



Moctezuma's Table: Rolando Briseño's Mexican and Chicano Tablescapes (Rio Grande/Río Bravo: Borderlands Culture and Traditions)

By Norma E. Cantú

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The table provides the food that sustains physical life. It is also the setting for people to share the fellowship that sustains cultural, community, and political life. In the vision of artist Rolando Briseño, food is a powerful metaphor, a way of understanding how culture nurtures the spirit. When cultures collide—as they inevitably do in borderlands settings—food, its preparation, and the rituals surrounding its consumption can preserve meanings and understandings that might otherwise have been lost to the mainstream social narrative. Briseño's exhibit, *La Mesa de Moctezuma/Moctezuma's Table*, originally hosted by San Antonio's Instituto Cultural Mexicano and later by the Instituto de México, Montreal, Canada, brings to vivid life the artist's conception of food as life source, social symbol, and embodiment of meaning. Now, editor Norma E. Cantú has gathered the art, along with the words of fifteen poets, writers, artists, and scholars who reflect in various ways on the layers of interpretation to be derived from Briseño's works. Their thoughts provide focal points for musings about food, transborder relationships between food and art, personal connections to food, individual works within the exhibit, and the intense and immediate connections among culture, food, and self.

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- Rank: #481994 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-10-24
- Released on: 2011-10-24
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

“While Briseño’s art work enjoys world recognition, the collection of essays makes the impact and value of his work accessible to all readers . . . places Mexico’s long culinary history as a place/space of global influence.”—Meredith E. Abarca, associate professor of English, University of Texas at El Paso

“This book adds a great (and missing) dimension to the current discussions within fields of history, anthropology, economics, environmental science and cultural studies about food’s impact on a people’s sense of collective and individual identity. *La Mesa de Moctezuma: Mexican and Chicano Tablescapes*, a collection of essays—personal and scholarly—offer in-depth critical reflection based on Rolando Briseño’s visual tablescapes representing over five-thousand years of Mexican (and Mexican-American) history via food. While Briseño’s art work enjoys world recognition, the collection of essays make the impact and value of Briseño’s work accessible to all readers. Briseño’s work and the collection of essays places Mexico’s long culinary history—one that dates back as far as 300 A.D.—in part with other world culinary-systems, by critically reflecting on Mexico’s centrality as a place/space of global influence.”—Meredith E. Abarca, associate professor of English, University of Texas at El Paso
(Meredith E. Abarca *associate professor of English, University of Texas at El Paso*)

“Moctezuma’s Table: Rolando Briseño’s Mexican and Chicano Tablescapes, edited by Norma E. Cantú, is an extraordinary art book that invites the reader to embark on an exciting journey related to both visual and gustatory senses. It is a delight for the intellect as well since the book encompasses a variety of scholarly essays providing the reader with historical and geographic information to complement Briseño’s artistic renderings of Mexican/Chicano food. The eye will marvel at the bright and cleverly conceptualized paintings offered by this talented artist. This is a splendid book to see, read, and to savor, via the imagination, its succulent Mexican/Chicano cuisine: *bocaditos*, *sopas*, entrées, side dishes, and desserts all are magnificently rendered in word and painting.”—María Herrera-Sobek, editor, *Santa Barraza: Artist of the Borderlands*

(Maria Herrera-Sobek *editor, Santa Barraza: artist of the Borderlands*)

About the Author

NORMA E. CANTÚ is a professor of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio, specializing in Latina/o and Chicana/o literature. Her PhD is from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

The art of ROLANDO BRISEÑO is held in a number of prestigious collections, including the Brooklyn and Bronx Museums of Art and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. He lives and works in San Antonio.

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