

Outsiders Within

TLISZA JAURIQUE [TLEE zah HOWD Ree Khee] has two homes: her old family home in south Phoenix and another near New York City. When she was a child, TLISZA's grandmother would tell her about the family's experiences in Mexico and of their difficult journey to the United States. They traveled and worked through Texas and Arizona mining towns before finally settling in south Phoenix. Her grandmother was from the Nahua and Yaqui people. The Yaqui are a Native American tribe who live in the Sonoran Desert of northern Mexico. TLISZA's grandmother also called herself a "Toltec," an ancient Mesoamerican word for artist, and passed this idea on to her granddaughter.

TLISZA calls herself "Mexica" [Meh SHEE Kah] after the people of the central valley of Mexico who speak the Nahuatl language. "Mexica" is also a name for many Indigenous people of Mexico. TLISZA also calls herself "Postmodern," which means she is a person who questions who we are and how we live.

Traditional Mexican celebrations, such as the Day of the Dead and the Feast Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe are important events in TLISZA's life. She was brought up to believe that people need to show respect for animals and the environment because each thing can have a spirit. One way to show respect is to create special places by setting up altars (offrendas) and little niches (nichos) in the home.

TLISZA always has seen herself as an "outsider." She believed that she was from a culture "other" than the dominant Anglo culture while growing up in Phoenix. She felt different from the popular groups in high school, the traditional Mexican women in south Phoenix and her Ivy League classmates at college. TLISZA is proud of her culture and she wants people to understand that Mexican-Americans can do many jobs. She has, herself, become a successful artist.

In her art, TLISZA often uses symbols borrowed from ancient Mesoamerican books. She is also influenced by a group of German artists called Expressionists. She admires their bold lines, strong colors and defiance of the Nazi regime and culture. Some of TLISZA's artworks are made with mirrors and glitter that sparkle and reflect light and people's reflections. She says that her artworks are constantly changing because they reflect different places and people. TLISZA's grandmother taught her that art is an everyday part of life. TLISZA believes that change is also a natural part of life, and she expresses this through her artworks.

Comments of TLISZA JAURIQUE's Work

Gary Keller Cárdenas, Director of Arizona State University's Hispanic Research Center and Chicana/o art collector

"TLISZA JAURIQUE explores the spirit and reality of pre-Hispanic peoples and how their experiences have affected the Chicana/o identity. The theme often evokes the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish. Her glitter paintings remind one of the style of pre-Conquest artwork and illustration, often using similar symbols. Ancestral Roots, or Another Death in the Desert uses images symbolic of a journey and of human sacrifice to comment on contemporary border issues."