public.

Accompanying the exhibition are several short documentary videos, including the 18-minute film, *She Is Everything: Maya Women in the Art of Pedro Rafaél González Chavajay*. The artist speaks about the respected role of women in traditional Maya society, and discusses this theme as it pertains to a number of his works. Three more short videos about artist Paula Nicho Cúmez are also available, as well as slideshows of Maya paintings on a variety of themes.

These artworks can be used as powerful prompts for discussion with community members as well as visiting classes from middle school through university. The exhibition can also serve as a focal point for events celebrating the living Maya culture, with indigenous and Latinx representatives from the San Francisco Bay Area—or from local organizations. These activities will help to educate people, and inspire creativity and action in the broader community.

Background

In 1929, by Lake Atitlán in the remote highlands of western Guatemala, coffee plantation worker Rafaél González y González mixed aniline dyes used by the weavers with sap from a gaviéa tree to paint images depicting traditional Tz'utuhil Maya life. Around the same time, in the Kaqchikel Maya town of San Juan Comalapa, Andrés Curruchich began to paint. His early works, often on items such as feathers or tin cans, were discovered by a rich Guatemalan with important connections. Thus, in 1956 Andrés' paintings were exhibited in blockbuster shows at San Francisco's de Young Museum and the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Realizing that painting was a viable source of income, a number of Rafaél González' sons and grandsons followed in his footsteps, and became the core of a constantly growing group of Tz'utuhil artists. Their vibrantly colored oil paintings document the rich Tz'utuhil Maya cultural heritage. Andrés Curruchich's son also became a painter, and his great success spurred many other men in Comalapa to become artists. Travel was difficult in those days, so the Tz'utuhil and Kaqchikel styles of painting remained separate and distinct.

The centers of Maya art today are still three small Tz'utuhil Maya towns (San Pedro la Laguna, San Juan la Laguna, and Santiago Atitlán) at the foot of the volcanoes around Lake Atitlán; and the remote Kaqchikel Maya town of San Juan Comalapa. Rafaél González' grandsons Pedro Rafaél, Mario, Mariano, and Matías González Chavajay are among the most well-known of the artists working in San Pedro la Laguna. They have inspired numerous apprentices, and their works have been exhibited nationally and internationally.

Until recently the roles of Maya men and women have been clearly defined, thus at first there were no women painters. The few Maya women who have now become artists are either descended from established painters, or have learned to paint from their husbands or other male relatives. The two Tz'utuhil women artists, Vicenta Puzul and María Teodora Mendez, are wives of artists. The first Kaqchikel women artists, Maria Elena Curruchiche and Rosa Elena Curruchich, are granddaughters of Andrés Curruchich. The most prominent woman artist today is the Kaqchikel painter Paula Nicho Cúmez, who learned from her artist husband, Salvador Cúmez Curruchich.

Specifications

- Number of Works:**
- 20 paintings
 - 7 textiles: 2 complete, handwoven Maya women's costumes (5 pieces), plus 2 additional blouses. Many additional textiles are available.
- Multimedia Component:** Slideshows of Maya paintings on a variety of themes will be provided for a video monitor.
- An 18-minute video may be shown in English or in Spanish: *She Is Everything: Maya Women in the Art of Pedro Rafael González Chavajay*
- Three short videos about artist Paula Nicho Cúmez are also available.
- Presentations:** Curators may be available to give presentations and gallery talks.
- Organized by:** Maya Woman: The Helen Moran Collection with the participation of Arte Maya Tz'utuhil
- Curators:** Rita E. Moran, Director of the Helen Moran Collection
Maureen Bourbin, Curator of the Helen Moran Collection
- Security:** Moderate security
- Insurance:** A certificate of insurance from the exhibitor's insurance company specifying coverage through transit and exhibition
- Fee:** No fee to educational and nonprofit institutions
- Shipping & Courier:** Exhibitors will transport the artworks to institutions in the San Francisco Bay Area free of charge.
For more distant locations, the borrowing institution is responsible for costs of round-trip shipping from San Francisco, plus the cost of a curator/courier to accompany the exhibition for installation and deinstallation.
- Support Requirements:** Video setup for slideshows or videos on USB drive or DVD
Podium, screen, microphone, and digital projector needed for related presentations.
- Booking Time:** 1 to 6 months
- Availability:** Contact us for latest information
- Contact:** Rita@MayaWomenInArt.org - 415-823-6909
MBourbin@gmail.com - 415-308-5751
Website: www.MayaWomenInArt.org

Curators

Rita E. Moran, M.A., has been the Director and Curator of Maya Woman: The Helen Moran Collection since 2007. A lifelong activist, she created the Collection to promote dignity and human rights for indigenous and Latina women, indigenous peoples of Latin America, and undocumented immigrants to the U.S. She has curated many exhibitions of works from the Collection in colleges, libraries, and community centers throughout the United States. She can give gallery talks, introducing the artworks and the artists, and can also speak on violence against women and the struggle for human rights in Guatemala, as reflected in the Collection. Rita taught English to Latino and indigenous immigrants for 18 years at City College of San Francisco and San Francisco Unified School District. In 2011 she was a member of the Guatemala Human Rights Commission's delegation investigating violence against women.

Maureen Bourbin, M.A., is Curator of the Collection. She has an M.A. in Museum Studies from San Francisco State University and specializes in researching the symbolism in Spanish colonial devotional artwork. She has curated several exhibitions in the San Francisco Bay Area, and currently serves on the Advisory Committee of Groundswell at City College of San Francisco. Former Board service includes the Board of the California Mission Studies Association, the Museum Studies Special Interest Group of San Francisco State University, and the Treasure Island Museum Association.

List of Objects for the Exhibition

Item	Accession No.	Artist	Título	Title	Date	H x W
1	7.2009	Paula Nicho Cúmez	Crusando Fronteras	Crossing Borders	2007	24 x 32
2	18.2010	Paula Nicho Cúmez	Nuestra Madre Tierra	Our Mother Earth	2010	24 x 32
3	19.2010	Paula Nicho Cúmez	Proceso y Visión de los Acuerdos de Paz	Process and Vision of the Peace Accords	2007	39 x 29
4	9.1.2011	Paula Nicho Cúmez	Destrucción de la Naturaleza	Destruction of Nature	2007	31 x 38.5
5	9.3.2015	Pedro Rafael González Chavajay	Riqueza Agena	The Riches of Others	2009	24 x 20
6	Arte Maya Tz'utuhil Collection	Pedro Rafael González Chavajay	Matanza en Santiago Atitlán	Massacre in Santiago Atitlán	1990-1993	36 x 54
7	8.3.2009	Mario González Chavajay	Baleado por el Ejersito en los 80	Shot by the Army in the 1980s	2005	15 x 13
8	8.4.2009	Mario González Chavajay	Torturado Líder Indígena	Tortured Indigenous Leader	2005	15 x 13
9	2.4.2007	Mario González Chavajay	Mujeres Revolucionarias de Todo Santo	Revolutionary Women of Todos Santos Cuchumatán	2005	15 x 13
10	4.6.2008	Mario González Chavajay	Violencia Contra la Mujer	Violence Against Women	2005	13 x 15
11	4.5.2008	Mario González Chavajay	Niños de Aldea	Children of the Village	2005	20 x 24
12	2.10.2012	Mario González Chavajay	Llantos de Atitlán	Lament of Atitlán	2005	15 x 19
13	2.11.2012	Mario González Chavajay	Los Sin Tierra	The Landless Ones	2005	20 x 24
14	11.2014	Samuel Cumes Pop	Proyecto "Chixoy"	The Chixoy Project	2014	24 x 18 Framed 29x23.5
15	17.2012	Samuel Cumes Pop	Hidroeléctricas	Hydroelectric Plants	2012	24 x 18 Framed 29x23.5
16	5.3.2018	Samuel Cumes Pop	Calvario de la Migrante	Calvary of the Migrant	2018	17.25 x 13.75 Framed 25.125 x 21.125
17	5.2.2008	Juan Fermín González Morales	Stan	Hurricane Stan	2005	20 x 16

Item	Accession No.	Artist	Título	Title	Date	H x W
18	6.1.2008	Juanita López	El Rapto	The Kidnapping	2008	10 x 13
19	2.2010	Julian Coché Mendoza	Tiempo de Perdida	Time of Loss	2010	12 x 16
20	8.1.2011	Lorenzo González Chavajay	Mujer de Santa Cruz	Woman from Santa Cruz	1991	15 x 11 Framed 19.75x15.5
BONUS painting, to be exhibited within the Library by librarians' desk:						
28	Arte Maya Tz'utuhil Collection	Victor Vasquez Temó	Tren de la Muerte	Train of Death	2008	67 x 89

Textiles

Item	Catalog No. Accession No.	Town / Description	Image	HxW
21	RM004 6.1.2011	Huipil Santiago Atitlán		26 x 38 T06
22	RM005 6.2.2011	Falda, Santiago Atitlán		39 x 135 T06
23	RM006 6.3.2011	Huipil San Juan Comalapa		21 x 30 T06
24	RM007 6.4.2011	Falda San Juan Comalapa		43 x 144 T06
25	RM008 6.5.2011	Cinta San Juan Comalapa		2.5 x 84 T06
26	CV023 13.23.2013	Chichicastenango		26 x 30.5 T03
27	CV016 13.16.2013	Todos Santos Cuchumatán		30 x 29.5 T02

The Paintings

Paintings to be included in this exhibition are reproduced below, organized into the following sections:

- Natural Disaster
- Genocide
- Violence Against Women
- Poverty
- Displacement by Multinational Corporations
- Immigration

Natural Disaster



Nuestra Madre Tierra / Our Mother Earth
Paula Nicho Cúmez 2010 (24 x 32 in.)

In the Guatemala highlands, a small indigenous village nestles in the bosom of Mother Earth, who embraces the surrounding volcanoes. Corn, the staff of life, is flourishing. Native birds, many of them depicted in the patterns of traditional weaving, enliven the scene. The Earth, and everything in it, is sacred to the Maya.

Kaqchiquel Maya artist Paula Nicho Cúmez has achieved an international reputation with her poetic, surrealist visions of women and the natural world. Originally a weaver, she learned to paint from her husband, Salvador Cúmez Curruchich. They live in San Juan Comalapa, which has become a center for Maya art. In the painting, Mother Earth is wearing a blouse (*huipil*) from the artist's own town.

Artist's Statement:

In this work there are three energies. Ruk'ux ya'el, Heart of the Water; Ruk'ux ulew, the Heart of the Earth, and Ruk'ux kaj, the Heart of the Sky. These are the energies that protect us and provide us with security and alimentionation, the way a mother does.



Destrucción de la Naturaleza / Destruction of Nature
Paula Nicho Cúmez 2007 (31 x 38.5 in.)

The torrential rains of a disastrous hurricane have wrought terrible destruction upon an indigenous community. People are being swept away by flooding and powerful mudslides. Mother Nature, suffering with the people, is personified in the mountain.

In October of 2005, Hurricane Stan caused thousands of deaths and the destruction of tens of thousands of homes in Guatemala and throughout Central America and southern Mexico.



Stan / Hurricane Stan

Juan Fermín González Morales 2005 (20 x 10 in.)

The devastating Hurricane Stan hit Central America and southern Mexico in October of 2005, just one month after Katrina struck the Gulf coast of the United States. Torrential rains caused catastrophic flooding and mudslides in Guatemala, affecting half a million people, with more than 650 deaths and 35,000 homes destroyed.



Llantos de Atitlán / Lament of Atitlán
Mario González Chavajay 2005 (15 x 19 in.)

The devastating Hurricane Stan hit Central America in 2005, just one month after Katrina struck the Gulf coast of the United States. The storm caused catastrophic flooding and mudslides in Guatemala, affecting half a million people, with more than 650 deaths and 35,000 homes destroyed.

On October 5, a huge river of mud slid down the volcanic slopes above the Tz'utuhil town of Santiago Atitlán. More than 150 people from the village of Panabáj were killed, and the homes of 5,000 people were destroyed. Here, a family has recovered the body of their young son. Many bodies were never found.

Genocide



Matanza en Santiago Atitlán, el 3 de Diciembre 1990

Massacre in Santiago Atitlán, December 3, 1990

Pedro Rafaél González Chavajay 1990 to 1993 (36 in. x 54 in.)

Victor Perera in his book *Unfinished Conquest* describes how the massacre of civilians by the Guatemalan army in Santiago Atitlán unfolded:

On midnight of December 2, 1990, approximately twenty-five hundred Atitecos, led by the outgoing mayor, Delfino Rodas, and the mayor-elect, Salvador Ramírez, marched on the army barracks south of Santiago Atitlán and demanded to speak with the *comandante*. At the mayors' urging, the marchers were unarmed and carried only sticks and white banners. Earlier that evening five plainclothes military, among them the base commander, had harassed several townspeople after drinking heavily in a local cantina. The *comandante*—who was apparently drunk—had attempted to rob the home of Andres Sapocu Jabuychan, and neighbors rang the churchbells to summon help. When a young man identified them as soldiers, the commanding officer fired his weapon, wounding a nineteen-year-old Atiteco in the hand and leg. Another youth apparently struck the officer in the face with a stone. The plainclothes soldiers gave themselves away when they had

to be rescued by an army patrol, which escorted the officer and his four men back to the barracks.

The marchers were met by the *comandante*, who told their leaders to turn back and return the following day. According to eyewitnesses, an Atiteco toward the rear threw a stone at the *comandante*. A soldier fired into the air and a sergeant major manning an automatic weapon opened fire. Witnesses report that a courageous marcher threw himself on the gunner to prevent a slaughter, but it was too late. The soldier continued to strafe the crowd even after everyone fell to the ground or sought cover. When the shooting stopped, eleven men, women, and children lay dead on the ground, and at least twenty-one more were wounded. Two of these later died in the hospital. The final tally revealed most of the dead and wounded were Catholics, among them several catechists with *Acción Católica*.

The following day a clamor arose for the expulsion of the army garrison from Atitlan. Father Tom McSherry quietly set up microphones in the square, as more than half the town's twenty thousand residents gathered to hear the Attorney for Human Rights and other speakers demand the army's removal. Mayor-elect Ramirez went on national TV to denounce the murder and the disappearance of two thousand Atitecos over the past eleven.

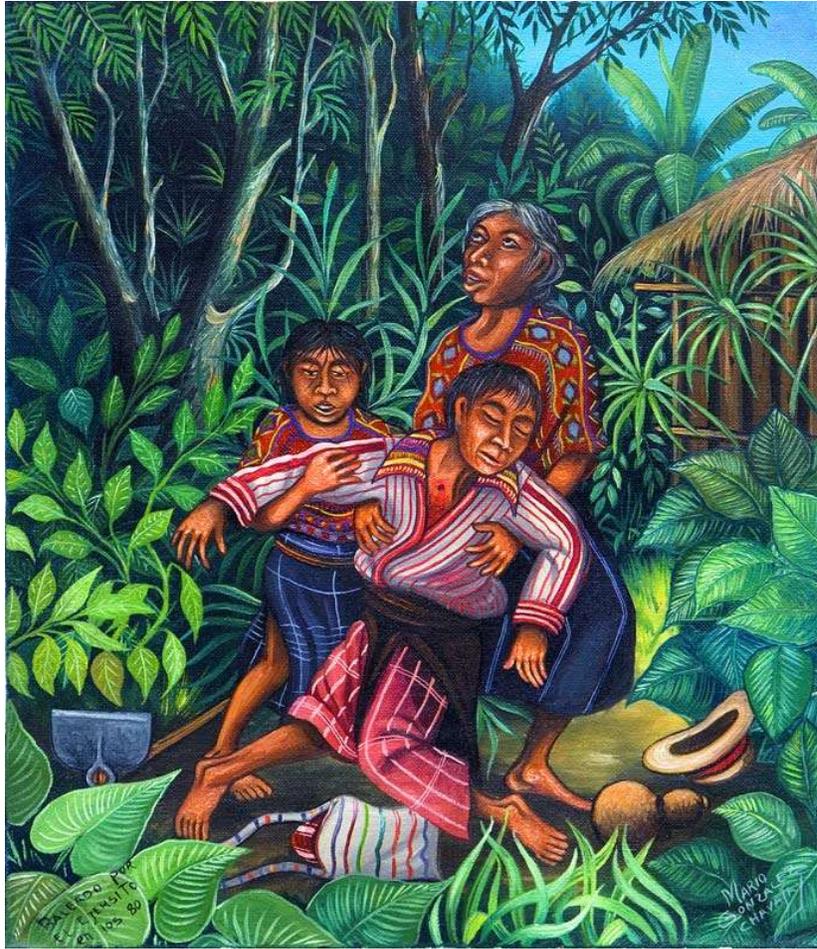
This event was a turning point for the Maya of Guatemala in the long conflict of the 1980s where around 200,000 indigenous people in Guatemala lost their lives mainly by the Guatemalan military. Santiago Atitlan is one of the popular tourist destinations in Guatemala, so this massacre made not only headlines in Guatemala, but garnered international attention. In response the army closed their base in Santiago Atitlan a couple of weeks later, but then in an about face decided it was a mistake. When they tried to move back into the base, the townspeople met them on the road and prevented them from returning. The military then went to every town around the lake proposing that they set up a base there. All of the Maya towns rejected the military's proposal. This was the first time that the Maya people had successfully defeated the military in this long conflict. While the military base was in Santiago Atitlan around 2,000 men, women and children lost their lives. After the military left, the killings stopped.



Tiempo de Perdida / Time of Loss
Julian Coche Mendoza 2010 (12 x 16 in.)

During the genocidal Guatemalan civil war (1960 to 1996) an indigenous woman mourns her loved one, while soldiers continue executions in the background.

This artist briefly attended art school in Guatemala City, where he was introduced to the Cubist art style. He went on to invent his own Maya cubist style.



Baleado por el Ejersito en los 80 / Shot by the Army in the 1980s
Mario González Chavajay 2005 (15 x 13 in.)

This indigenous husband and father has been murdered by the Guatemalan army, leaving his family unprotected. His young daughter's skirt is askew, indicating that she may have been raped by the soldiers.



Torturado Líder Indígena / Tortured Indigenous Leader
Mario González Chavajay 2005 (15 x 13 in.)

The Guatemalan army has tortured and murdered this community leader, and even killed his dog.



Violencia Contra la Mujer / Violence Against Women
Mario González Chavajay 2005 (13 x 15 in.)

A woman carrying fruit has been attacked and raped in the countryside.

Tens of thousands of indigenous women were raped during the civil war. Guatemalan women today continue to be raped and murdered with virtual impunity.



Mujeres Revolucionarias de Todo Santo / Revolutionary Women of Todos Santos Cuchumatán
Mario González Chavajay 2005 (15 x 13 in.)

These women from a remote mountain town have armed themselves with rifles, a machete, and a sharpened stick, to defend their families. Their husbands and brothers may have been killed by the army while struggling to keep possession of their land.

Much of the Mam Maya population of this town fled to Mexico during the violence of the 1980s.



Proceso y visión de los acuerdos de paz / Process and Vision of the Peace Accords
Paula Nicho Cúmez 2007 (39 x 29)

This splendid image of a Maya woman spinning her thread—recalling Ixchel, the Maya goddess of weaving—represents the hopes of the indigenous people for the creation of a lasting peace after several decades of war. The peace accords of 1996, aided by the presence of UN observers, brought an end to the genocidal civil war.

The woman's figure unites the earth with the lake and sky, both of which have taken on the color of human skin. The peacock feather designs cover the woman's body. Paula refers to her *traje* (traditional handwoven attire) as her second skin. It is part of who she is, and she would feel naked without it. The peace accords included respect for the Maya culture and traditional Maya religious beliefs.

Artist's Statement: To me, Guatemala has been drowned, as in the sea. I feel that the only thing that remains for us is to once again weave the country, without forgetting our histories, which we carry in our skin and in our voices.

Violence Against Women



El Rapto / The Kidnapping
Juanita López 2008 (10 x 13 in.)

A woman on her way to draw water from the community fountain is being carried away by two men in broad daylight. Her water jug lies shattered on the ground. A friend is trying to protect her, but another woman is ignoring everyone.

The image can be interpreted in a number of ways:

If a couple cannot obtain their parents' permission to marry, they may decide to elope by staging a kidnapping. Once the woman has been "stolen," no one else will marry her. In that case their union would have to be accepted as a *fait accompli*. Similarly, if the couple cannot afford the traditional three-day wedding fiesta, they may elope in this fashion. In either case, women are seen as chattel, to be taken by force.

In many cases, a man may simply seize a woman against her will and force her to become his wife—or force her into prostitution. In addition, strangers may kidnap women. Their victims may be raped, tortured, and their bodies mutilated.

Guatemala is one of the most dangerous places for women in the Americas. Domestic violence is rampant, and the crime of femicide—the murder of women—is done with virtual impunity.

Poverty



Riqueza Agena / The Riches of Others
Pedro Rafaél González Chavajay 2009 (24 x 20 in.)

A family carries to market all the products they have made and the food they have produced—but they cannot afford to keep anything for themselves. The old and tattered *traje* (clothing) that the family members wear indicates their level of poverty. By contrast, they carry to market the rich bounty of Guatemala—avocados, corn, squash, flowers and poultry. Because of their extreme poverty, they cannot partake of this harvest. They probably exist on a frugal diet comprised mainly of beans and tortillas.

The life of a *campesino* is financially difficult even if the family grows a small amount of coffee, the principal cash crop for the Maya. For many Maya families, the money they earn in January from coffee must last for the entire year. The artist remembers that as a child his family often did not have enough money for food.

Before the Conquest, the different Maya tribes held much of land communally, and each tribe had land not only in the highland area of Guatemala, but also in the hot coastal area where crops flourished. Then in the 19th century, the Government of Guatemala confiscated coastal the land and offered it to Europeans who would immigrate to Guatemala to run plantations. As a result, most Maya were forced live off of what they could grow on the more marginal land in the highland area of Guatemala. The highland Maya would then migrate, for several months each year, to work on the plantations in harsh conditions and for very low pay. The farmlands outside of the highland towns were no longer held communally; rather they were divided and subdivided with each passing generation. The Maya who most quickly understood and adopted themselves to this new system of private ownership, often ended up with title to the most land.

Traditionally *campesino* families are large; eight children would be considered normal. Although this ensures that enough children will survive to take care of the parents in their old age, it also means that there may not be enough money for food, nor will the family have the resources to send the children to school. The girls are usually the first ones to be withdrawn from school; if the boys finish sixth grade, the girls may only finish third grade.



Niños de Aldea / Children of the Village
Mario González Chavajay 2005 (20" x 24 in.)

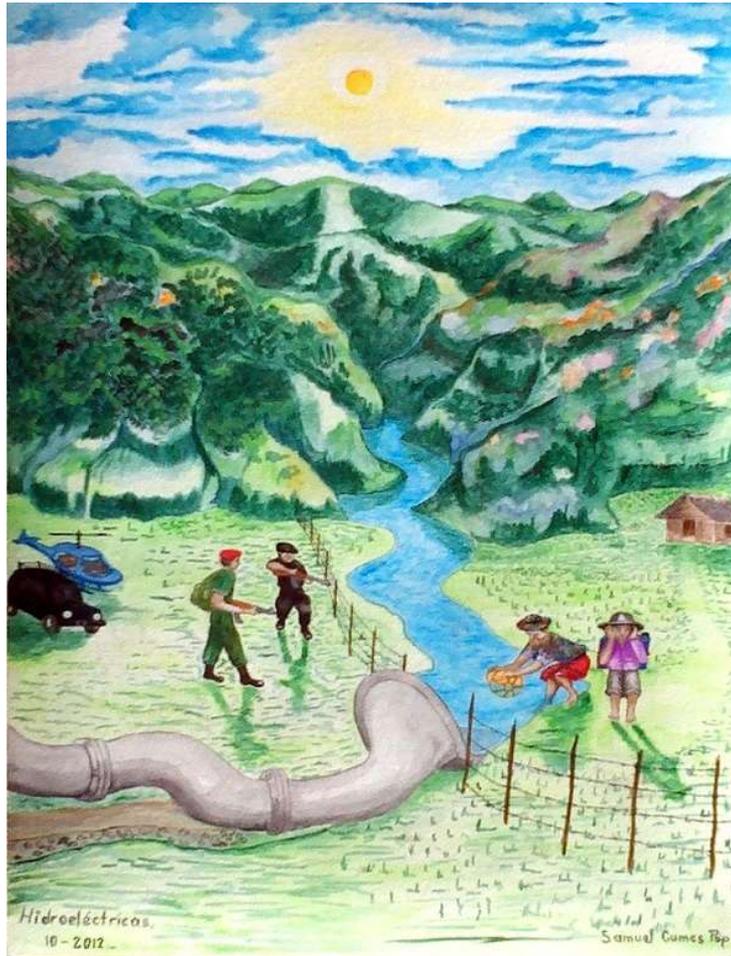
Young village children collect heavy loads of firewood out in the forest. Many indigenous children must work to help their families, and do not have the opportunity to attend school.



Mujer de Santa Cruz / Woman from Santa Cruz
Lorenzo González Chavajay 1991 (15 x 11 in.)

An indigenous woman from the village of Santa Cruz la Laguna, near Lake Atitlán, carries her baby in her shawl.

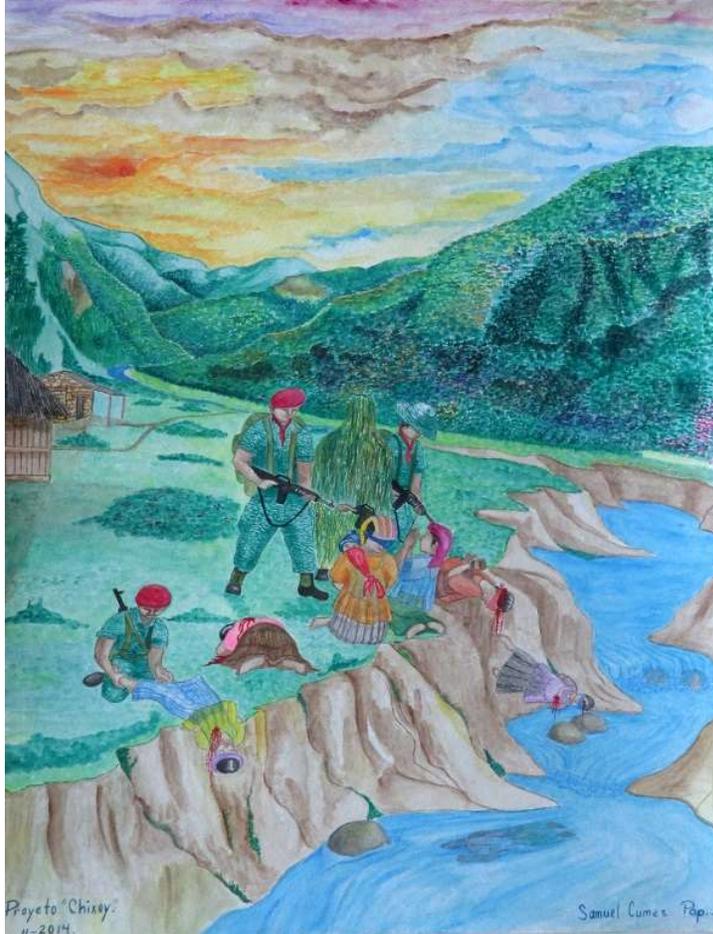
Displacement by Multinational Corporations



Hidroeléctricas / Hydroelectric Projects
Samuel Cumes Pop 2012 (24 x 18 in.)

Artist's Statement:

Lately, Spanish companies are creating hydroelectric projects. They are different from the mining companies, I guess, because the hydroelectric projects don't destroy, deforest, pollute, or erode the land, and the animals don't die. But the companies take the higher flow of water and leave farmers without water for their consumption, for their crops and for their animals. They take over everything—and they even kill in order to take away the water, just as happened in Santa Cruz Barillas, northwest of Guatemala City, on May first or second of 2012. It's a great shame that government officials are not on the side of the people. They kill in order to keep the water and don't permit the poor farmers to have their water. How much do the campesinos take? Very little, of course. But let's look at how much the companies take: a lot. What do the campesinos have? A simple house. What do the employers have? Luxury cars, helicopters, and a lot more that represents power. Poverty and power, that's the big difference.



Proyecto "Chixoy" / The Chixoy Project
Samuel Cumes Pop 2014 (24 x 18 in.)

Artist's Statement:

This painting was inspired by the Chixoy hydroelectric project that caused much death and pain at the beginning of its construction. Before its construction, the military government at the time, along with some companies, evicted many families from their land, forcing them to move to other places where they did not want to go. The families that did not obey were massacred and thrown into the Chixoy River and disappeared. Thus the military avoided the need to excavate.

The irony of this project is that even today many people who live near where the electricity is generated are still without power. Wires carrying the power pass near the homes of the people, and in some cases even the electrical poles are on their land, but the people still live in the dark. Residents living near the reservoir have to ask permission to cross it, and must make the request fifteen days in advance. How difficult this would be when there is an emergency! With people having lost family members, land, and much more, and not receiving any benefit, it's a shame.

The only ones who benefit from the natural resources are the government and the rich—not the small properties that people have in the tiny communities that exist in the mountains of my country.

Today the government of the United States and the global banks are forcing the current government to reimburse or economically compensate families affected by this project. I understand that the government has accepted the demands of the government of the United States and the international financial agencies.



Los Sin Tierra / The Landless Ones
Mario González Chavajay 2005 (20 x 24 in.)

Families who have been driven off their land by multinational mining or hydroelectric projects—or perhaps displaced by natural disaster—take refuge in the jungle. These subsistence farmers have little shelter from torrential rains, and often they have no land to cultivate.

Immigration



Crusando Fronteras / Crossing Borders
Paula Nicho Cúmez 2007 (24 x 32 in.)

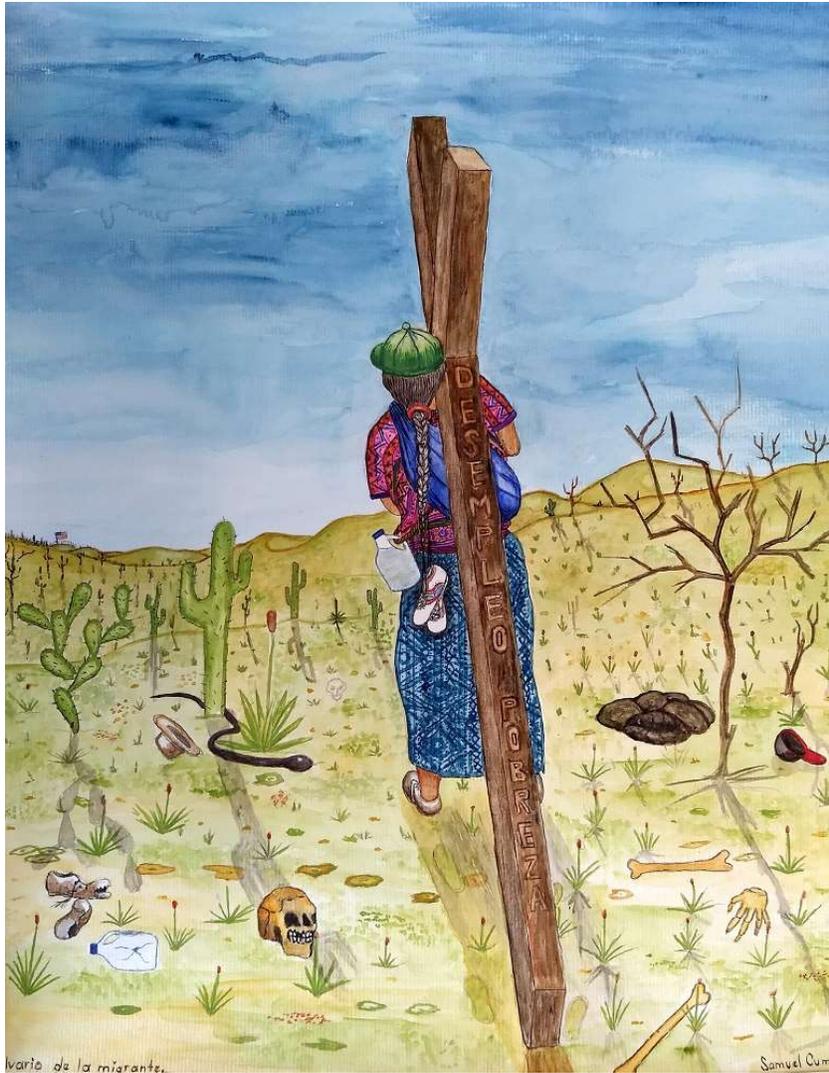
An indigenous woman takes flight, transcending the boundaries that have held her back. Rising into the air, still dressed in her native clothing, the woman retains her identity—her culture.

This image suggests a woman overcoming the poverty, violence, and discrimination that have oppressed Maya women for centuries. Perhaps it also refers to immigrant women crossing the frontiers on their way to a new life in Mexico or the United States. For such a journey much is left behind. In the painting, the woman loses a shoe, and the small dog, perhaps representing her family, runs after the woman. The risks are great. Who knows when she will be able to see or talk to her loved ones again.

Millions of Maya have fled to Mexico and the United States, seeking jobs and refuge from poverty and continuing violence.

Artist's Statement:

Many people begin to fly, seeking a dream. But on the way they change or they need to abandon their past, leaving behind them things that are essential in their lives, such as the heat of their land, their native dress, their voice, their dreams. Many of them will never return.



Calvario de la Migrante / Calvary of the Migrant
Samuel Cumes Pop 2018 (17.25 x 13.75 in.)

A Maya woman drags a heavy cross through the perilous desert, seeking refuge in the United States. The American flag is visible far away on the horizon. Her cross bears the inscriptions, “Unemployment” and “Poverty”.

**BONUS Painting—To be displayed inside the Library, near the librarians’ desk
The painting can be accompanied by a pointer to the 2nd floor exhibition.**



Tren de la Muerte / Train of Death
Victor Vasquez Temó 2008 (67 in. x 89 in.)

This powerful painting expresses the immigration hopes and fears of the people of Mexico and Central America—and of the United States. The artist worked on this large canvas for two years.

The work was inspired by a neighbor of the artist, who decided to immigrate illegally to the United States. He climbed aboard the train along with many other refugees, but fell off and the train cut off his leg.

The Textiles



Woman's Native Costume (Traje) from Santiago Atitlán

Cotton

Blouse/Huipil c. 2000 Skirt/Falda c. 1980s

The blouse was woven on a backstrap loom. The multitude of birds on the *huipil* signify Guatemala's diversity of bird species and colors, and may represent bird's days—an important month on the Mayan solar calendar. The flowers around the neckline are a popular pattern borrowed from European and Chinese cultures.

Skirts are worn by wrapping them around the body several times and tucking in the end at the waist. The skirt is woven on a floor loom with *ikat* or *jaspe*, tie-dyed fabric, which usually involves participation from the weaver's entire family to measure, wrap, and tie the fabric in traditional patterns before it is dyed.

The town of Santiago Atitlán was the capital of the Tz'utuhil Maya people in pre-Columbian times, and was then known as Chuitnamit. Franciscan friars arrived during the Conquest in 1547 and built the Church of Santo Tomás on a site sacred to the Maya. The town is located between the Tolimán and San Pedro volcanos. The Mayan Tz'utuhil speakers earn their living from selling textiles, paintings, crafts, raw sugar and fruit.



Woman's Native Costume (Traje) from San Juan Comalapa
Blouse/Huipil Skirt/Falda Belt/Cinta c. 1980s
Cotton

The blouse and sash were woven on a backstrap loom by women in San Juan Comalapa. The blouse is made of two panels sewn together. The stylized diamond-shape bands and the horizontal strips are traditional features of Comalapa *huipiles*.

The skirt in this example was woven on a foot loom—probably by a male weaver—and made from one wide panel and a narrower one. The fabric is wrapped around the body several times and secured with a sash. The *ikat* or *jaspe*, tie-dyed fabric is a labor-intensive process often involving the weaver's entire family to measure, wrap, and tie the thread before it is dyed, in order to yield traditional patterns when it is woven.

San Juan Comalapa is situated on the side of a deep ravine. Before the Spanish Conquest this Kaqchikel town was known as Chi Xot. Franciscan friars arrived in the 16th century.



Woman's Blouse (Huipil) from Chichicastenango
Cotton

Note that this backstrap woven everyday *huipil* is constructed of three panels instead of the traditional two. The sunburst embroidery at the neckline of the blouse is typical of this Maya town.

Chichicastenango is a famed Quiché Maya market town in the highlands north of Lake Atitlán. It was originally named Chaviar before it was colonized in the 16th century by Spanish Catholic friars. The *Popol Vuh*, a Maya book relating the story of creation, was discovered in the town's church of Santo Tomás Apóstol. Chichicastenango is also the location of Pascual Abaj, a major Maya shrine where indigenous religious rituals are still performed today. Many people practice both the Maya religion and Catholicism.



Woman's Blouse (Huipil) from Todos Santos Cuchumatán
Cotton

In this example the three-panel *huipil* has ties at the neck to adjust the opening for the wearer. The diamond pattern seen on this *huipil* unites the universe, sky, and earth.

The Mam Maya town of Todos Santos suffered some of the worst violence during the internal conflict in Guatemala. Immigrants to the United States from this town were given refugee status.

About the Artists

The proposal includes nine contemporary Maya artists, and features the two most prominent indigenous artists in Guatemala.

Pedro Rafaél González Chavajay and Paula Nicho Cúmez

Around 1930 the first two Maya oil painters began painting scenes of their traditions and culture: Rafaél González y González in Tz'utuhil-speaking San Pedro la Laguna, and Andrés Curruchich in Kaqchikel-speaking San Juan Comalapa. By the end of the 1970s a new generation of self-taught Maya artists emerged. The most important of these were the grandson of Rafael González, Pedro Rafaél González Chavajay; and one of a handful of women who painted, Paula Nicho Cúmez, of San Juan Comalapa.

Old Rafaél González painted what he saw. He even included hippie tourists in a painting of a town festival. His grandson Pedro Rafaél is intent on painting the disappearing Maya culture and traditions. Pedro Rafaél never includes people in his paintings who are not wearing traditional Maya attire (*traje*). He always carefully researches the themes of his paintings, talking to the elders in town to make sure that he is depicting the traditions correctly. He paints more slowly and carefully than any of the other artists in town. His paintings are a visual history of the traditions of the Tz'utuhil Maya culture.

Paula Nicho Cúmez was one of eight women artists who were part of a collective of women painters that her future husband, artist Samuel Cúmez Curruchich, helped to form. Samuel had travelled to Oaxaca, Mexico, where he met artists in the surrealist tradition. Paula draws upon her dreams for her paintings. She always paints themes that represent the point of view of a woman, and a Maya. Her paintings always include elements that symbolize important parts of the Maya culture and cosmovision.

These two artists complement each other, and together they provide a rich expression of the Maya culture of Guatemala. Pedro Rafaél documents the outer Maya traditions, while Paula depicts the inner spiritual world.

Works by both of these artists are included in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.

Most of these artists have won awards in Guatemalan national competitions, and several of them have exhibited internationally. For additional biographical information, please refer to www.ArteMaya.com, and the publication *Arte Naif: Pintura Maya Guatemalteca Contemporánea / Contemporary Guatemalan Mayan Painting*, Bilingual Edition, published in 2001 by UNESCO/Fundación Paiz para la Educación y la Cultura.

Julian	Coché Mendoza	Tz'utuhil Maya from San Juan la Laguna. The artist learned to paint from his older brother, Antonio Coché Mendoza, San Juan la Laguna's first Maya painter. Julian briefly studied art at the National Institute in Guatemala City, where he was introduced to Cubism. Mendoza created his own "Maya cubist" style.
Samuel	Cumes Pop	From San Pedro la Laguna, b. 1960. The artist's father was Kaqchikel Maya and his mother Tz'utuhil Maya. He has created his own unique vision and style of painting, quite different from the <i>arte popular</i> of other Maya artists. The trauma he suffered during the time of violence comes out through his surrealist paintings. He is one of just a handful of artists from his town who always have original ideas.
Juan	Fermín González Morales	Tz'utuhil Maya from San Pedro la Laguna. Forced into the military during the time of violence, he was made to fight from a helicopter. He originated the Maya <i>vista del pájaro</i> , or "bird's-eye-view" style of painting, which has been imitated by many other artists.
Lorenzo	González Chavajay	Tz'utuhil Maya from San Pedro la Laguna. The artist was a son of Rafaél González y González,
Mario	González Chavajay	Tz'utuhil Maya from San Pedro la Laguna. The artist is a grandson of Rafaél González y González, and brother of Pedro Rafaél González Chavajay.
Pedro Rafaél	González Chavajay	Tz'utuhil Maya from San Pedro la Laguna, b. 1956. The artist is a grandson of Rafaél González y González, and brother of Mario González Chavajay. Pedro Rafaél was the first Maya painter in San Pedro la Laguna, and perhaps the most prominent Maya artist today.

Juana	López Perén (Juanita López)	Kaqchikel Maya from San Juan Comalapa, b. 1981. A self-taught artist, she likes to paint the customs and traditions of her town.
Paula	Nicho Cúmez	Kaqchikel Maya from San Juan Comalapa, b. 1956. The artist learned to paint in a group of “surrealist” Maya women taught by her future husband, the well-known artist Salvador Cúmez Curruchich. She is the most prominent Maya woman artist, and has earned an international reputation.
Victor	Vasquez Temó	Tz’utuhil Maya from San Juan la Laguna, b. 1968. A self-taught artist, his compositions always have great energy.

Selected Exhibitions, Maya Woman: The Helen Moran Collection

Institution	Title	Dates
Oberlin College Mudd Library Oberlin, OH	<i>La Mujer Maya</i>	March-April, 2011
Cañada College Art Gallery Redwood City, CA	<i>Maya Woman: Life, Art, Hope</i>	April-May, 2011
Overture Center for the Arts Madison, WS	<i>Maya Art: Pedro Rafaél González Chavajay</i>	October, 2012 to January, 2013
Evergreen Valley College Evergreen Gallery San Jose, CA	<i>Maya Woman: Life, Art, Hope</i>	March-April, 2013
City College of San Francisco Mission Campus Lobby San Francisco, CA	<i>Maya Women in Art</i>	August-October, 2013
City College of San Francisco Ocean Campus, Rosenberg Library San Francisco, CA	<i>Maya Women in Art</i>	September, 2013 to February, 2014
City College of San Francisco Civic Center Campus San Francisco, CA	<i>Maya Art and Textiles</i>	November, 2013 to April, 2014
Oakland Public Library Cesar Chavez Branch Oakland, CA	<i>Honoring Our Women Weavers—Maya Paintings and Weavings</i>	March-April, 2014
Northern Illinois University NIU Art Museum De Kalb, IL	<i>Visiones e Historias: Maya Paintings from Guatemala</i>	January-February, 2017
Latino Arts, Inc. Milwaukee, WI	<i>Visiones e Historias: Maya Paintings from Guatemala</i>	March-June, 2017
City College of San Francisco Mission Campus Lobby/Student Council Office San Francisco, CA	<i>Maya Art and Textiles from Guatemala</i>	February-May, 2017