



Untitled, 1976
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez

Beyond the Shape: El Arte de Chente Rodriguez

April 11 - August 3, 2025



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Welcome to Mexic-Arte Museum!

Welcome to the Mexic-Arte Museum, the leading Mexican Art Museum in Texas. Founded in 1984 by artists Sylvia Orozco, Sam Coronado, and Pio Pulido, the Mexic-Arte Museum was created to provide a space for Mexican art and culture in Austin. Since then, the museum has grown into a vibrant hub for cultural exchange, offering diverse programs such as the Day of the Dead Parade, Viva la Vida, the Changarrito residency, and the Cinco de Mayo Luncheon and Fest.

The mission of the Mexic-Arte Museum is to enrich the community through education programs, exhibitions, and the collection, preservation, and interpretation of Mexican, Latino, and Latin American art and culture for visitors of all ages.

This Gallery Guide is designed to enhance your experience of Beyond the Shape: El Arte de Chente Rodriguez, an exhibition showcasing over 50 years of work by painter and screenprinter, Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez.

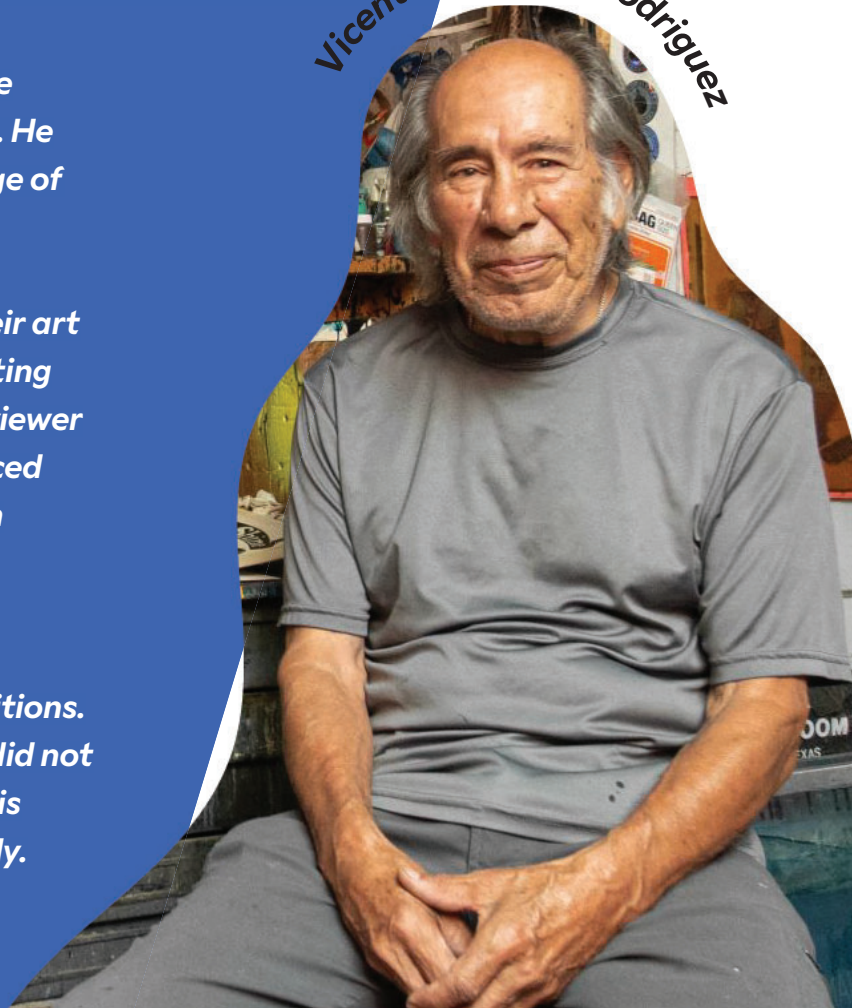
Beyond the Shape: El Arte de Chente Rodriguez showcases Rodriguez's unique artistic vision and highlights the important role of Chicano/a/x artists in contemporary art. This exhibition invites you to explore his artwork and discover how his art has left a lasting mark on Austin and the Chicano/a/x art movement.

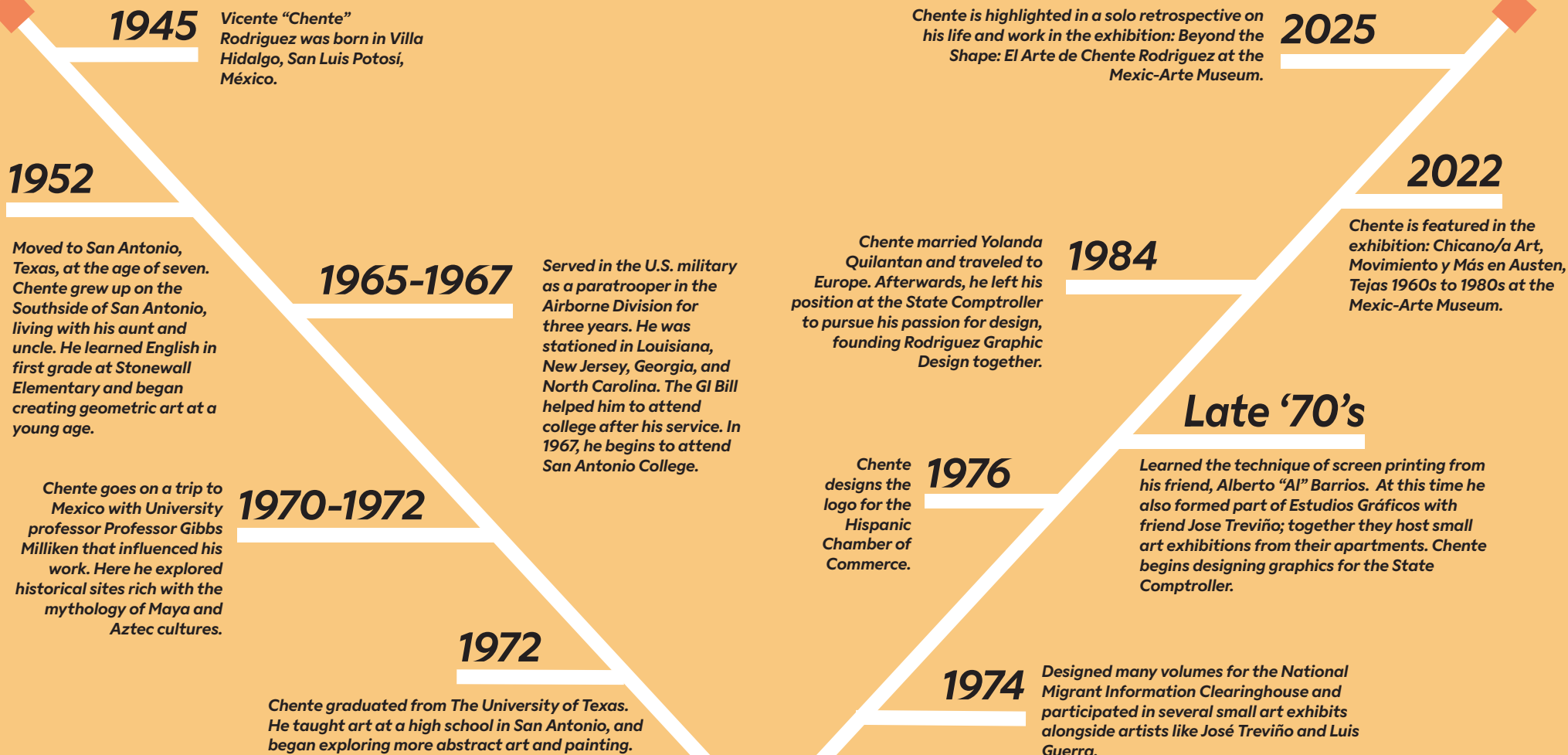
Who is Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez?

Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez (b. 1945 Mexico) is a Chicano artist that has dedicated his life to art and helping the community through his art practice. He studied painting at The University of Texas in Austin from 1969 to 1972, and he was involved with the Chicano Movement in Austin producing silk screen posters and other ephemera. Throughout his lifetime, he developed and continued to create hundreds of vibrant geometric style artworks. He experimented with shape and explored a range of color palettes closely related to abstract expressionism. Rodriguez's paintings are an example of how Chicano artists have used their art to express aesthetic values while also supporting social causes. Rodriguez's work presents the viewer with how Chicano and Chicana artists embraced the possibilities of aesthetic innovation, often through experiments with color and paint application.

Chente has participated in many group exhibitions. He has never had a major exhibition since he did not choose to promote himself and his artwork. His work is not known outside of friends and family.

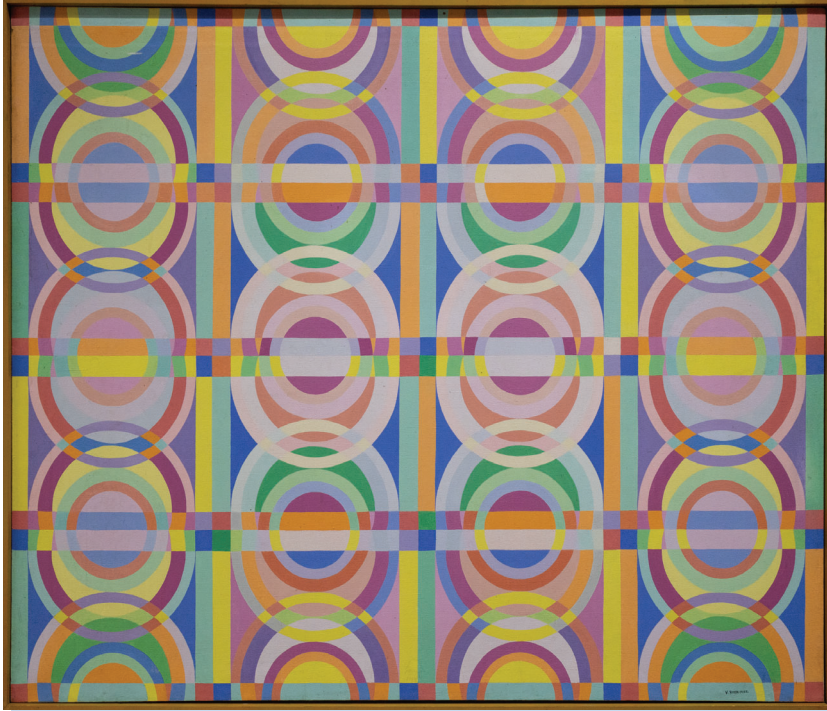
Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez





Timeline of Chente's Life

Geometric Abstraction



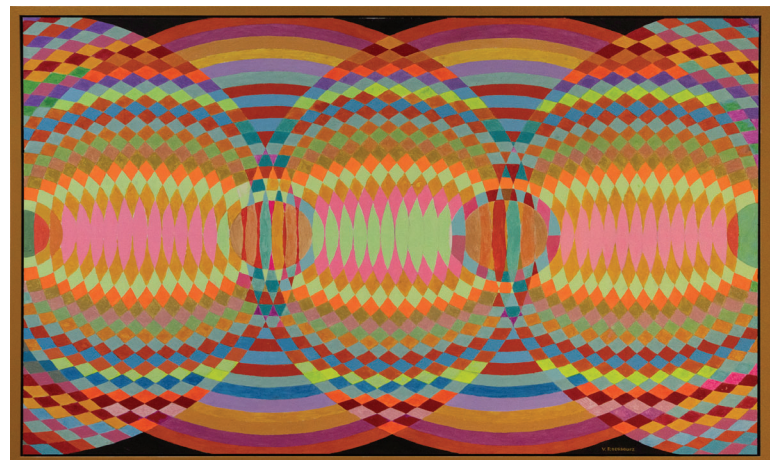
Untitled, ca 1980's
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez

Chente has been drawn to abstract art from a very young age, never preferring to create realistic pictures, like of trees or people. This type of art, often called figurative or representational art, refers to artwork that depicts something from the real world, for example: a chair, a person, or a flower.

Instead, Chente has always loved working with basic shapes, lines, and colors. This type of art, also called Abstract or non-representational, is artwork that does not depict scenes or objects from our everyday life. Rather, it is a composition of colors, lines, and shapes used to convey feelings or ideas.

What is Geometric Abstraction?

Geometric abstraction is a type of art that uses simple shapes like circles, squares, and triangles to create designs. This style of art doesn't try to show things from the real world, like trees or animals. Instead, it focuses on shapes, lines, and colors to express feelings and ideas. Geometric abstraction relies on the artistic elements of line, rhythm, pattern, and color.



Untitled, 2025
Acrylic on board, 38" x 54"
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez

The Effects of Color

Although Chente was formally trained in traditional painting and drawing while at The University of Texas, Chente's color choices are often intuitive.

An intuitive art process means that the artist works without a pre-set plan, and the artist allows their instincts to guide the artistic process. This approach to color often leads to surprising combinations.

To understand some of the choices Chente makes, it helps to know a little about the building blocks of color itself.



Primary Colors

Primary Colors are the colors red, yellow, and blue. These are colors that cannot be made, but these colors can be mixed together to create all other colors (for example, green, orange, and purple).

Secondary Colors

Secondary Colors are the colors that result from mixing two primary colors. For example, green (yellow + blue), orange (yellow + red) and purple (red + blue).

Tertiary Colors

Tertiary or Intermediate Colors are colors that result from mixing a primary color and a secondary color. For example, yellow-orange (yellow is primary and orange is secondary).

Abstraction & Drawing

Think about what you learn in math class: circles, squares, and triangles. In geometric abstraction, artists use these shapes to make something unique and exciting. His use of colors, shapes, and patterns invites viewers to experience art not through what they recognize, but through how they feel when they see his pieces.



*Untitled, 2020
Mixed media on paper, 18" x 14"
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez*

*Find a drawing by Chente that interests you.
What feelings do its lines communicate?
What colors capture your attention?*

*When you draw, what do you
usually depict and how? Do
your drawings imitate the real
world?*



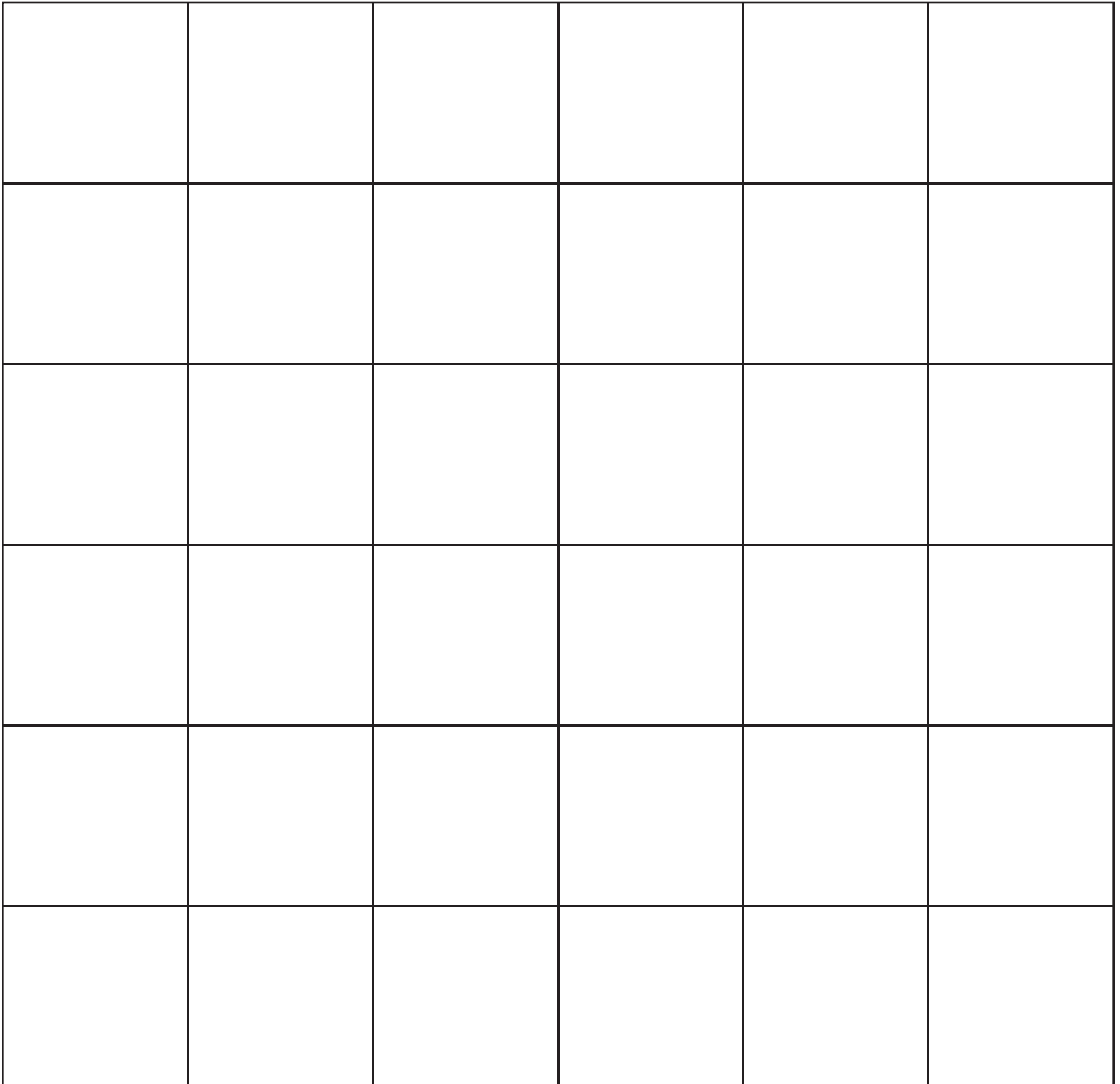
*Untitled, 2007
Ink, marker, and color pencil on paper, 12" x 16"
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez*

Activity: Abstract Grid Drawing

Chente often divides his abstract paintings based on space and shape. Use this grid to add your own shapes and lines, filling them in with colors of your choice!

Materials:

- Something to draw with, like a pencil, pen, or marker
- Something to apply color, like paints, colored pencils, or markers

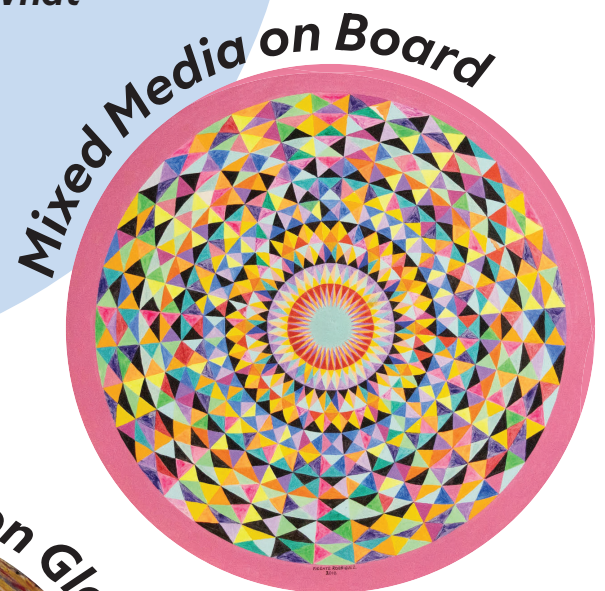
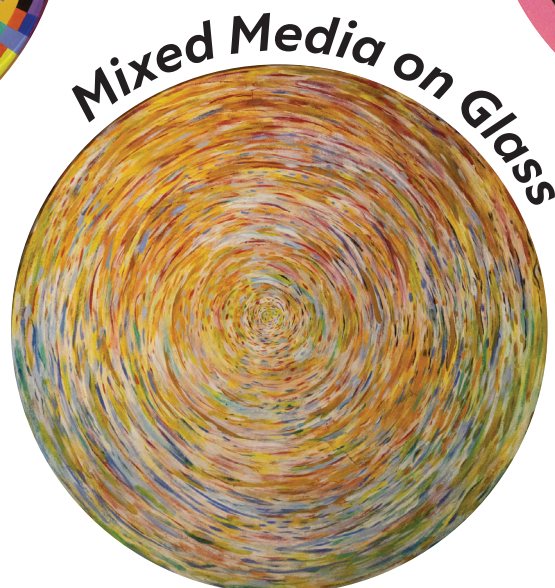


Chente Rodriguez makes art by finding old objects like clocks, photo frames, and drumheads and turning them into canvases or frames for paintings.

Chente's Evolving Art

While Chente doesn't have a specific reason for using a circle canvas, circles hold deep meaning in art. Circles often symbolize unity and wholeness, representing the never-ending cycles of life.

What do circles remind you of? What do you think circles mean?



Chente and Screenprinting

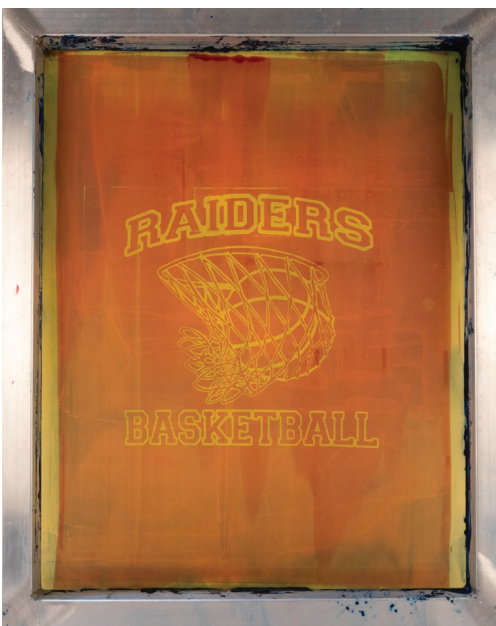
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Chente learned how to screen print in the 80's from his friend Alberto "Al" Barrios, who owned a screen printing business in Austin. Chente found that he was good at screen printing and began printing for many different people and communities. Chente created the logos & designs for many of these screens.

In 1984, he and his wife, Yolanda Quilantan Rodriguez, started a business called Rodriguez Graphic Design. Later, he teamed up with his good friend Pete Limón. Together, they made thousands of T-shirts over the years. After 40 years of working in screen printing, Chente is getting ready to retire, and while he brings his printing to a halt, his designs will always be remembered by people in Austin.



*Silkscreens, Dates vary
Burned silkscreen
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez*



*Silkscreens, Dates vary
Burned silkscreen
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez*

Personalized Logo

Follow in Chente's shoes and create your own logo or adapt an existing logo for an imaginary organization, brand, or product.



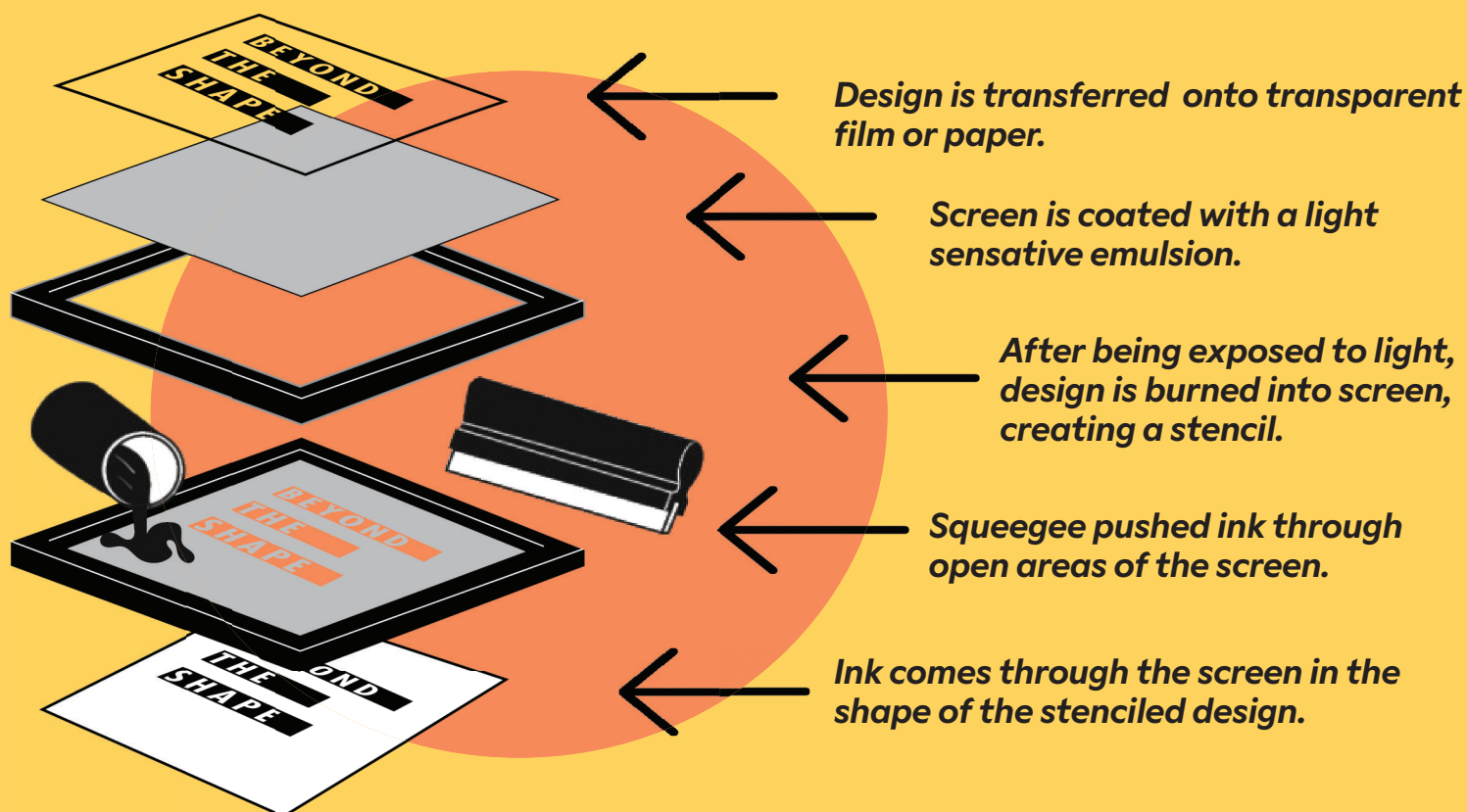
What is a Screenprint?

Screen printing is an art technique where ink is pushed through a mesh screen onto a surface, like a shirt, poster or bag. The mesh screen is like a big cloth with tiny holes in it, allowing for ink to pass through the screen. When printing, screens have a stencil that block some areas of the screen, so ink only goes through the open parts, creating a picture or design on the surface below. You can even use different colors, putting one layer of ink after another, to make bright, colorful designs. This process can be done again and again to create many prints!

*Silkscreens, Dates vary
Burned silkscreen
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente"
Rodriguez*



The Process



The Rodriguez Graphic Design Custom Silkscreening: Chicano T-Shirt Designs catalogs contain various examples of graphic silkscreen designs for Chente's business. The designs are accompanied by examples printed on clothing items and information for the sizing, printing, and ink/shirt color of the original designs to inform selections on the order form included at the back of the catalog.



**Rodriguez Graphic Design Custom
Silkscreening, 1976
Printed catalog, 8.5" x 7"
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez**



**Silkscreens, Dates vary
Burned silkscreen
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez**



The Chicano Movement



Migrant Working, 1975
Pen and ink on paper, 8.5" x 11"
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez

The Chicano Movement was a powerful social and political movement that began in the 1960s and reached its height in the 1970s, aiming to achieve justice for Mexican Americans and other communities of Latinx descent across the United States.

In Austin, the movement gained strength at The University of Texas at Austin, where students and activists worked together to fought together against issues like racial inequality, lack of access to quality education, and poor working conditions. As part of this movement, the term "Chicano" was adopted as a symbol of pride, protest, and resistance, signaling a commitment to the empowerment of Mexican American communities.

Questions:

What other words or images do you associate with the term "Chicano?"

Do you think the issues the Chicano Movement wanted to address are still relevant today? Why or why not?

Chicanos & Art: Screenprinting



Art Exhibit by Chicano Artists, 1974
Seriagraph on paper, 16" x 10.25"
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez

The Chicano Movement, closely linked to the Civil Rights Movement, was a catalyst for political and social activism, with Chicano graphic artists using screenprinting to amplify their efforts. By creating artwork supporting causes like the United Farm Workers Union and advocating for the Chicano community, artists helped establish a vibrant, politically charged art movement that continues to resonate today.

1966

Establishment of the Brown Berets: A Chicano activist group is founded in Los Angeles focusing on civil rights, police brutality, and community empowerment.

1967

Economy Furniture Strike: Mexican American workers in Austin, Texas, go on strike to demand better wages and working conditions.

1968

In 1968, a MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization) chapter is established at The University of Texas in Austin. MAYO was a political organization formed in San Antonio, Texas that advocated for Chicano rights.

1973

The Brown Berets Austin chapter is founded by Gilbert Rivera and later led by organizer, Paul Hernandez. This same year, the Brown Berets establish "El Centro Chicano," where they coordinated protests against police brutality, held demonstrations to improve public infrastructure in East Austin, and worked on campaigns to elect Mexican Americans into local offices.

1972

Establishment of the Juarez-Lincoln University: An alternative Chicano university emphasizing bilingual and bicultural education is established in Austin, Texas.

1969

Crystal City Walkouts: Mexican American students walk out of schools in Crystal City, Texas, demanding better representation, equal education, and an end to discrimination.

1973

Founding of the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce: Established by prominent Mexican American leaders with the goal of advocating for and serving Hispanic businesses.

1974

Establishment of the National Migrant Farmworkers Clearinghouse: Created to provide information, resources, and advocacy for migrant farmworkers.

1984

Mexic-Arte Museum Established: The Mexic-Arte Museum is founded in Austin, Texas, to promote and preserve Mexican, Latino, and Latin American art and culture.

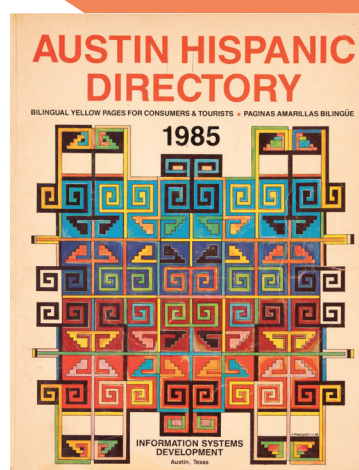
A Chicano Timeline

Chente's Ephemera

While at The University of Texas in Austin, Chente became involved in the Chicano Movement. Chente joined the Mexican American Youth Movement (MAYO), an organization that helped lead protests in Austin, San Antonio, and Crystal City.

He used his art to support these causes, designing logos, booklets, and posters that often featured bold shapes and people in action. These creations, also called ephemera, are things like flyers and postcards that exist for a short time but make a big impact.

Throughout the 1990s, Chente designed several programs for Diez y Seis celebrations in Texas. Two of the programs were designed for Austin celebrations in 1990 and 1992, hosted by the Fiestas Patrias of Austin. An additional program was for the 1996 celebration in Troy, Texas. All programs include brief statements about the celebrations and a multitude of sponsorships laid out across the pages.

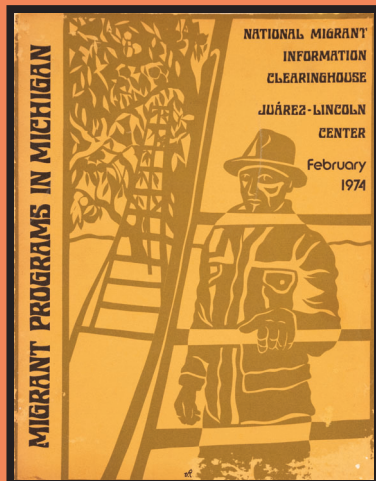


Organized by Martha P. Cortera
Information Systems Development
Austin Hispanic Directory 1985, 1985
Print directory, 11" x 8.5"
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez



Diez y Seis
Graphics by Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez
12th Annual Diez y Seis: Fiesta Gardens, 1990
Publication, 11" x 8.5"
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez

Juarez-Lincoln University



Migrant Programs in Michigan, 1974
 Printed directory, 11" x 8.5"
 Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez

Juárez-Lincoln University was founded in 1971 in Austin, Texas, to help Mexican American students who wanted to learn more about their culture and get a quality education. The University was created after a big meeting in 1969 held by the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). During this meeting, students discussed problems in schools, such as not having enough Mexican American teachers and not learning about their own history. This meeting led to the creation of new schools, including Juárez-Lincoln University.

At first, the school was in a small office in Fort Worth, but by 1972, it moved to Austin. By 1975, the school grew bigger and had its own building. It offered both bachelor's and master's degree programs. What made this school one of a kind was that students could choose their own projects to work on instead of just taking regular classes. The school also helped students who didn't have a lot of money to pay for college by keeping tuition low and offering scholarships. Juárez-Lincoln University closed in 1979, but its building became an important part of the community. Even though the building was torn down in 1983, the memory of the school and its focus on helping students stay connected to their culture is still remembered today.

Activity: Design A Pamphlet Cover

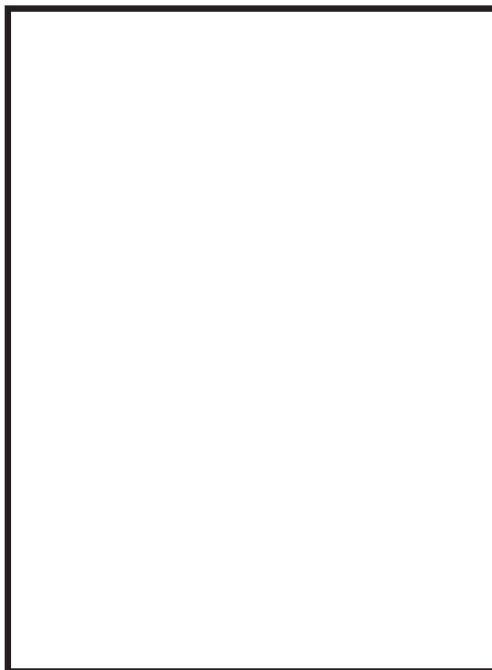


Untitled, 1976
 Mixed media, 38.75" x 26.75"
 Courtesy of Cynthia & Lydia Perez

A pamphlet is a small booklet that contains information about an important topic.

Think about an issue or something you believe in within your personal life, community, or in the world. For example, are you passionate about the environment, culture, or politics? What is it you'd like to protect or change?

Now, voice your stance by creating a pamphlet cover with words, images, and/or slogans. Remember to be both creative and informative while making your message clear.



El Viaje de Chente

While studying at the University of Texas in Austin, Rodriguez took an Art and Photography class with Professor Gibbs Milliken. During their time together, Milliken invited Chente on a trip to Mexico to assist with Spanish translations.

During his trip, Chente visited many archeological sites, or the remnants of structures from past civilizations. The exploration of these ancient, historical sites sparked an interest in the rich mythology of Maya and Aztec cultures, inspiring Rodriguez to create art that depicted figures from Mesoamerican mythology.



Around the same time, many artists in Austin, specifically those of Mexican descent, began to feel a stronger connection to their heritage. This newfound sense of cultural pride prompted them to explore their roots and express these connections through their artwork. Rodriguez also responded to this cultural shift by creating a series of works, some that featured figurative artwork.



*Mayan Sarcophagus lid of King Pacal,
Palenque, Mexico, 2024
Silkscreen outline and marker on board
Courtesy of Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez*

Mesoamerican Cultures

The Aztecs (Mexico)

During the 15th and 16th centuries, the Aztec ruled a vast empire in what is now Southern and Central Mexico. Migrating from their northern homeland of "Aztlán," the Aztecs would establish their capital city of Tenochtitlán in 1325 upon the marshes of Lake Texcoco.

Through commerce and wars, Tenochtitlán came to rule hundreds of states. However, most of the Aztec Empire's success was due to its elaborate agricultural system, including their use of irrigation and chinampas ("floating islands"). Their government was led by powerful kings who oversaw tax collection, governors, and even courts of justice to create a strong, interconnected empire.

The Aztecs, like the Mayans, believed in many different gods and goddesses. They even constructed grand, magnificently decorated pyramids, like the Templo Mayor, to make sacrifices and worship their gods. Many of these would eventually be destroyed in 1521, when the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortéz laid siege to the city and defeated the Aztecs, building Mexico City atop the remains of Tenochtitlán.

The Maya

Maya civilization reached its height from around 250 CE to 900 CE, occupying what is today Southern Mexico, Guatemala, and the Yucatán peninsula. The Maya occupied numerous cities throughout this region, each led by a dynastic ruler and serving as centers of agriculture, ceremony, and social life. Important cities included Palenque, Chichén Itzá, and Tikal.

Maya society was advanced in astronomy, mathematics, and writing, creating the Maya script and a long-count calendar to track time. They also excelled in agriculture, using techniques like terracing and irrigation to grow crops such as maize, beans, and squash.

Around the 9th century, many southern cities declined, likely due to environmental factors, warfare, and political issues. Northern cities, such as Chichén Itzá, continued to thrive until the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century. Despite the decline, the Maya's cultural and intellectual contributions have had a lasting impact on the region.

Question: How is the Mayan religion similar and/or different to other religions you know of?

Calendario '77', 1977
Graphics by Vicente "Chente" Rodriguez and José Treviño
Printed calendar, 17" x 11"
Courtesy of Modesta Treviño



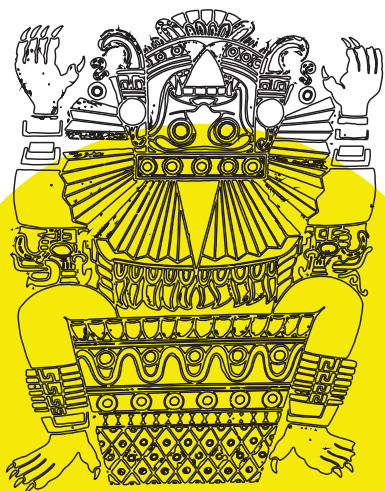
Scavenger Hunt: Aztec/Maya Iconography

*Can you find all of these
Aztec/Mayan icons in
Chente's works?*



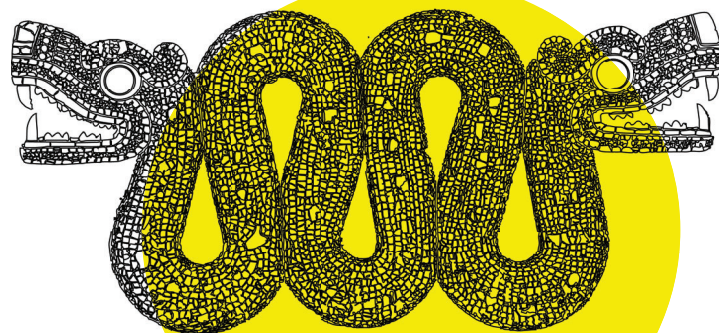
Xipe Totec

Xipe Totec is the Aztec god of spring and new life. He is shown wearing the skin of another person to represent the Earth growing new plants, like putting on new skin.



Pre-Columbian Figure

This figure is inspired by Pre-Columbian art and mythology. Although we are not sure who this represents exactly, it closely resembles Tlaltecuhli, the Aztec earth deity often shown in a crouched position with a wide, open mouth, symbolizing both creation and destruction.

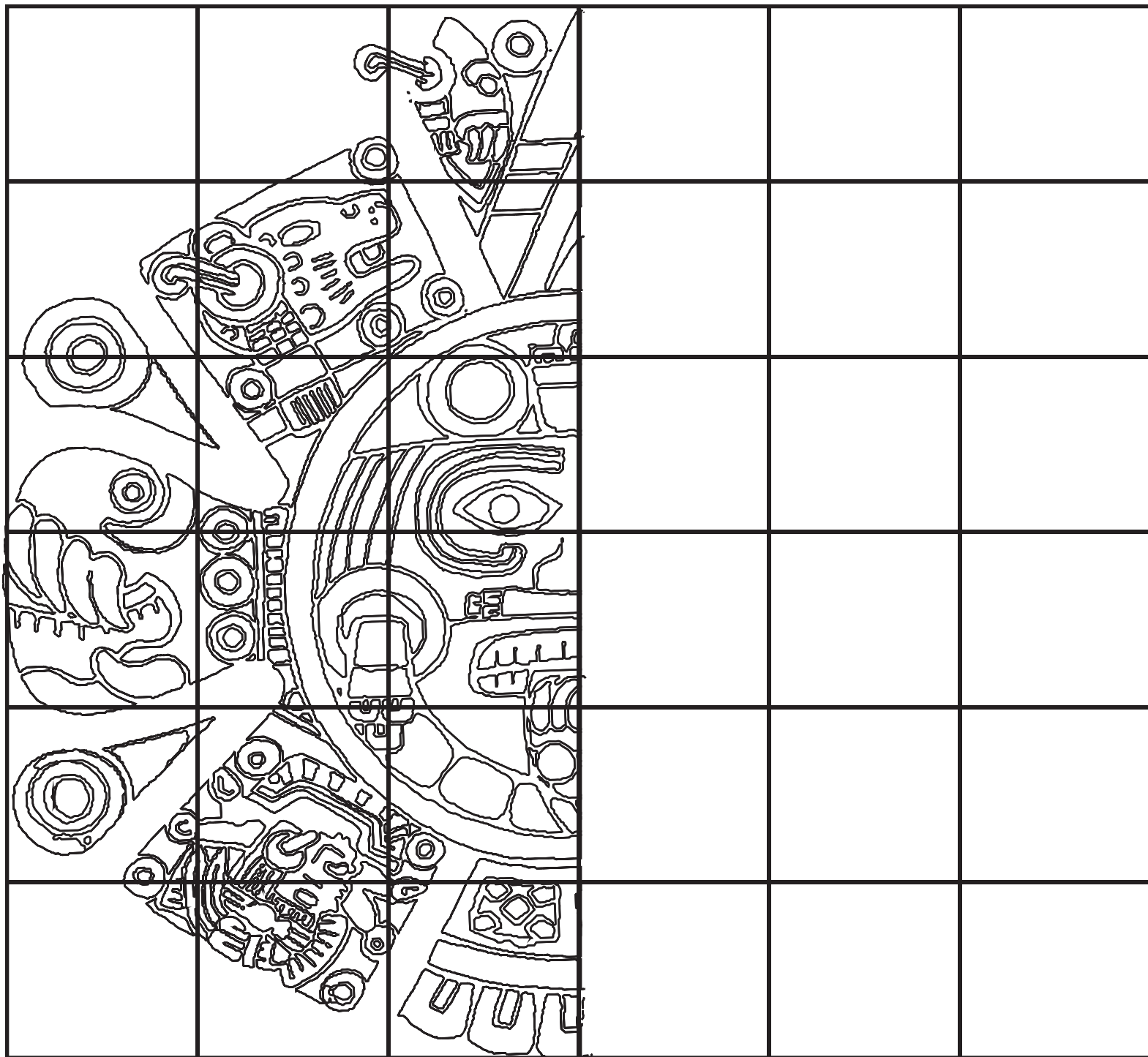


Double-Headed Serpent

This turquoise-covered snake has two heads and was made by the Aztecs. Snakes were important symbols of change and movement between the sky, earth, and underworld.

Finish the Drawing: Aztec Sunstone

Chente created many designs of the Piedra del Sol, an ancient Aztec monolith that symbolized the conception of time. At the center of the stone is the sun god, Tonatiuh, and he is surrounded by symbols of different time periods in Aztec mythology, like the "Four Jaguar" era. Can you find the jaguar in this image?



Sunday, April 27th, from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Nuestra Voz: An Afternoon of Latinx & Chicana/o Poetry Readings

This event celebrates the vibrant voices of Chicano/a/x poets, offering a unique opportunity to connect the arts, literature, and community. Experience the powerful work of local poets as we honor the rich cultural heritage of the Chicano/a/x experience and the legacy of Austin's influential poets.

Saturday, May 3rd 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

La Fête de Cinco de Mayo at Republic Square

Join us at La Fête de Cinco de Mayo for a vibrant family event and celebration of Mexican and French cultures! Experience the rich intersection of traditions through engaging activities, educational games, lively performances, and a variety of food and art vendors. It's a day of culture, connection, and creativity you won't want to miss!

Sunday, May 18th 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Family Day with Artist Bibi Flores

Family Day on Sunday, May 18 will offer families and youth the opportunity to participate in a hands-on art-making activity focused on color, line, and shape, led by artist Bibi Flores, with all materials provided by the museum.

Sunday June 22nd 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Family Day: Printmaking

Family Day on Sunday June 22nd will invite families and youth to participate in creating collagraphs and learning about different types of printmaking, inspired by printmaker Chente Rodriguez.

Thursday, June 26th 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Media Mixer: Screen Printing

Join us for an evening of screen printing, where adults can create their own custom designs on t-shirts in this hands-on workshop.

Thursday, July 17th 6:00 - 9:00 PM

Media Mixer: Genre Painting with Jarrod Williams and Myra Roze

Join us for an evening of painting with muralists Jarrod Williams and Myra Roze, where adults can explore genre painting techniques in a collaborative environment.

Public Programming

Join us in celebrating *Beyond the Shape: El Arte de Chente Rodriguez!*



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*Special thanks to the Rodriguez family and the individuals
who generously lent artwork and ephemera to the exhibition.*

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