

Abstract

The last three decades have seen the Southern Mexican city of Oaxaca evolve to become an autonomous centre for the creation and promotion of contemporary art on state, national and international levels. The present research's original contribution to knowledge is the analytical investigation of an art movement's response to the political and technological effects characteristic of postmodernity and effected through globalisation.

The research uses a hybrid theoretical framework that includes the work of: Fredric Jameson to discuss postmodernism; Nelly Richard to characterise a postmodern Latin America; Homi K. Bhabha to analyse the postcolonial context and the creation of agency; and, inherent to this structure and the context, the work of Néstor García Canclini.

The theoretical investigation is supported by ethnography that ascertains how hybrid political thought and community altruism characterise the Oaxacan art community and the aesthetic expression practised by a new generation of its members.

Oaxacan contemporary art is based on the success of the post-Rupture primitivist magical realism practised originally by important Oaxacan artists living and travelling in other locations. The most recent generation of contemporary artists in Oaxaca integrates with, upholds and promotes the model of cultural production that is now inextricably intertwined with the local and wider communities.

Participant observation and the analysis of the behaviour of the artists studied, focused the investigation on the efficient interaction between artists and collective action as an integrated sector of civil society. The research determines how the artists studied and the wider Oaxacan art community applies their knowledge of global communications and information technology to create and market a cultural product and promote a postmodern social and political perspective.

Regarded as a solid sector of the local and regional community due to its national and international standing, the Oaxacan art community constructs political power from significant, direct involvement with micro-projects to engaging in partnerships with state and federal stakeholders in large-scale cultural endeavours. The research discusses projects instigated and undertaken by the artists studied, including the call for a pacifistic solution to the Oaxaca Conflict of 2006, a six-month socio-political uprising caused by actual and historic conditions in the national and regional Left-Right political duel.

The strength of the art community is founded on necessary and reinforcing collective action in both artistic and altruistic projects; often combined through the direct use of art in the creation of funds and media-empowered support towards achieving a perceived common good that centres on the protection of identity and the political defence of diversity.