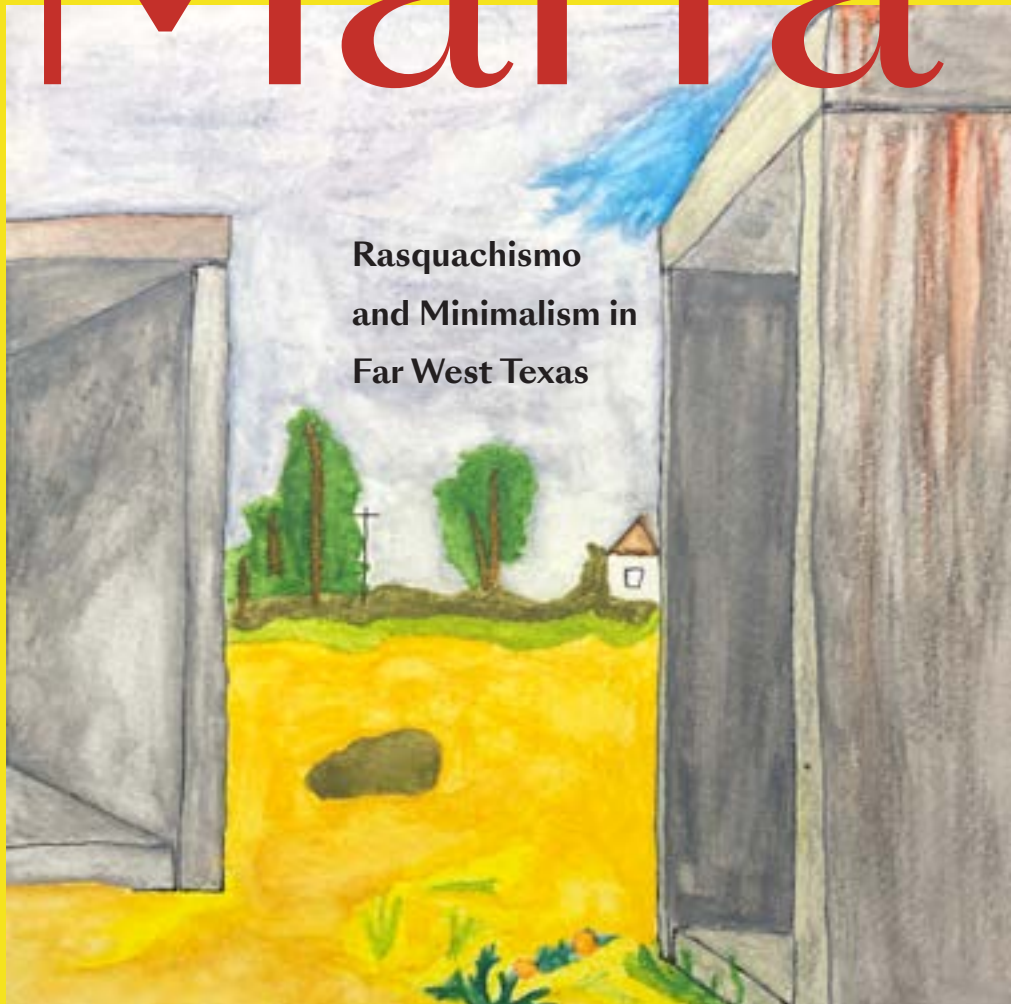


Josh T Franco

Marfa, Marfa

Rasquachismo
and Minimalism in
Far West Texas



Marfa, Marfa



BUY

Marfa, Marfa

Rasquachismo and Minimalism in Far West Texas

Josh T Franco

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Durham and London 2026

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Project Editor: Lisa Lawley

Designed by Dave Rainey

Typeset in Adobe Jenson Pro by Copperline Book Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Franco, Josh T. author

Title: Marfa, Marfa : rasquachismo and minimalism in far West Texas / Josh T Franco.

Other titles: Rasquachismo and minimalism in far West Texas

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2026. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2026003892 (print)

LCCN 2026003893 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478039211 paperback

ISBN 9781478034179 hardcover

ISBN 9781478062745 ebook

Subjects: LCSH: Judd, Donald, 1928–1994—Criticism and interpretation | Art—Texas—Marfa | Mexican American art—

Texas—Marfa | Minimal art—Texas—Marfa | Minimal art |

Decolonization in art | Biculturalism—Texas—Marfa | Marfa (Tex.)

Classification: LCC N6535.M38 F73 2026 (print) |

LCC N6535.M38 (ebook) | DDC 709.764—dc23/eng/20260603

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2026003892>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2026003893>

Cover art: Josh T Franco, *Watercolor Study (Donald Judd, 15 untitled works in concrete, 1980–84)*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.

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This publication has been made possible through support from the Terra Foundation for American Art International Publication Program of CAA.

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Invocation

The following words are intended to be spoken. They were prompted by an invitation to The Ends of American Art Conference hosted by the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Art History Department at Stanford University in November 2014.

One senior art historian—not a conference participant—has since identified my performance as prosopopoeia. I hear him, *con respeto*, while I disagree. Prosopopoeia names the ancient Greek concept of speaking as an object, a *thing*. Here, the thing is not the central action, not the locus from which the voice emanates. For communicability among materialists and art historians (all people who need and love our things), I do offer the being of a plaster construction crafted in an attitude of utter devotion by a man and continuously sweated over by a family and pilgrims. But this is not the thing speaking. It is the transcribed voice of a goddess of the Americas. Not prosopopoeia, but inhabitation, presence, blessing. It is appropriate to light a candle (preferably red) before reading aloud and to blow out the candle following the last word.

★

*Yo soy Guadalupe.
I am Guadalupe.*

In one legend of my birth—my transformation five hundred years ago into a goddess of the Americas—I spoke to a bishop through Juan Diego, a dark-skinned poor man.¹

Here I also speak in partnership with a brown-skinned boy, un hijo mio.

But we do not address a bishop today. Today, we speak to guardians of faith in something else, something called art. Their faith is in crisis.

From where I live in this plaster form, sheltered by this altered bathtub—this altar-ed bathtub—mounted on rocks, I have come to know something of the art you guard.² (This speaking boy loves it too.)

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How did I come to know?

*Porque yo soy La Guadalupe de Marfa, Tejas.
I am the Guadalupe of Marfa, Texas.*

I first heard this place in the prayers of la familia Sanchez, appearing first to the father, Hector.³ (Why am I always revealing myself to men?) The Sanchez family lives in this house. They take care of me.

This boy who speaks has a grandfather. The grandfather was himself a boy in this yard. I called this speaking boy back to this dirt-grass patch of ancestral land. I called him because I want to know more about this vecino, my neighbor.

*First: What is his name? The boy gives two syllables:
“Don” y “Judd.”
I cannot believe that is all.*

*My own name goes on forever in comparison: Coatlicue–Cihuacoatl–
Tlazolteotl–Tonantzin–Coatlalopeuh–Morena–Guadalupe...*

“But he’s not exactly your neighbor,” says the boy. “He died. About three years before you showed up here. But those are his things you look at all day. And all the people coming in and out of those gates are here because of him.”

“Oh,” I sound. I know what it’s like to have pilgrims. Mine come less often now. I was more popular when I was new in town and living as a flicker in the trunk of this tree here. I was in the newspaper and everything.

El Vecino Judd’s pilgrims come every day. I watch them walk around his things. Those blocks are so tall. It must hurt their necks to look up. Some pilgrims fit inside them standing. The blocks are made of concrete, so similar to what makes me in this form.

I watch the blocks change from almost white to dark gray every day. Sometimes red, when the sun is red, but then everything is red, even the yellow grass.

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*The blocks sit so still. They make shadows that split the light around them
sharply.
Every edge a sundial.*

*At night they are lit by the moon. The sky is clear most nights in this desert.
The boy tells me El Vecino Judd loved natural light. He would never flip a
switch if he didn't have to. Did he know that the natural light at night comes
from my daughter Coyolxuaqui? I don't look upward so much (the prayers
at my feet keep me busy), but I know she's there because of her light.*

*People leave my neighbor's place with all kinds of faces. Some are so happy!
Like they've never seen such things with their eyes, but they already had in
their hearts. Plenty leave angry, muttering under their breath, "That is not
art . . ." They all leave different than when they entered.*

*I wonder if people think I am art? People are led to me by their spirit, not
necessarily their eyes (though much effort was given to make me beautiful,
and for that I thank the Sanchez family). The boy read me a passage once,
some words of El Vecino Judd's, all about things like the blocks and the spirit
world. I remember a little bit:*

*"All forms are spiritual . . . Art must . . . be general, but at the same time out
of the ordinary."⁴*

*I don't think I am very ordinary, so does that mean I must be art? But
perhaps I am not "general" enough. Maybe you can tell me, guardians. I am
curious, if not terribly concerned. Let's let some nights pass. I am here for a
while, cemented and sunbaked in place.*

*I notice something: The other pilgrims leave no ofrendas! No talismans for
mi vecino. No food. No little tin drawings. Not even a little pile of rocks.
They do take. They take pictures.*

*Are they pilgrims if they leave nothing? Ofrendas remind me what people
pray for: the little girl leaves a flower for her lost cat; the old man a cigarette's
worth of tobacco for a job. What kind of blessings do El Vecino Judd's
pilgrims ask?*

But I guess he's not there to receive prayers. The boy says he didn't really believe like that, he thinks not anyway. But who really knows? Mi vecino's body resides in a simple pine box farther out in the desert. Like the furniture in his casitas, the pine box was made by those who knew him well. Putting things together like this—with materials from nearby and all by hand and learning as you go . . . El Vecino Judd's daughter calls it "DIR." I call it "rasquache." Rasquachismo built my own little bathtub-house.

So my neighbor is gone, and we will never meet. In town are just his things. Not "just" . . . they are interesting things. They give me a lot to think about every day.

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Introduction

Rasquachismo, Minimalism

In many respects, the rasquache defiance of Chicano art production has served as an anecdotal history for a community repudiated and denied in institutional history within the nation as a whole.

—Amalia Mesa-Bains, “Domesticana”

In the context of Minimalism and Modern art, rasquachismo is more than an oppositional form; it is a militant praxis of resistance to hegemonic standards in the art world.

—Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master’s House*

Minimalist sculpture is a badgering, unavoidable presence, waiting to be acknowledged.

—Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia*

Why Minimalism and rasquachismo should be considered side-by-side, or “cara a cara,” is a driving question of this book.¹ This question is answered by citing and site-ing the town of Marfa, Texas. Responding to this question also results in queering art-historical practice. It does so not by identifying queer iconographies or hidden queer histories—though such uncovering is welcome—but by disrupting “the very means of locating stable meaning, let alone identity, at any given work’s root.”² In Marfa, what is an object of pilgrimage to some is invisible to others; what is art to a few is an alien form to audiences who never sought it; what looks like mere survival from the outside expresses a communal and creative sensibility for those who practice it; and what is high Minimalism to some is DIY to still others. Of course, time shifts and blurs all first impressions. By the end of this book, I hope the reader’s vi-

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sion is blurred, “rasquachified,” so that they can perceive fuller, more complex pictures of the town “pulled through” studies of the artworks in question.³

GETTING TO MARFA

My own history with Marfa begins before I was born. In the 1940s and 1950s my grandfather, Hipolito “Polé” Hernandez, and his immediate family were farmworkers. Marfa was home base between seasonal migrations west as cotton- and fruit-picking seasons dictated. As a young adult, Hernandez moved to nearby Odessa, Texas, where he worked for thirty-five years as a forklift operator at General Tire & Rubber Co. All four of my grandparents moved from smaller towns in the area to Odessa, where they raised their children. My own childhood in Odessa was punctuated with trips to Fort Stockton, Alpine, and Marfa to visit family who still resided in those towns. During these many excursions in my first twenty or so years of life, I became familiar with Marfa as a somewhat boring, nostalgic, almost silent place.⁴ I was sometimes engaged, sometimes irritated as my Caló ears struggled to converse with exclusively Spanish-speaking relatives. We ate excellent home-made Mexican food. My parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents sat around discussing a great-grandmother and other long-ago relatives whom I would never know. (I was made keenly aware on which side of the border each was born.) Some of these relatives are buried in Marfa’s cemeteries. One of my cousins married into a ranching family for whom Marfa provides the nearest civic services and social life. As older connections between our family and Marfa pass on, new ones form.

For those not familiar with Marfa, none of this is remarkable. The initiated, those who have made this journey, are likely awaiting my acknowledgment of the town’s behemoths: Donald Judd, Minimalism, and contemporary art. The delay echoes my experience. Often written up in publications like *Vanity Fair*, *W Magazine*, and *New York Times Travel*, Marfa is popularly perceived as an outpost of Manhattan in Far West Texas.⁵ It is a node in a global network of post-1945 art destinations that has achieved pilgrimage status. Pilgrims are initially drawn by the significant collections of Minimalist works at the Judd Foundation and the Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati (hereafter referred to as Chinati). Judd moved to Marfa around 1972, and subsequent years have witnessed a significant increase in tourism and relocation there by other artists.⁶ According to then—Associate Director Rob Weiner,

Chinati alone received more than ten thousand visitors between 2011 and 2012, more than quadruple the number of residents who call Marfa home.⁷ If “during the sixties, the relationship of the avant-garde and commerce was as reciprocal and sustaining as it had ever been,” this commerce now includes auspicious travel (and generating documentation in the form of social media) to such anointed destinations as Marfa.⁸

While my route to Marfa typically involves driving south and slightly west from Odessa in a car with parents, siblings, and often cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents as well, people drawn by Judd and contemporary art most often drive into town from the opposite direction. They fly into El Paso, where they rent a car. Those with friends in town might be fortunate enough to have someone pick them up at the airport. In either case, they depart the airport and drive east, leaving behind the mountains that surround El Paso for a flatter desert landscape that becomes slightly mountainous again three hours later as they near Marfa. Passing Elmgreen & Dragset’s *Prada Marfa* (discussed in chapter 2) on their right signals that they will arrive in Marfa within the next half hour. When they encounter the first intersection with traffic lights, their host might inform them that this is in fact the only traffic light. From this intersection, the heart of town, they’ll note the picturesque Presidio County Courthouse to their left and US Route 67 unfurling into the southern horizon to their right.

Marfa’s population oscillates from census to census around the two thousand mark. A drive from one end of town to the other takes a matter of minutes. Everything is “close,” physically, but a geography of social consciousness pictures different experiences of proximity and distance in Marfa. My grandfather’s childhood home shares a small traffic circle with three landmarks: Marfa’s public housing complex, a US Border Patrol headquarters, and the first entrance to Judd’s public collection, Chinati. Yet I grew up completely unaware of Judd’s presence. It was an unacknowledged layer, a tourist and art world concern, or so I might have conceived it if I had even realized that many of the white people, los gringos, we encountered were tourists and art folk. Marfa did not mean Minimalism for me until I undertook an art history major in college. Marfa, for my family, was never avant-garde. It was and is rasquache through and through (though I would also not learn of this word until much later, undertaking my own process of “Chicanization”).⁹ Thus, Minimalism and rasquachismo constitute the dual site, the palimpsest, from which I begin.



FIGURE I.1 Detail of Donald Judd's 15 *untitled works in concrete*, 1980–84, one of fifteen groupings arranged in a line over approximately one mile. Photo: Florian Holzherr and Douglas Tuck. Donald Judd Art © 2025 Judd Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

In this book, I sketch some of Marfa's histories and the encounters they make possible today in order to articulate the spatializations and aestheticizations that produce the town socially, both on the actual streets of Marfa and in the social realms in which it is inscribed elsewhere. As an art historian, I begin from analyses of artworks and arts-based institutions' roles in producing the town. However, other key institutions are addressed, including the US military, the US Border Patrol, the railroad and ranching industries, and the Catholic Church.

I do not have only theoretical "sites" in mind. My thinking began from direct observation of sculptural proximity. Judd's 15 *untitled works in concrete* (1980–84) are situated outdoors less than a third of a mile from an altar in the backyard of my grandfather's childhood home (figures I.1 and I.2). The altar was built by Hector Sanchez, whose family still resides in the house. It comprises a hand-painted statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a stone-encrusted, upturned bathtub housing her, and a shallow, cemented grotto at her feet.¹⁰ Sanchez constructed the shrine to honor an apparition of Guadalupe that ap-



FIGURE I.2 Hector Sanchez, altar for the Virgin of Guadalupe, Marfa, Texas, 1997.

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peared to him and a companion in the fall of 1997.¹¹ She appeared nocturnally as a white, slowly moving figure embedded in the trunk of the tree that now presides over her less ephemeral sculptural form. Were it not for her downcast eyes and the wall around Chinati (evidence of its former purpose as a US military base), Judd's untitled works in concrete would be directly in her sight. They remain locked in this configuration today.

While at the outset of this work the analytic coupling of Minimalism and rasquachismo seemed a novelty relevant to Marfa alone, other historical moments and contemporary sites continue to reveal themselves as already having addressed the same or similar concerns, if only obliquely in some instances.¹² Together, they are a slowly revealing constellation that shifts the established bearings by which Minimalist art and work called Chicanx art are navigated. A recent additional complication in nomenclature is the spreading use of the *x* in *Chicanx* and *Latinx*. I use *Chicanx* in this book for both its welcomed disruption of gender legibility and its graphic cleanness relative to the alternative, *Chicana/o*. Readers may consider the *x* an expanded container that includes the *o* and the *a* rather than outright rejecting them, especially in instances where the word is used to refer to art in historical contexts where it was not an option at the time. This allows me to deploy the *x* asynchronously, but not ahistorically. *Chicana* and *Chicano* do remain in direct quotations; proper names of institutions, movements, publications, and so on; and where the preference of a described individual is known. Finally, the *x* forces reflection on the linguistic border zone in which many Latinxs in the United States live; if read in Spanish, one would pronounce *x* as "ch," and in English it is inherently awkward. Welcome to the experience of living between languages, a feature shared by much Chicanx artistic production discussed here. There is no easy resolution.

But there is little Chicanx art in Marfa. That is, one does not think of Marfa's galleries and institutions when one thinks of the typical locales where such work incubates: Los Angeles, San Antonio, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, San Francisco, San Diego, and so on.¹³ Chicanx artists have occasionally exhibited work in Marfa, and one of these uncharacteristic and particularly auspicious instances is addressed in chapter 3.¹⁴ *Art* here signals the production of works sponsored, collected, or otherwise sanctioned by curatorial intention and located in self-identified galleries, arts residencies, or museums. Few artists who identify as Chicanx maintain studios in Marfa, and none of the institutions there explicitly serve Chicanx or Latinx aesthetic concerns.¹⁵ So the question

must be asked again, slightly reworked: If there is (almost) no Chicane art in Marfa, how does it demonstrate the need for thinking about the histories of Minimalism and Chicane art together?

While decreasing, the majority of Marfa's population remains identified as "Hispanic," presumably most of whom are Chicane, Mexican Americans, or Mexican immigrants (50.8 percent).¹⁶ Many Marfa residents, including my own relatives, speak norteño Spanish or a Tejano mix of Spanish and English at home. It is this population's production of objects for public display, domestic observations, Spanish-English Caló, and various daily habits that lay the grounds on which I make my argument for Marfa's key position as a site for considering Minimalism and Chicane art alongside one another. This heterogeneous "compendium of all the movidas [roughly, 'tactics'] deployed in immediate, day-to-day living" was first formally brought under the rubric of "rasquachismo" by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto.¹⁷ In these everyday practices, he locates the origin of formal and conceptual characteristics that would later be recontextualized as components of Chicane art upon the latter's entry into academia, museums, and galleries.

Ybarra-Frausto was not the first to deploy rasquachismo, but he was the first to theorize it on paper for an art world readership.¹⁸ He calls it "one form of a Chicano vernacular, the verbal-visual code we use to speak to each other among ourselves."¹⁹ Beginning with literature in the 1920s such as Daniel Venegas's novel *Las aventuras de Don Chipote, o, cuando los pericos mamen* (1928), Ybarra-Frausto shows us the working-class, immigrant roots of rasquachismo. What readers take away from his description is that a rasquache attitude confronts the everyday with more than is needed to survive it. This is done through an innovative approach to the materials provided by circumstance, "tenacity and adaptability," and a certain valued locura, madness.

In the 1930s and 1940s carpas (tent shows) and tandas de variedad (vaudeville shows) traveled across the Southwest United States, further spreading a rasquache aesthetic. Rasquachismo here was deployed by the peladitas and peladitos. According to Ybarra-Frausto, for these characters—the Chicane "everyman" and "everywoman" of their time—rasquachismo was a way to reconceive the everyday, presented first as a struggle for survival, then as a site of vitality and sustenance. On the ground, this reconception takes the form of movidas, which are "the coping strategies you use to gain time, to make options, to retain hope."²⁰ When did the relationship begin between these lived quotidian movidas and what gets sanctioned, institutionalized, as art?

In the 1960s and 1970s, as Chicanxs turned “inward to explore, decipher, and interpret elements from the Chicano cultural matrix, artists and intellectuals found strength and recovered meaning in the layers of everyday practices.”²¹ Artists, including myself, continue turning inward in the extant, in flux “cultural matrix” of Chicanismo. In a note, Ybarra-Frausto identifies some artists by name, providing examples of rasquachismo that inspired his foundational essay. David Ávalos’s *Hubcap Milagro #3* is included in the list.²²

Ávalos’s wall-mounted mixed-media work comprises an amputated trunk of a gutted male figure, a hubcap, two flanking shot glasses serving as votive candleholders containing upright, erect lipsticks, and a stainless-steel rotary saw blade positioned as the figure’s halo (figure I.3). Beneath the void left by the eviscerated core, sculptural testicles adorned with a carved, flaccid penis in low relief protrude between muscular thighs. A heart is carved into his torso, pierced by crude nails. Ávalos’s piece strikes me as an allegory of the project of this book. Imagine a figure: She is educated in the United States as an art historian in the early twenty-first century, familiar with the canonical works of the previous century and armed with knowledge of historical precedents and formal vocabulary to aptly analyze unfamiliar works of the present. Were this scholar to come across *Hubcap Milagro #3* without title or curatorial context, she might easily locate it within the histories of avant-garde assemblage, kitsch, and queer art. Jasper Johns and Joseph Cornell might be immediate references for the combinatory forms. The upright lipstick would hearken in her mind to Claes Oldenburg’s 1969 *Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks*.

Nothing is necessarily wrongheaded about our fictional art historian’s interpretation. For one, records show that Ávalos was impressed by Oldenburg well before he created *Hubcap Milagro #3*.²³ It is quite possible he was aware of Oldenburg’s much publicized installation at Yale, in which a monumental pneumatic lipstick component is central.²⁴ Similar to the relationship between lipstick and the masculine-coded military vehicle on which Oldenburg’s work sits, the lipstick in *Hubcap Milagro #3* complicates the gender codes by which one might read the piece. It contrasts almost comically with the bald head and robust torso of the masculine figure supported by the macho signifiers of hubcaps and rotary saws. Furthermore, as an assemblage of found objects and obscure signifiers produced in 1980s Southern California, it certainly locates itself comfortably within well-established North American art practices. Aptly enough, then, our viewer situates *Hubcap Milagro #3*



FIGURE I.3 David Ávalos, *Hubcap Milagro* #3, 1985.

within the canon with which she is familiar. Yet this reading does not precisely identify the fuller, conflicting historical conditions that might also account for Ávalos's work.

Ybarra-Frausto identifies *Hubcap Milagro* #3 as an auspiciously *rasquache* work. Why? Not all of Ávalos's assembled objects are as "found," or arbitrarily selected, as our viewer might assume. In the world of vernacular Mexican American Catholicism, a *milagro* is a small devotional object, often hammered out of tin or other cheap metals into the shape of an animal or an image representing the devotee's object of prayer. In that context, the rotary saw blade takes on new significance: *Formed of metal and useful for forming metal*, it both demonstrates and short-circuits the practice of *milagro*-

making. The raunchy, critical humor of the uncapped, deployed lipsticks standing erect on either side of the unnervingly barely there presence of an etched penis—above which the saw blade glintingly menaces—reads as a comment on the constructedness of gender through socially coded genitalia and maquillage, but also more than that.²⁵ In the context of popular Mexican Catholicism, they also stand as potential critiques of homophobia and colonially imported organizations of the social through racialized gender disseminated and policed by the Church.

This irreverence is further grounded in the hubcap's allusion to lowrider culture. The practice of lowriding sets US Chicanxs apart from *la gente por el otro lado*, that is, from Mexican national identity present south of the border. To conservative Mexicans, as well as assimilationist and conservative Mexican Americans, lowriding demonstrates the deterioration of traditional Mexican values resulting from the ongoing Americanization of migrant Mexican youth. Together, the eviscerated gut, nearly absent phallus, discharged lipsticks, rotary saw, and hubcap circle the Catholic symbol of the sacred heart at the work's center. Menacingly and comically, they cloud the object's legibility: sacred or profane? Earnest or ironic? *Rasquachismo* suspends these questions.

But our not-wrongheaded novice art historian would miss the opportunities presented by such suspensions. Beyond indicting art history yet again for what has been continually devalued by omission, this fictional encounter raises the question of whether it would be possible, or even desirable, for art history to incorporate the differential ways of knowing and seeing that are necessary to understand a *rasquache* aesthetic. Canonical terms art historians receive in training are most often Eurocentric ones delivered as universals. These terms can cross borders freely, their fluidity sanctioned by dominant histories. This occurs, for instance, when an art critic calls the activity of neo-Indigenous Nahuatl-speaking *danzantes* in Texas “performance art” and few bat an eye. In contrast, if the work of an artist like Thomas Hirschhorn were described as “*rasquache*,” most readers would be curious at best while, at worst, the critic would be accused of producing nonsense. The operation, in other words, is firmly unidirectional. In a *rasquache* spirit, the various “incorporations” of the differential modes of seeing that enliven Chicanx art (and perhaps a Chicanx art history) are deployed here as *movidas* geared toward thriving beyond survival in the discipline, and beyond a desire for inclusion within institutions of art and higher education. In this book, these *movidas* are equally applied to Minimalism.

So, what of Minimalism in this conversation? Pamela M. Lee characterizes Minimalism's presence as "badgering."²⁶ She makes her argument within a well-known lineage of those who have felt berated by Minimalist works, beginning with Michael Fried.²⁷ Judd himself voiced frustration and disavowal, not of the works but of the association itself. According to him, "There was in no way a group at all."²⁸ But Minimalism's apparently confrontational nature has ignited others outside this heavily trafficked art-historical genealogy of art historians and artists. Bringing other viewers' critical positions into art history will alter how we understand that genealogy. I want to evince the significance of doing so and the fact that I am not the first to see how Minimalism and *rasquachismo* are foils, though I extend this observation substantially. Further argument as to why Marfa matters for Chicana art, even though no significant body of Chicana art resides here, is embedded in this evidence.

THREE DEGREES OF RASQUACHISMO

Besides the canonical litany of those perturbed by the insistent presence of Minimalist works, Chicana cultural theorist Alicia Gaspar de Alba also felt badgered. Before attending to her indictment of Minimalism, I turn our attention to her elucidation of the connections between Chicana vernacular aesthetics and their significance for community formation, keeping in mind the communities of Marfa. In a significant structural expansion of *rasquachismo*, Gaspar de Alba identified works like Ávalos's as "third-degree *rasquache*," following Celeste Olalquiaga's formulation of three degrees of kitsch:

"Third-degree kitsch" includes icons and paraphernalia that have been recycled by the art world in the makings of "happenings," assemblages, and mixed-media installations. In Chicano/a and Latino/a art, this takes the form of *altares*. . . . This artistic installation differs from home altars of the first-degree kind, says Olalquiaga. "As a recent exhibition title suggests, the recasting of altars is often meant as a 'ceremony' that invests them with a new political signification and awareness." . . . Third-degree *rasquachismo* . . . informs the work of Chicano and Chicana artists—writers, musicians, filmmakers, and other producers of culture.²⁹

Here, via Olalquiaga, Gaspar de Alba presents a description of *rasquachismo* that honors its origins while reflecting the multilevel experiences of it relevant when she was writing in the 1990s. Those origins are in the "everyday"

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movidas theorized by Ybarra-Frausto a few years before. While he looked back to a set of references from the first half of the twentieth century, Gaspar de Alba addresses the situation from the perspective of her own time, when for an increasing (if still relatively low) number of Chicanxs, subjectivity was less likely to be formed through farmwork and other rural and working-class experiences than through popular culture and formal education. In her address she does not leave behind Ybarra-Frausto's references but links them indelibly with her own through the reorganization of the category into degrees. Her words continue to inform rasquache practices today, continually reaffirming the productive value of her renovation.

Particularly valuable in Gaspar de Alba's restructuring of rasquachismo is its opening up of possibilities for relation between Chicanxs who have had, and chosen to remain involved in, the experience of higher education and adjacent intellectual cultures and those who have not. These are often prominent intrafamilial distinctions, and thus Gaspar de Alba's framework becomes *intimately* valuable and not merely structurally, academically interesting. Her work provides a tool for avoiding the bankrupt understanding of such situations as standoffs between cultural/familial "traitors" and those who uncritically reproduce Chicanx cultures, exacerbating their ossification into heteronormative, multicultural ornament. I do not discount the vernacular Guadalupe of Marfa who appeared at the site of my grandfather's childhood home because I have a PhD in art history. Rather, working within the structures established by Ybarra-Frausto and Gaspar de Alba, I embrace this loaded, site-specific sculpture using the tools from all my realms of experience: my Chicanx upbringing and higher education. Theorist Gloria E. Anzaldúa writes about an analogous position in the context of feminisms of white women and women of color: "I can write . . . and yet I realize that many of us women of color who have strung [academic] degrees, credentials and published books around our necks like pearls that we hang onto for dear life are in danger of contributing to the invisibility of our sister-writers. 'La Vendida,' the sell-out."³⁰ First- and third-degree rasquachismo provide richer starting points for speaking across these distinctions than the framework of "sell-outs" and "real" Chicanxs, even if the trope of selling out cannot be completely denied. Having three degrees of rasquachismo allows one to stand outside this trope to revise it creatively and communally or simply to reject it.

Returning to the terms in an art context, the breakdown of rasquachismo into three degrees is key for clarifying the communal connection between

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what might otherwise seem politically and aesthetically disparate productions. For example, on one hand, there are third-degree works like Ávalos's, exhibited in contemporary art spaces, while on the other, there are first-degree private milagros and milagro-bearing altars in homes, yards, cemeteries, and churches throughout Latin America and the United States, including in West Texas. It is not that the third degree demonstrates a higher level of self-consciousness or artfulness than the first, despite the implication of a graduated scaling. Rather, the degrees are distinguished by different sites and intended audiences; they are shaped by different but closely related experiences of coloniality that manifest along a spectrum of identity constructions understood, if often contradictorily, as Chicana. ³¹ Often the material results appear dramatically different. If they do share morphological vocabularies, as in the case of altars, which have a growing art-world audience, they are physically and/or contextually *sited* at radical distances from one another (a white cube rather than a yard, for instance). However, first- and third-degree rasquachismo share a commonality in resisting and creatively exceeding ongoing processes of subjugation and other lasting colonial traumas. Gaspar de Alba began the project of articulating a rasquachismo relevant to Chicana artists and scholars at the end of the twentieth century, finding words for negotiations of the everyday that are *not* marked by certain experiences of labor, religion, and rural life that fueled, for instance, the Chicano Movement. ³² As noted, they are often instead inflected by experiences of urban environments, higher education, and increasingly globalized information traffic. As is the case in my family, first-degree practitioners are often the parents and grandparents of those who express themselves in the third. The degrees are felt and lived cyclically rather than linearly, as elders witness and the young remember our elders' accounts, fantastically and politically interpreting them through our own daily living situations and creative practices.

FACING MINIMALISM

Gaspar de Alba directly pits rasquachismo against Minimalism: "In the context of Minimalism and Modern art, rasquachismo is more than an oppositional form; it is a militant praxis of resistance to hegemonic standards in the art world."³³ Why, among the myriad other labels for postwar and contemporary art in the 1990s, does she single out Minimalism, along with "Modern art," as the aesthetic against which rasquachismo is cast as a "militant" defi-

ance? For one, many art historians have demonstrated that Minimalism and Modernism were never very friendly, even among themselves.³⁴ The line in the sand drawn by Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood" article in 1967 was precisely between these two camps (in many ways, it distinguished them as distinct camps in the first place), and Judd is indeed a named enemy in his writing. I choose to examine Gaspar de Alba's reading at length, however, due to her position in American and Chicana studies and in order to bring those fields in contact with the trajectories of these ideas in art history. These are important border crossings to undertake to create conditions in which these fields inform rather than ignore one another.

Taking the statement as it is given, then, Gaspar de Alba interprets Minimalism as the most exemplary form of a discriminatory Modernism.³⁵ If we give ourselves over momentarily to the most popular characterizations of Minimalism's forms she may have had in mind, her reasons become clearer: By the 1990s when Gaspar de Alba wrote, Minimalism had become a referent for multiple design fields from fashion to furniture, its formal qualities codified in terms of pristine materials, an austere approach to color, rectilinear profiles, hard surfaces, and a visual echo of architectural surrounds. In *rasquachismo*, on the other hand, "Aesthetic expression comes from discards, fragments, even recycled everyday materials such as tires, broken plates, plastic containers recombined with elaborate and bold display . . . and even embellishment of the car. The capacity to hold life together with bits of string, old coffee cans, and broken mirrors in a dazzling gesture of aesthetic bravado is at the heart of *rasquachismo*."³⁶ It is clear why, to Gaspar de Alba, Minimalism *appeared* diametrically opposite to *rasquachismo*. Their contrasting approaches to space and materials—and the cultural meanings ascribed to them—constituted some of the stakes of battles being waged in the 1980s and 1990s across institutions of art and higher education, battles in which she participated. The 1992 exhibition *CARA: Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation*, Gaspar de Alba's case study, was itself a prominent negotiation between a "mainstream" art institution—in this case the Wight Art Gallery—and the creative production of "a community repudiated and denied in institutional history within the nation as a whole"; that is, *Chicanxs*.³⁷

Yet within the catalogue of the exhibition the grounds of this opposition are already questioned:

There is an irony here—if you are in a position to enjoy it: those who never made it till now arrive to find the Museum in ruins. . . . But it gets

worse. They arrive to find their identity already gone, their Culture in fragments, their Nationhood dispersed, and their Monuments reduced to canonical rubble. The site they were to occupy is nothing but a razed discursive plane. Welcome to the New Art History. There is room for everyone and a place for none.³⁸

Penned jointly by Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino and John Tagg, the essay that opens with these words is ultimately about the futility of capturing or curating identity within the context of the museum. It is not necessarily mired throughout in the glib nihilism suggested by this pithy first paragraph. It does, however, contend with the solidity that Gaspar de Alba's statement assumes. If the museum is in ruins, the canon reduced to rubble, casting *rasquachismo* as "a militant praxis of resistance to hegemonic standards in the art world" rings quixotic. Yet Tagg's and Sanchez-Tranquilino's earnest participation in *CARA* and continued investment in Chicana art does evince some faith in the category (to match that of Gaspar de Alba) or better said, in projects that continue to struggle against and with the grain of Chicana identity formation through visual presentation.

More than a decade after *CARA* and Gaspar de Alba's study, film and Chicana art scholar Chon A. Noriega writes, "History is a palimpsest and not just the story of the victors; and one does not undo the victor's history as much as weave one's writing into and around the other stories."³⁹ This comes from his introductory essay for an anthology of key texts from the Chicana studies journal *Aztlán*, in whose pages Chicana artists have been a major presence alongside debates around Chicana aesthetic sensibilities. Throughout the essay, the mechanics of wrenching concessions from power (and acknowledging what power requires in return for conceding) are reconsidered. Noriega cites Emma Pérez's concluding line in *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*: "Forget the Alamo," Pérez closes in serious jest. Many of the spaces Chicanas now hold, especially in higher education, were ceded due to the militant spirit of scholar-activists. In citing this line here, Noriega complements that militancy with "laughter."⁴⁰ He also points out that forgetting is its own kind of memory. Both moves demonstrate the central role paradox plays in the history, analysis, and production of Chicana thought and art—be it "popular," "contemporary," "vernacular," or "fine."

In Marfa, it is crucial to note that there are social and physical walls around fine art and that many, both locals and visitors, are intimidated. I have felt it. My family has felt it. Sometimes harsh, *militant* statements draw-

ing lines in the sand feel necessary. I refuse to disavow the capacity of these stances to make it possible for one to survive, to shore up a sense of self in the presence of objects that seem alien and threatening at times, especially when one finds them in spaces considered utterly familiar—home—prior to the strange encounter. Is it possible to “forget” Marfa? It is clear that, in recent history, Judd’s story has been the dominant story of Marfa outside the town. Forgetting, as Pérez deploys it, is a historical method that makes weaving one’s stories “into and around” the dominant one an act of complexly relating to power without conceding to it and without uncritically turning a blind eye to its badgering presence. The chapters of this book are such acts of weaving.

DIFRASISMO, DOMESTICANA, AND DECOLONIALITY

The title of my book, *Marfa, Marfa*, and the chapter titles demonstrate the unique Nahua literary trope of difrasismo. I deploy this trope as a titling device following Laura E. Pérez’s example. She describes difrasismo’s function as maintaining “the sometimes culturally untranslatable coexistence of . . . non-canonized aesthetic systems and the philosophies and larger social imaginaries in which these are embedded.”⁴¹ Thus, difrasismo is one way in which I attempt to articulate my insistence on the uneven multiplicity of Marfa. This introduction positions “Minimalism, Rasquachismo” as the overarching difrasismo of the project, within which each of the following chapters has its place.

While the dialogue between third-degree rasquachismo and Minimalism is not entirely unfamiliar—it is rather well populated if one knows the signs to look for—the dialogue between first-degree work and Minimalism is seemingly nonexistent. The chapter “Pilgrim, Approach” stages one of these conversations, called for by the existence of an altar dedicated to an apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe neighboring Judd’s public collection of his own and his contemporaries’ permanently installed works at Chinati.

Chapter 2, “Marfa, Aztlán,” begins from a recognition that Marfa is socially, commercially, and aesthetically inscribed in spaces far beyond West Texas. This reterritorialization is one of the primary mechanisms through which the town has become associated with certain art worlds and social realms also associated with art destinations like New York City; Beacon, New York; Joshua Tree, California; Santa Fe, New Mexico; and other sites that currently hold some status for contemporary art goers. This chapter does

not deny those associations but recognizes that Marfa is also sited in Aztlán. This is the name mythically given to the Southwest of the United States by Nahuatl-speaking peoples who migrated through the area, ultimately settling in what is now Mexico City. Chicanxs in the United States have appropriated the notion of this territory through political action, literature, performance, and visual art since the 1970s. In this chapter I present the tools and language needed to reinterpret art produced in Marfa as produced in Aztlán.

The third chapter, “Making, Aesthetics,” takes cues from a community of scholars and artists engaged in the project of decolonizing aesthetics. This chapter dissolves a distinction between so-called natural processes of making and making as undertaken by artists in Marfa, specifically Donald Judd. Tim Ingold’s theorizing of making provides language for articulating this particular project and connecting it with the concerns of those attempting to decolonize aesthetics.

The conclusion reflects the increasing role of yards and yard art. Consciously reinterpreting West Texas as a network of yards—sites of idiosyncratic and personal creativity that are almost always on view for the wider world—produced surprising new visions and modes of thinking. The conclusion of this chapter and the book is a demonstration of “hanging out” in these sites. Through conversations with two fellow travelers, art historians Jana La Brasca and Max Tolleson, readers are given a glimpse of what it means not only to write about and historicize Marfa but actually to be there, lovingly and in great company.

In her project of distinguishing kitsch from rasquachismo (a response to Ybarra-Frausto’s essay), artist and scholar Amalia Mesa-Bains is led to invent a neologism: domesticana. Like Gaspar de Alba, she is also responding critically to Olalquiaga, particularly countering the latter’s framing of religious iconography in some women artists’ work. Unlike in Olalquiaga’s formulation, “For Mesa-Bains, the use of religious figures and motifs is not purely ironic, not entirely a question of opportunistic *détournement*. Rather the work connotes the sacred *and* the secular, the political *and* the transcendental, the feminist *and* the pious.”⁴² For femme-spectrum Chicana artists, practicing domesticana, a feminist rasquachismo, means inhabiting a tense space between affirmation of women’s typical domestic activity and “resistance to the subjugation of women in the [same] domestic sphere.”⁴³ There is an emphasis on “ephemeral, site-specific works,” and most of the work “elaborates on traditional forms such as the reliquary, capilla [small, outdoor chapel], domestic

memories of bedroom altars, vanity dressers, ofrendas . . . , and everyday reflections of femininity and glamour.”⁴⁴ Paradox is crucial to successfully practicing this simultaneous reverence for and resistance to aspects of women’s roles in domestic life. Mesa-Bains looks to her own work and that of Patricia Rodriguez and Patssi Valdez for examples of such paradoxical work that, “unlike kitsch, seeks not an appropriation of low over high but in fact a state from within Chicanx culture.”⁴⁵ The attitude with which I write and the methods in which I work are aligned with this “new domesticana defiance.” I do not promote appropriation, translation, or revolution in Marfa. Instead, I articulate an inhabitation of “fractured loci of enunciation” within and significantly constituted by the multiplicity of a town.⁴⁶ The voice of the book is reverent *and* resistant. Functioning as a difrasismo comprising many difrasismos, this work addresses the fields of Minimalism, rasquachismo, Chicanx studies, American studies, and art history broadly not in the name of synthesis or mutual transparency but for something else: the possible expression of a “decolonial aestheTic/aestheSis.” This notion is reintroduced in the penultimate chapter, where the book is situated within the context of the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD) collective.

Thinkers and concepts associated with MCD recur throughout this book, particularly when considering the relationships between art, aesthetics, and radically different purposes for making and displaying objects. One advantage of turning to MCD is access to thought that provides a different, complementary sense of the paradoxes offered by Chicanx art scholars such as Mesa-Bains, Sanchez-Tranquilino, Tagg, Noriega, and Pérez. In particular, I have in mind MCD scholar María Lugones’s essay “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception.” Lugones speaks to and within an audience of women of color yearning for coalition among themselves. Forming this coalition is difficult, however. A central difficulty is unlearning to perceive one another from “arrogant” perspectives of domination; that is, as beings who can be and are “grafted” to one’s own existence as abuse-able, servile, ignore-able, and available without qualification. Lugones tells us she learned this lesson first as a child growing up with a domestically bound mother (including her own active role in this binding) and observing the treatment of servants in Argentina’s upper classes. She writes,

It was not possible for me to love my mother while I retained a sense that it was fine for me and others to see her arrogantly. Loving my mother also required that I see with her eyes, that I go into my mother’s “world,”

that I see both of us as we are constructed in her “world,” that I witness her own sense of herself from within her “world.” Only through this traveling to her “world” could I identify with her because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. Only then could I see her as a subject, even if one subjected, and only then could I see at all how meaning could arise fully between us. We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated; we are lacking. So traveling to each other’s “worlds” would enable us to be through loving each other.⁴⁷

These lessons echo with behavior Lugones observes among women of color in the United States, even as these very women proclaim desires to love one another. Arrogant perception can be horizontal as well as vertical in her schema. The “world-traveling” she demonstrates here is key to how I propose Marfa might be considered differently than it has been.

Many Marfans live preoccupied with their own struggles around arrogant perception. I write from my own ongoing negotiation, with a knowing suspicion that it resonates with many. This preoccupation has much to do with a strong desire to love and be loved, to be neighborly, to enter conversation together in Marfa’s unique visual and sculptural field with an ease that does not always come readily. Does this lack of ease have something to do with the isolation of Marfa? Does this isolation and the smallness of the town emphasize the difference of cultures, value systems, language backgrounds, class statuses, ethnic identities, and understandings of art and beauty held by its constituents? Furthermore, what if, for some of us (perhaps all, it might turn out), multiple positions—understood as constitutive of our positions in the worlds from which we see and are seen—have been internalized? Lugones understands a multiplicity of positions as central to the experience of women of color. What she also illustrates is that these positions are also located in *multiple worlds*. As I reread her essay, I am struck by the experiences by which she comes to this formulation. They are remarkably close to how I see my selves in Marfa. Of “worlds” Lugones writes, “I will lead you to see what I mean by a ‘world’ the way I came to propose the concept to myself: through the kind of ontological confusion about myself that we, women of color, refer to half-jokingly as ‘schizophrenia’ (we feel schizophrenic in our goings back and forth between different ‘communities’) and through my effort to make some sense of this ontological confusion.”⁴⁸

Accents, ways of eating, cultural references, aesthetic judgments, physical boundaries, language: My enactments of all of these can shift dramatically almost from block to block in Marfa. With the Sanchez family in the kitchen of my grandfather's former home, in the public library, in the galleries or the bookstore, an ontological confusion betrays itself in the ways I take up these aspects of my selves anew at each site. This is a different inhabitation of Marfa from the culinary consumption of the locale bolstered by features in glossy lifestyle magazines, on travel websites for the middle and upper classes, or for artists who inhabit the town for longer but still temporary residencies. My footing inevitably trips down Marfa streets, socially cobbled as they are under many of our feet. To enjoy leisure in Marfa is an elusive state, as anxiety about being the appropriate self in the appropriate setting rarely ebbs.

Because I write as many selves, I realize that some possible tropes must be discounted here. I am not writing about performativity. Nor is this an argument for multiple sites of authenticity, which presumes the value of essential natures. I do not perform. I am not "more authentic" here rather than there. (If I do perform, then I am also performing right now, always.) Rather than performances, I understand my running around Marfa(s) as many acts of traveling, following Lugones:

The shift from being one person to being a different person is what I call traveling. This shift may not be willful or even conscious, and one may be completely unaware of being different in a different "world," and may not recognize that one is in a different "world." Even though the shift can be done willfully, it is not a matter of acting. One does not pose as someone else; one does not pretend to be, for example, someone of a different personality or character or someone who uses space or language differently from the other person. Rather, one is someone who has that personality or character or uses space and language in that particular way. The "one" here does not refer to some underlying "I." One does not experience any underlying I.⁴⁹

This makes all the difference in an attempt to discuss issues of competing notions of art, ethnicities, language formations, and modes of perceiving others in the name of constructing tools for conviviality, if we are not to argue according to bankrupted notions of inclusion/exclusion and margins-and-centers. Lugones wrestles with the question of how women of color love one another, understanding that to love in the sense she desires requires the dif-

ficult work of unlearning to perceive one another arrogantly. Who do I love in Marfa? My family members who live and have lived there; my colleagues whose ongoing willingness to think with me about art and life marks me; my friends with whom I share spaces and meals and drinks (not mutually exclusive categories, though frequently the demarcations instantiate themselves clearly and unsettlingly); even the tourists I invariably share a few beers and meals with during any given visit. To demonstrate a love that comes from a recognition and learned undoing of arrogant perceptions, Minimalism and rasquachismo are two worlds I propose to travel.

BIENVENIDOS A MARFA, MARFA

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INVOCATION

1. Castillo, introduction to *Goddess of the Americas*.
2. Here I follow Laura E. Pérez's example in activating the pun between *alter* and *altar*: "As a form of domestic religious practice outside the domain of dominant religiosities, the altar has been a site for the socially and culturally 'alter,' or other, to express, preserve, and transmit cultural and gender-based religious and political differences." Pérez, *Chicana Art*, 91.
3. Salgado Halpern, "Virgin Mary Image Appears."
4. Allen, "Donald Judd and the Marfa Objective," 1. Allen's dissertation includes the otherwise unpublished Dutch interview in which Judd discusses spirituality and states "all forms are spiritual."

INTRODUCTION. RASQUACHISMO, MINIMALISM

1. My situating Minimalism and rasquachismo cara a cara, or face-to-face, is undertaken in the vein of feminists of color. It signals that race and ethnicity's co-constitution with sex and gender plays a formative role in this writing. Along with art, they also play crucial roles in the social fabric of Marfa. As María Lugones does in her essay, in a different context, I too "am thinking about cracked mirrors that reflect us falsely because I want to lead you into the spaces where I explore racist ethnocentrism." My spaces are Marfa and the spaces of art history. Cracked mirrors abound in both. Lugones, "Hablando cara a cara," 46–54.
2. Art historian Christina Noel Robbins came across a letter from Michael Fried to Philip Leider in the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art in which Fried expounds on the "faggot sensibility" of Minimalist art. Robbins's resulting article is a profound assessment of art criticism since the publication of Fried's "Art and Objecthood" (1967). She argues that those "sensibilities" identified and demonstrated by Fried are not merely anecdotal but in fact integral for understanding art criticism. Paying due attention to anecdote and the lived world around art, as this book does, is the remedy to Fried's misguided attempts to identify "pure" Modernist art. Robbins, "Sensibility of Michael Fried," 432.
3. In the conclusion to this book, art historian Max Tolleon provocatively uses the idea of the town's fuller context being "pulled through" a water-color picture of one of Donald Judd's works.

4. Cheech Marin, reflecting on touring West Texas as a performer, aptly described my homeland as “the place you can see your dog run away for three days.” Josh T Franco, “Oral history interview with Cheech Marin, 2017 October 16–17,” Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
5. These publications and the fashion industry’s preoccupations with Marfa are addressed at length in Franco, “Exposed: Process, Couture, and Photography in Marfa, Texas,” available on Vimeo, accessed August 28, 2025, <http://vimeo.com/65853302>. There is nothing new about the tight relationship between glossy magazines and Minimalism. James Meyer’s assessment of such publications—including a close reading of Francesco Scavullo’s portrait of Donald Judd and Julie Finch, from *Harper’s Bazaar*, July 1966—offers a clear demonstration of how “just as the artists used this venue for their own purposes, so too they were used. Their presence in *Harper’s Bazaar* was part of a larger marketing strategy or ‘culture sell,’ whereby a product’s image could be ‘upgraded’ by associating it with the most advanced culture.” This uneasy symbiosis remains active today, with esteemed destinations standing in for individual artists. Meyer, *Minimalism*, 29.
6. D. Judd, “Casa Lujan and La Catorcena,” 29.
7. Neda Ulaby, “Marfa, Texas: An Unlikely Art Oasis in a Desert Town,” National Public Radio, August 2, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/08/02/156980469/marfa-texas-an-unlikely-art-oasis-in-a-desert-town>.
8. Meyer, *Minimalism*, 29.
9. This was the first time I was explicitly confronted with the notion of Chicanismo as a process rather than a fixed identity. Lyrically, Guillermo Gómez-Peña demonstrates this point in a chiasmic observation of himself and collaborator Roberto Sifuentes: “Two important borders separate Roberto and I: cultural and generational. He is a Chicano in the process of Mexicanization (which means that he is looking South) and I am a Mexican in the process of Chicanization. (Will I ever become a ‘real’ Chicano? Will I ever ‘arrive’? Will ‘they’—the border guards of identity—ever let me?)” Gómez-Peña, *Dangerous Border Crossers*, 11–12.
10. The original design included a shallow cement pool that held water; this was later filled in with more cement for ease of maintenance.
11. Salgado Halpern, “Virgin Mary Image Appears,” 1, 7.
12. Many of these instances were gathered in the 2008 exhibition *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. While *Modernism* was the preferred term through and against which many of the curators’ catalogue essays review this group

of work, it was nevertheless clear that Minimalism in particular provides many of the gestures and forms appropriated by the artists.

13. For understanding the geographic associations of Chicana art, it is instructive to note which states were singled out and which areas were grouped to organize the regional committees for the watershed exhibition *CARA: Chicano Art—Resistance and Affirmation, 1965–1985*: “Arizona, Northern California, Southern California, Colorado, Eastern Seaboard, Mid-West, New Mexico, Northwest, Texas.” Griswold del Castillo et al., *CARA*, II.
14. Although Chicana artists have occasionally exhibited work in Marfa, there is no critical mass or institutional support that would encourage one to consider it a site of Chicana art making. Notable exceptions all took place at Ballroom Marfa: Franco Mondini-Ruiz’s installation *Giant* (2004); the group show *In Lieu of Unity/En lugar de la unidad*, which included Margarita Cabrera’s soft-sculpture *cacti* (2010); rafa esparza’s *Tierra. Sangre. Oro.* (2018); and *Los Encuentros*, which included Justin Favela, Ozzie Juarez, Antonio Lechuga, Narsiso Martinez, and Yvette Mayorga (2025).
15. Some Marfa-based artists who do identify as Chicana include artist Mateo Galindo, multimedia artist Prepney, photographer Sarah M. Vasquez, and artist Rigo A. Zamarron.
16. According to DATA USA, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/marfa-tx/>.
17. Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo,” 156.
18. As Ybarra-Frausto himself is well aware, use of the term *rasquache* dates at least to the early twentieth century. Taking it up as an intellectual concept is relatively new. My grandmother saw me give a version of this chapter as a talk in the summer of 2013; afterward, I asked her what she thought. She was “impressed” by what had been done with the word and what I was doing with it, and she explained her own lifelong understanding as follows: “When I was a little girl, if your friend invited you to get ice cream, then asked you to pay for yours and hers *after* ordering . . . that was *rasquache*.” Esperanza Hernandez, conversation with author, July 15, 2013.
19. Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo,” 155.
20. Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo,” 156.
21. Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo,” 159.
22. The other artists identified by individual works in the *CARA* exhibition are Diane Gamboa, José Montoya, Teddy Sandoval, Carlos Santistevan, Ruben Trejo, Linda Vallejo, and Larry Yañez. Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo,” 162n2.

23. Ávalos references the moment of this impression in an oral history taken by Margarita Nieto for Smithsonian's Archives of American Art. He saw an exhibit that included Oldenburg's work in Stockholm while he was stationed in Europe during the Vietnam War. Margarita Nieto, "Oral History with David Ávalos, 1988 June 16–July 5," accessed June 20, 2013, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-david-avalos-5428>.
24. For an extended analysis of the political, queer import of the ascendant lipstick, as well as a list of press and published sources where Ávalos might have encountered documentation of the work, see Williams, "Lipstick Ascending."
25. "Rasquachismo is a sensibility that is not elevated and serious, but playful and elemental. . . . It is witty and ironic, but not mean-spirited (there is no sincerity in its artifice)." Ybarra-Frausto, "Rasquachismo," 155.
26. Lee, *Chronophobia*, 44.
27. Lee notes her own awareness of the well-worn quality of this narrative, though ultimately argues for the novelty of her approach: "To revisit Fried at this moment would seem to belabor the point, a calculated redundancy: how many times must we return to this canon text? Yet as many critics and historians have noted, such attention is deserved, for no text articulates the peculiar mechanics of minimalism's reception as brilliantly as it does, in spite of its antagonism toward the work in question." Lee, *Chronophobia*, 38.
28. "Well, I hate the term 'minimalism.' There was in no way a group at all. It's a real concoction; it's a publicity thing. . . . It's just some sort of publicity thing which comes from art history, where they think everything comes from styles and groups and so forth, which is kind of doubtful anyway, if you go back and look at it." Judd and Murray, *Donald Judd Interviews*, 498.
29. Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art*, 12–13. There is a second-degree rasquachismo, as the reader may suspect. Second-degree rasquache works are commercially produced and proliferate flat, seductive images of otherwise complex icons. Consider images of the Virgin of Guadalupe as fashion accessories (key chains, T-shirts, embroidered jackets, etc.) divorced from the meanings and practices constitutive of her origin and role in Latin American faith practices.
30. Anzaldúa, "Speaking in Tongues," 167.
31. More recent developments in theorizing visual appropriation as a method of (dis)identification by those whose work is uneasily, and often unwillingly, located in the category of Chicana art include a strikingly analogous distinction to the one Gaspar de Alba articulated between "identity politics" and a "politics of identity" in her survey of the 1992 ex-

hibition *CARA: Chicano Art—Resistance and Affirmation*. In a concise, dense discussion of Juan Capistran's quotations of the punk band Black Flag's logo and Frank Stella's early monochromatic stripe paintings, Rose G. Salseda writes, "These artists' engagement with the past and their commitment to expanding notions of identity ably articulate the distinction between the concept of postidentity and that of post-race. Post-race discourse altogether dismisses the legitimacy of racial identity, pointing to the falsehood of the biological concept of race or insisting that race was a 'problem' that has somehow been resolved. Postidentity discourse, by contrast, is a critical mind-set that favors nuanced understandings of identity and challenges the naturalized and policed notion of what it means to be black or Chicano, and so forth. In this sense, the term 'post-identity' constitutes a fundamental reimagination of identity politics." Salseda, "New Wave of Identity Politics," 27.

32. The emergence of the term *Chicano* was concomitant with the Chicano Movement, which emerged in the 1960s as part of the larger civil rights movement occurring throughout the United States. It was and remains closely identified with groups like the United Farm Workers, which was founded by César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in 1962 to advocate for better conditions for agricultural labor forces, which included large Mexican American populations. In the 1970s and continuing today, the same fight for fair treatment and equal rights entered other domains beyond the agricultural sector, such as higher education, museums, and galleries. The 2008 exhibition *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement* focused on this afterlife and the complexities of Chicane identities when historically removed from the movement's origins (the same problem Gaspar de Alba approaches). Art was always a part of the movement, but as time passed, artists who identified as (or were identified by others as) Chicane naturally began working in much more expansive terms. One significant problem that arose was that of audience: If the purpose of Chicane art is no longer exclusively to build movement adherents and solidarity or confront the oppressor with powerful imagery, who is it for? Of complications generated by this shift over time, *Phantom Sightings* cocurator Rita Gonzalez writes that "discussions regarding audience and community engagement carried over into the 1980s as a number of Chicano artists landed in commercial galleries nationally, producing anxieties about the dilution of what artists and historians found was distinctly Chicano about Chicano art. In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, a larger conversation about art, activism, and diversity was influenced by the changing landscape of arts funding and the import of relational forms of art—from Fluxus to feminist art to what Suzanne Lacy has called 'new genre public art.'" Gonzalez et al., *Phantom Sightings*, 47.

33. Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art*, 12.
34. Opposite “successful” Modernism according to Fried, the literalist or Minimalist works he criticized “redirect a viewer’s experience away from the contained and self-sufficient work of art and out toward the world. The redirection results in an ambiguity as to what exactly is to be included in the aesthetic experience, which becomes infinitely expandable, in both space and time, capable of including the site of display and all the atmospheric nuances therein, including the mobile body of the viewer herself.” Robbins, “Sensibility of Michael Fried,” 436. What Fried disdains in Minimalism is in fact exactly what I aim to accomplish in this book, attention to “all the atmospheric nuances” around and including art in Marfa.
35. See Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” 116–40.
36. Mesa-Bains, “Domesticana,” 157–58.
37. Mesa-Bains, “Domesticana,” 159.
38. Sanchez-Tranquilino and Tagg, “Pachuco’s Flayed Hide,” 97.
39. Noriega, “Dissension of Other Things,” 4.
40. Noriega, “Dissension of Other Things,” 4.
41. Pérez, *Chicana Art*, 14.
42. González, *Subject to Display*, 133.
43. Mesa-Bains, “Domesticana,” 306.
44. Mesa-Bains, “Domesticana,” 307.
45. Mesa-Bains, “Domesticana,” 307.
46. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 34.
47. Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, 83–84.
48. Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, 84.
49. Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, 89–90.

1. PILGRIM, APPROACH

1. Judd’s appreciation for the flora of the Southwest began long before his 1972 move to Marfa. I describe the collection as “beloved” based on the account of Judd’s longtime assistant, Jamie Dearing, who recounts one of the earliest tasks Judd set for him: Moving the cacti collection from his and Julie Finch’s Nineteenth Street apartment down to 101 Spring Street in 1968. Shortly thereafter, Dearing would again oversee the move of this highly climate-sensitive collection, this time from New York City to Marfa. Dearing, discussion, Artist-Guide Training Program, 101 Spring Street, Judd Foundation, January 28, 2013.
2. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 95.
3. For more information on *MARFITA*, see the documentary film by Sean Gaulager, including artist interviews, available on Vimeo, accessed August 28, 2025, <http://vimeo.com/31273553>.