

Latin American & Iberian Institute
Richard E. Greenleaf Visiting Library Scholar
Presentation by Theresa Avila

I am honored to be a Greenleaf Visiting Library Scholar and I would like to thank the Latin American and Iberian Institute for this opportunity. It has been a wonderful two weeks conducting concentrated archival research in the University of New Mexico's Latin American Library Collections. Research has many facets and I could not have been successful in my endeavors without the support and assistance of the Zimmerman Library staff and in particular the folks at the Center for Southwest Research.

[slide] In particular I would like to thank:

Suzanne Schadl

Michael Kelly

Christopher Geherin

Nancy Brown- Martínez

Samuel Sisneros

I would also like to acknowledge Russell Davidson who through his publication, *Latin American Holdings in the University of New Mexico Library: An illustrated history and guide* (UNM University Libraries and Western Edge Press, 2004), and in conversation provided me great insight into the UNM Library Latin American Collections.ⁱ

[slide] My proposed project for research in the Latin American Library Collections at the University of New Mexico was to conduct research and locate visual material that stems from or is related to the Mexican Revolution. In particular, I am working toward building a thirty page visual essay for a special issue of *Third Text* slated to be published in 2014.ⁱⁱ The concept for the *Third Text* issue stems from Dr. David Craven, Mexican scholar Leticia López Orozco, and my ongoing dialogue and interests in Mexican

Art as it relates to the legacies of the Mexican Revolution. As many of you here today know, it was Dr. Craven's mission to build, utilize, and promote the holdings at the University of New Mexico's libraries. It was with the purpose of highlighting the collections at the University that the visual essay for the *Third Text* special issue was developed. Thirty pages have been allotted within the *Third Text* publication for the visual essay, which has the potential to showcase numerous objects and images. Text will be part of the visual essay, which would acknowledge the University of New Mexico's Latin American library collections as the distinct source for the images included, as well as provide a curatorial statement and address the social and political context of each item in the essay. In particular, I will include a brief history of the development of the library's collections specific to Mexico and the Mexican Revolution. [slide] The type of material I have looked for and at to include in the visual essay includes caricatures, photographs, graphic prints, posters, excerpts from news journals and publications, bulletins, book covers, music albums, and sheet music that were produced during the era prior to the Mexican Revolution, during the decade of violence (1910-1920), and after the insurgency. [slide] Themes and topics I particularly focused on and sought out in my research include material that presents or makes commentary on: the social and political conditions in Mexico particularly related to the outbreak of the war, civil liberties and human rights, labor laws, access to education, the control of natural resources, the Mexican Revolution and the actors involved, nation building after the war, and the legacy of the insurgency.

[slide - Craven] And briefly, I would like to address my work with the UNM library collections and David Craven's role in that. For over ten years I worked with Dr. Craven who was both my MA and Doctorate advisor. My work as an art historian and my approach to art is very much a result of my relationship with David who was extremely passionate about art and politics. Another thing that Dr. Craven was extremely passionate about was the UNM Library Collections. David regularly pressed upon me and my colleagues in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of New Mexico the significance of UNM's library Latin American Collections. He would direct us to collections, artist, artwork, and publications through coursework, special projects, and for our own academic endeavors. In this regard I would like to quote Russ Davidson who recently spoke with me about David's contributions to the library. I am paraphrasing, but Russ communicated that:

David Craven was an indefatigable advocate for building the UNM Library collections.

His courses and scholarship was often based on or incorporated material from the library collections. He personally extended himself to do what he could to enrich its holdings. David was always willing to write letters and make statements in support of acquisitions that emphasized the significance of material for him as an instructor and scholar. When he wrote a grant, David always remembered to incorporate a library component that would aid in the acquisition of resources he deemed necessary for his projects. Furthermore, David wrote numerous essays about or building on UNM's library holdings, as well as catalogue essays for exhibitions of objects from UNM's library collections. He also promoted exchanges between UNM and libraries in countries that lacked books and resources, such as numerous libraries in Central America.ⁱⁱⁱ

David's commitment to and enthusiasm for UNM's library collections was infectious. Through my own work and efforts I hope to follow in Dr. Craven's footsteps in working with and promoting the many wonders that can be found here.

[slide - Aniversario de la Revolución Mexicana, 1985 from Sam Slick Collection]

The current focus of my work is the Mexican Revolution and its legacy. For over a decade I have read about, studied, discussed, and thought about the Mexican Revolution. The one thing that has become crystal clear to me about the Mexican revolt of 1910 is that its significance and relevance extends beyond the decade of violence between 1910 and 1920. The Mexican Revolution is alive and well in Mexico, in the United States, and abroad. It lives on through the people, art, and the ongoing struggle of the oppressed.

The Mexican Revolution occurred between 1910 and 1920. Beyond the armed conflict, revolutionary demands resulted in ongoing national programs that promised to address and fulfill the demands of the Revolution's ideologues. In the 1920s through the 1940s alliances between distinct political groups that had at one point been at odds during the civil war and the blending of rival traditions produced overarching narratives of the Mexican Revolution. The 1910 civil war is an ongoing concept that has evolved over one hundred years and is continuously evoked. Thus, the scope of the visual essay has the potential to extend to the dictatorship (1876-1910) that lead up to insurgency in 1910 to contemporary times, as the legacy of the Revolution is still pertinent to today's social, political, and artistic concerns.

There is much to say about the Mexican Revolution as an event and its legacy, however, today my focus is to talk about what I found in relation to this event and phenomena in the library's holdings. I will say that there are many questions that inform my interests and search for material, including:

Who participated in the Mexican Revolution?

What did life during the war look like?

How was the rebellion remembered and constructed?

What formats were engaged to invoke and disseminate information and narratives about the revolt, the ideas of revolutionaries, and to establish the pantheon of revolutionary leadership? How does post-war Mexico and Mexicans connect to their revolutionary past?

This presentation addresses these questions and more through the UNM archives. However, it is important to understand that no one source can represent or address the complex and multifaceted nature of the Mexican Revolution. Instead, I seek out the uncommon and unknown to help build up my understanding of the different aspects of life, people, and history that are part of the Revolution and that is what I share with you today.

[2 slides] The Mike Gunby Mexican Revolution Postcard collection is made up of two albums of photo postcards primarily taken by L.R. Pimentel in the Chihuahua campaigns of the Mexican Revolution ranging from 1910-1913.

[2 slides] The Howard Van Meter Pictorial Collection, 1905-1914

1 album contains 199 photographs and postcards, plus clippings, posters, articles, and invitations. Marjorie Van Meter went to Empalme to teach in a school which catered to the children of United States colonists in Mexico. Her husband Howard was employed at an accounting bureau. The album apparently belonged to Major Howard Van Meter, whose name appears on a number of items in the album. The album contains snapshots, postcards, and clippings related to the Mexican Revolution in Sonora between 1912 and 1914.

[slide] The Mexican Chapbook Collection is comprised of 123 chapbooks printed in Mexico that range in date from 1880-1919. For the most part the collection is a good representation of the era of Porfirio Díaz', which ranged from the late 1880s to 1910. Most are printed by Antonio Vanegas Arroyo, and many are illustrated by José Guadalupe Posada. The collection covers various topics, including cooking,

home remedies, riddles, fortune telling, and Catholic celebrations, devotions, and prayers. Many of the chapbooks are collections of song lyrics.

[slide A la hora de la comida]

A caricature published in *Multicolor* on August 24, 1911 illustrates this sentiment. The illustration is entitled “At the hour of the meal” and depicts Zapata gnawing on a human bone. Zapata is identifiable by his sombrero, mustache, the bandoliers across his chest, and the uniform of the agrarian laborer or campesino’s calzone. His hat is embellished with skulls around the brim. Features are grossly exaggerated, the hands are monstrously enlarged and his nails claw-like. The caption below the image reads, “The leg of the hacendado that I ate at lunch was more flavorful.” Zapata’s cannibalistic meal is presented as preceded by a scene of killing and dismemberment, made evident by the machete and knife at Zapata’s feet. The violent and cannibalistic image is further inflated by the numerous bones that sit in the bowl in front of Zapata, and by the severed hand and foot strewn to his right.^{iv} Across the machete’s blade is a heart with an arrow through it, Zapata’s initials, and the statement “I serve my owner.” The butt of a rifle, visible behind Zapata’s left, is also marked with Zapata’s initials. Labeling the weapons as belonging to Zapata implicates him as responsible for the deaths of the hacendados being eaten. Behind Zapata is a dark sky and vultures are sitting on a brick wall. Next to Zapata stands a miniaturized figure who also wears campesino’s uniform. His dark skin, large flat nose, and large lips indicate he is of African descent.^v African slaves were imported to Mexico as between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.^{vi} In Mexico, those of African descent were considered inferior and barbaric, as were the indigenous of Mexico. Based on these beliefs discriminatory laws were established to deny them social and political rights.^{vii} The dark skinned figure in the caricature can be read as representative of all campesinos. Thus both groups are equated as uncivilized and without rights, which denies them claim to social or political justice.

Although known among members of the ruling class in Mexico as a “criminal” during his lifetime, Zapata has subsequently come to signify also ruling-class institutions, seamless ideologies, and a unified national heritage. The difference between the above grisly illustration and that of Zapata as a popular icon raises many questions regarding the construction of Zapata as villain, and eventually as the personification of national identity, cultural heritage, justice, and regional tourism. What happened to convert a violent outlaw, who had to be eliminated, into a national and cultural symbol?

Sam Slick Poster Collection - "Formerly known as the International Archive of Latin American Political Posters, the Slick Collection (renamed after the collector who formed it) contains nearly 10,000 images (silk-screen, photo off-set, woodcut, and block print) from Latin America and Spain. The great majority produced between the mid 1960s and the late 1990s. Latin American political posters newly acquired from other sources are also incorporated into the collection. All of the countries of Latin America, as well as Puerto Rico and the United States, are represented in the Slick Collection, permitting the comparative study of such themes as political mobilization and mass communication, opposition to dictatorship and imperialism, the reemergence of democratic regimes, popular movements for literacy, public health, land reform, human rights, and the adaptation and reworking into Latin American posters of pop art, conceptual art, and other styles and visual languages. In its scope and depth, the Slick Collection is unmatched." (31-33)

[slide] Editorial Botas Book Covers Collection – The Botas collection comprises 147 books (all first editions) issued between 1919 and the 1950s by Editorial Botas, one of Mexico's preeminent 20th C publishing houses. Many of the books published by the company were strongly nationalistic and helped disseminate ideas and values promulgated by the government from the 1920s into the 1940s. Their covers were often designed with a similar purpose and serve as vivid examples of the popular graphic art inspired by the aims of Mexican Revolution.

The Ediciones Botas Pictorial Collection is comprised of book covers, original book cover art, illustrations, technical drawings, manuscripts, and photographs related to the Mexican book publisher Ediciones Botas. The Ediciones Botas Pictorial Collection contains book covers, cover art, illustrations, manuscripts, and other materials from the prominent Mexican book publisher, Ediciones Botas. These materials reveal historical and aesthetic trends from the early to mid-twentieth-century within Mexican culture, society, and book publishing practices. Discussing the research value of the published book covers, Wendy Louise Pedersen writes, "The Editorial Botas book covers are important examples of twentieth-century Mexican graphic art, which exhibit an orientation toward populism, modernism, and the aesthetics of the nation's indigenous artistic patrimony" (Pedersen, 33).

Describing the origins and life of Ediciones Botas, Pedersen writes: Spaniard Andres Botas immigrated to Mexico from his native Spain in the late nineteenth century. He had earlier established a large tobacco plantation in Cuba, and a tobacco shop in Mexico City. There were very few publishing houses in Mexico at the time; moreover, there was no paper industry and high tariffs made the production of books

economically impractical. Most books were imported from Spain and other European countries, with a smaller number sent by the more established publishing of Argentina and Chile (Loyo 1988). According to family interviews (Zahar Vergara 1995), a friend of Botas in Barcelona had exported several cartons of books to Mexico City and the importers were unable to claim the goods. Botas was asked to intervene in his friend's situation and sell the books, which he manages to do with ease. In 1907, reflecting this success, the cigar store became a bookstore, the

In 1916, Botas' son, Gabriel, arrived from Cuba to take over the business operations of the bookstore. The Mexican Revolution, which was still underway at this time, created conditions favorable to publishing through reduction of tariffs and the adoption of a sustained effort toward national literacy. Don Gabriel organized literary circles and began the publishing venture that became Editorial Botas, bringing out works from many distinguished Mexican novelists and thinkers of the day. Well-known graphic artists were contracted to produce eye-catching covers, some of which were signed and others not. The house actively published literary and philosophical works, often of a sharply nationalist bent, as well as legal textbooks. When Don Gabriel died in 1968, responsibility for the publishing house passed to his son, Andres. The younger Andres Botas was a practicing attorney with little interest in the family's publishing activities, which dwindled to a single criminology journal before ceasing altogether in 1973. The bookstore remains in the hands of the founder's great grandchildren, who have expressed interest in reissuing some of the classic works under the Botas imprint (Zahar Vergara 1975). (Pedersen, 35-36)

[slides - Profs, Van de Velde Archive] - Paul Van de Velde was born in Belgium, but lived much of his life in Mexico. He served some years there as Belgian consul and was also a mining engineer. Most of his time in Mexico was spent in Oaxaca, where he owned a gold and silver mine. The majority of the materials in this collection were written or acquired in Mexico by Paul Van de Velde during his term of diplomatic service for the Belgian government from around 1910 to 1940 primarily during his tenure in Oaxaca.

ⁱ Davidson's publication serves as a primary resource for descriptions of the collection. Another important source for descriptive narratives of the collections is the Rocky Mountain Online Archive (RMOA).

ⁱⁱ *Third Text* has been in production for twenty-six years and publishes six issues annually, online and in print by Routledge, Taylor & Francis, UK.

ⁱⁱⁱ These comments were made by Russ Davidson in a phone interview on June 26, 2013.

^{iv} Michael J. Schreffler establishes that cannibalism is a construction of the sixteenth century and visually linked to indigenous inhabitants of the Americas, even though it was almost never witnessed, and engaged as a “differentiating mechanism.” Illustrations from this period with references to cannibalism and the indigenous Americans constructed an image of a savage and chaotic culture that would ultimately be civilized and governed by European powers. See Michael J. Schreffler, “Vespucci Rediscovered America: The Pictorial Rhetoric of Cannibalism in Early Modern Culture,” *Art History* 28:3 (June 2005) 295-310.

^v The point to emphasize this figure’s skin color is a common practice and marker of identity that can be traced to Spanish colonial caste paintings, which served to visually illustrate the categories and social rank constructed for people based on racial distinctions.

^{vi} See R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720*, 13.

^{vii} See Laura A. Lewis, “African Mexicans,” *Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society & Culture* (volume 1, A-L), Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2.