RASQUACHE DOMESTICANA: Technologies of meXicana Self-Fashioning

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Abstract: The theoretical frameworks of rasquachismo and domesticana are combined into an analytic for fashion that we term rasquache domesticana. We apply rasquache domesticana to the self-fashioning of meXicanas both within the domestic sphere and migrating into e-commerce by meXicana vendors. We use "meXicanas" (Fregoso 2003) to refer to women who embody the cultural exchange and hybridity between Chicanas and Mexicanas. We identify three technologies of self-fashioning meXicanas use: simple modification (adding embellishments, trims, and jewelry to mainstream garments to reflect meXicana culture), restructuring modifications (using garments to create other garments to express an ethnic aesthetic), and professional modification (professionals repurposing fabrics to create new clothing). We conclude that the symbolic forms used to adorn the body follow Chela Sandoval's (2000) concept of movidas. meXicanas use movidas as survival tactics to represent their intersectional identities through the materiality of fashion and thereby resist patriarchal restrictions in their communities, bond with other women, and expand beauty standards beyond those imposed by mainstream fashion codes.

Keywords: *meXicanas, fashion modification, gendered rasquache, rasquache domesticana*

In this article, we focus on the self-fashioning practices that originate among working-class meXicanas (Fregoso 2003) and that may persist even as class status changes. We apply the concept of *rasquache domesticana*, which combines Tomás Ybarra-Frasutro's (1988) theoretical construct rasquachismo and Amalia Mesa-Bains' (1999) genderization of this notion—which she termed domesticana—by examining aesthetics produced by women in the home. We identify three technologies (Sayers 2014) used by meXicanas that embody rasquache domesticana: simple modification (e.g.,

adding embellishments, trims, and jewelry to mainstream garments to reflect meXicana culture), restructuring modifications (e.g., using garments to create other garments to express an ethnic aesthetic—using a rebozo to make a dress), and professional modification (e.g., professionals repurposing fabrics to create new clothing). We use the term "technologies" in the cultural studies sense of the concept as existing in "recursive and embodied relationships with their operators" and understood "through their social, cultural, economic, and technical processes" (Sayers 2014, 236). This theoretical approach informs our proposed concept of rasquache domesticana, which is applied to the various techniques used to craft fashion in the domestic sphere, the movidas (Sandoval 2000), or political machinations, they represent, as well as to refer to the resulting aesthetic reflecting meXicana subjectivities. From our analysis, we surmise that meXicanas practicing these three technologies of rasquache domesticana self-fashioning results in an aesthetic that represents their intersectional identities through the materiality of fashion. Through their intentional embellishments, they resist patriarchal restrictions within their communities, bond with other women, and expand beauty standards beyond those imposed by mainstream fashion codes.

We lean on Hurtado and Cantú's (2020) adaptation of the self-descriptive term "meXicana" to analyze this formation's self-fashioning practices. Cultural critic Rosa-Linda Fregoso in her book *meXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands* (2003) was the first to propose the term, noting it:

> draws attention to the historical, material, and discursive effects of contact zones and exchanges among various communities on the Mexico-U.S. border, living in the shadows of more than 150 years of conflict, interactions, and tensions. 'me-Xicana' references processes

> of transculturation, hybridity, and cultural exchanges—the social and economic interdependency and power relations structuring the lives of inhabitants on the borderlands (Fregoso 2003, xiv).

Hurtado and Cantú (2020) propose that meXicanas' self-fashioning aesthetics illustrate the inextricable ties that Mexicanas and Chicanas have in the construction of their social identities, cultural production, and visual representation by self and others. The term meXicana exalts the hybridity produced by la mezcla (the mixture), which is essential to all that is lo mexicana/x and Chicana/x, and highlights the resistance and creativity inherent in this hybrid. meXicana encompasses the indigenous roots of Mexico while simultaneously recognizing mestizaje—the racial inheritance of the sixteenth-century Spanish conquest and subsequent colonizations, including the French (1861-1867), and the United States, which led to the annexation after Mexico's defeat in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) of the territory that becomes the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The self-fashioning of meXicanas signals this crossroads (esta bocacalle) of multiple cultures and histories.

Our examination of meXicana self-fashioning is a multi-method approach. First, we reviewed writings by Chicana scholars who describe elements of rasquache domesticana. In addition, both authors conducted ethnographic observations over a five-year period with various meXicana constituencies at multiple venues. We visited clothing stores (such as mainstream outlets like Macy's, Dillard's, and Anthropologie, discount outlets like Ross and Marshall's, and second-hand stores like Goodwill), where we had informal conversations with shoppers and store attendants. We visited these venues in northern and southern California, south Texas (including San Antonio and Houston), Chicago and New York City. In addition, we met informally with working-class residents

living in predominantly Mexican American communities in areas where these stores are located. To obtain observations from meXicana professionals, we engaged in informal conversations with meXicana professors and staff in several universities and at professional conferences such as MALCS (Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social), NACCS (National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies), and the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa, El Mundo Zurdo. We also conducted several interviews with vendors of meXicana fashion at these conferences, many of whom have Internet websites where they display their wares. Extensive field notes were recorded for each of these instances. Our analysis of these various nodes of data allowed us to identify the three technologies of rasquache domesticana: simple modification, restructuring modifications, and professional modification. We contend that the use of these various technologies by meXicanas to adorn the body are an example of Chela Sandoval's (2000) concept of movidas (i.e., mechanisms used to recapture agency). Transforming clothing and accessorizing can be understood as one of many movidas meXicanas use to validate their intersectional identities, their bodies, and their cultural symbols. These particular maneuvers manipulate the materiality of fashion to resist patriarchal restrictions in their communities, bond with other women, and expand beauty standards beyond those imposed by mainstream fashion codes.

meXicanas and the Conceptualization of Rasquache Domesticana

meXicanas as a group come from working-class backgrounds where necessity has dictated the creative use of resources to maximize family and community survival.[1] The cultural practice of making something out of nothing gave rise to Ybarra-Frausto's (1988) theoretical framework of rasquachismo. From his point of view, rasquachismo "is an underdog perspective" that takes the position of the "have nots" and has "evolved as a bicultural sensibility" (7). Gonzales aptly summarizes the class positioning of rasquachismo:

> Rasquache, together with the practice of *rasquachismo*, is a working-class, Chicana/o/x response to lived experiences of oppression. With roots in the indigenous Nahuatl language of Mexico, rasquache indicates low-class behaviors and cultural practices. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Chicana/o/x arts movement, particularly across the American Southwest, re-envisioned rasquache as a subversive response to anti-Mexican racism within the United States. As a Chicana/o/x cultural expression, the word connotes myriad ways that Mexican bodies, practices, and spaces of congregation are racialized and dismissed as deviant and low class. At the core of rasquache is the practice of making do with whatever is at hand (2020, 3).

Whereas Gonzalez highlights the structural and classed nature of the enactment of rasquachismo, Mesa-Bains (1999) elaborates on the characteristics of the rasquache aesthetic:

> In rasquachismo, the irreverent and spontaneous are employed to make the most from the least. In rasquachismo, one has a stance that is both defiant and inventive. Aesthetic expression comes from discards, fragments, even recycled everyday materials such as tires, broken plates, plastic containers, which are recombined with elaborate and bold display in shrines (capillas), domestic décor (altares), and even embellishment of the car. …it is a combination of resistant and resilient attitudes devised to allow the Chicano to survive and persevere with a sense of dignity. The capacity to hold life together with bits of string, old coffee cans, and broken mirrors in a dazzling gesture of aesthetic bravado at is at the heart of rasquachismo (1999, 161).

Rasquachismo has a masculinist referent, and, therefore, not uniform across sexuality categories (García 1998). Mesa-Bains sharpens the theoretical framework of rasquachismo by adding a feminist lens, recognizing that because of a social-constructed gender binary, women are largely responsible for "child rearing, healing and health, home embellishment, and personal glamorization" (1999, 161). She engenders and politicizes the notion of rasquachismo by proposing that within the domestic sphere, meXicanas use their housekeeping skills in creative ways to beautify the home and gain some measure of self-agency. The domestic sphere is not without conflict and potential oppression (McMahon 2013), but Mesa-Bains also sees it as a potential space of creativity: cooking meals, building altars, crocheting, embroidering, gardening, sewing and meXicanas' self-adornment all provide opportunities for creative production. Admittedly, the everyday activities characteristic of domestic life can be both oppressive and serve as aesthetic sites that resists those very same hegemonic ideologies that delimit the life opportunities for women. We agree with Mesa-Bains' (2003) merger of the concept of domesticana with rasquachismo to better account for the ways meXicanas' aesthetic production in the domestic sphere is subversive and political. Furthermore, we draw in Sandoval's (2000) explication of movidas. Building on Gloria Anzaldúa's work on border crossings, Sandoval contends that movidas can be moves, shifts, motions, jumps, dances, turnings, travels, journeys—that is, any action indicating movement. Individuals who have experienced different social systems by traversing cultures, languages, and nation-states (among other border crossings) learn to actively and creatively subvert hegemonic norms and attitudes through various movidas. Movidas destabilize the potentially devastating effects of inscribing the body through race, class, ethnicity, ableness, and sexuality using humor, irony, visual display, political action, cleverness, wisdom, and small acts of resistance. For the meXicana women studied here, this means the tactics they use to disrupt the limited range of visual representations found in mainstream fashion magazines.

Fashion as Art with a Political Sensibility

Ybarra-Frausto and Mesa-Bains positioned the origins of a Chicano/a art aesthetic as resulting from Chicanas/os/xs' history of displacement, colonization, and bicultural sensibilities. Fregoso (2003) aptly articulates these historical dynamics as the conditions that prescribe the way meXicanas live between borders of all sorts—national, class, cultural, linguistic, political, and social, among others. We draw from these three theorizations to analyze meXicana self-fashioning (which others have called self-adornment and personal glamorization [Mesa-Bains 1999]), and map out the politicization inherent in these practices with the concept of rasquache domesticana.

Additionally, we adhere to Perez's (2020) perspective of analyzing fashion as art as we approach meXicana self-fashioning as an artistic expression. Fashion can be conceptualized as an aesthetic (which, according to the Oxford Dictionary means the perception of the beautiful in nature and art) that can be expressed in distinct ways by different cultural groups, such as Chicanos/as/xs and Latinos/as/xs (Hurtado 2006). U.S. Latinos/as/xs have developed various fashion aesthetics that are shaped by language, region, age, and historical period. For example, homie style, Tejana style, gangsta style, LA style, and even haute couture are some of these aesthetic styles. These styles are not mutually exclusive; they comingle and layer upon each other, providing a visual identifier of what is considered lo mexicano/a/x and, more generally, lo Latina/o/x (Hurtado 2006). The meXicana rasquache domesticana aesthetic is but one of these assorted Latina/x aesthetic styles.

Scholars have examined Chicanas/os/xs self-fashioning in several spheres: women in Zoot suits (Ramírez 2009), quinceañeras (González 2019), Chicana faculty in the academy (Díaz-Sánchez 2020), and performers like Selena (Paredez 2009) and Lydia Mendoza (McMahon 2020). We address

a version of Latina/x style that is particular to a meXicana experience and is best encapsulated by the fused concepts of rasquachismo and domesticana. We conceptualize rasquachismo domesticana as encompassing both the creation of clothes and "day-to-day" exchanges of "working-class Chicanas" that include "home embellishments, home altar maintenance, healing traditions, and personal feminine pose and style (Mesa-Bains 2003, 303) and their oppositional undercurrents. Mesa-Bain's feminist revision of rasquachismo better articulates this function of meXicana fashion aesthetics. Although both aesthetics—rasquachismo and domesticana—are viewed as survival techniques (Mesa-Bains 2003, 298), domesticana emerges from a position of "resistance within the domestic sphere to 'majority culture' and as an 'affirmation of cultural values,' yet it also serves as critique and intervention to change those structures of patriarchal restrictions placed on women within that same culture" (Mesa-Bains 2003, 302; Barnet-Sánchez, Ybarra-Frausto, and Mesa-Bains 2005, 93).

The political dimension of feminist resistance to patriarchy through rasquache domesticana is not present in previous discussions of rasquachismo as a Latina/o/x style or sensibility. Rasquachismo primarily describes an aesthetic, not a position of resistance achieved through creativity, women bonding, and disruption of mainstream visual norms (Mesa-Bains 2003). The women who create as producers and/or practitioners of meXicana fashions are craftily responding to their exclusion in the mainstream fashion world, the patriarchal beliefs within their culture, and their ethnic and gendered historical erasure in the United States.

A domesticana sensibility opposes the tensions of control and domination within ethnic expectations and mainstream narratives; therefore, when meXicanas apply these techniques to modify clothing and accessories that

adorn their bodies, it is a political act. We find utility in Sandoval's concept of movidas to help make sense of the oppositional nature of these maneuvers. In "Invention as Critique: Neologisms in Chicana Art Theory," Jennifer González (2003) argues that it is not the material that makes art political, but how viewers read the sign. González states,

> Resistance is not a quality located *within or performed by* the work of art. Instead, it is a semantic transformation performed by the artist and agreed upon by the audience. By rereading signs in the world and ascribing to them a new meaning, by rejecting the constraints of one semiotic system in favor of another, by reconstructing the frames of reference through which one is defined and by which one is given access to power, these artists create a space for others to examine their own frames of reference, their own ideologies. This is what I see as the resistant element of *domesticana* (322).

Therefore, it is not only the intentional choices meXicanas make regarding how to dress and accessorize their bodies; it is also the how those choices are read by community(ies) that creates political impact (Hernandez 2009). Because many working class meXicanas share similar fashion, aesthetic, cultural, language and political codes, the creator and the community are able to read and interpret the political intervention intended by meXicana fashions. Hence, the garments become politically charged, communicating people's history, identity, and resistance. It is but one of the varied movidas meXicanas use to resist hegemonic norms that erase their histories and identities.

In Chon Noriega's article "Fashion Crimes" (2001), the author considers the use of Chicana/o/x fashion, arguing that missing from Chicana/Chicano Studies research is how identity is expressed with clothing across different

time periods. Noriega states, "With Chicano fashion, the ornamental is utilitarian because it advertises a social conflict, yet it also disguises an identity from the state. It is strategic" (7). The use of "Chicano fashion" as political action produces a "stylization" of ethnicity that signify distinct historical moments of "identity play" (Hernandez 2009, 109). Moreover, Chicanas and Chicanos have a distinctive style given their ethnicized and racialized relationship to the dominant "repertoire of fashion vocabularies" (Hurtado 2006, 147). While meXicana fashion aesthetics reflect a rasquache style, it also can be understood in relation "to an individual's social identities" (150). The way meXicanas adorn and dress their bodies is rooted in a legacy of expressive forms of resistance, pride, and history (Nájera Ramírez and Cantú 2009). In effect, meXicana self-fashioning adds new "aesthetic vocabularies" to existing dominant fashion codes (González 2008, 14), complicating and layering a visual landscape that otherwise would remain uniform to mainstream norms. The movidas required to pursue a rasquache domesticana aesthetic may be additionally conceptualized as a form of *disidentification* (Muñoz 1999) with mainstream fashion dictums in that they exalt an aesthetic that opposes the homogenization of what is conventionally desirable in self-fashioning.

The cultural practice of rasquache domesticana is a powerful tool used by meXicanas to solve the dilemma of visually expressing their intersectional identity constellations based on gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Additionally, meXicanas engaged in rasquache domesticana to modify clothes that are produced under oppressive corporate conditions and that are made to conform to mainstream fashion codes that exclude their body types and bicultural rasquache aesthetics. We propose that self-fashioning takes place within the domestic sphere because mainstream fashion and aesthetics do not reflect the hybrid existence of meXicanas who draw

from multiple fashion codes, have limited resources to spend on "personal glamorization" (Mesa-Bains 1999, 161), and have experienced a social and cultural tradition of resourceful and imaginative beautification in all aspects of their lives—homes, gardens, fiestas, and cultural celebrations like quinceañeras, weddings, and baptisms. These collective processes or movidas of decoration and adornment are primarily the responsibility of women in meXicana communities and are transmitted from generation to generation. However, the continuity of these practices may fluctuate as women's circumstances change through education, travel, marital status, becoming parents, and social mobility (Nájera Ramírez and Cantú 2009).

How do meXicanas, then, create their own space and sense of style to contest their exclusion from the prevailing fashion scene? While making one's own clothes might not be practical economically for everyone—even with the popularity of the successful television series *Project Runway* and the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) movement—meXicanas often find creative ways to modify mainstream clothing and foster a meXicana fashion aesthetic. Participating in the production of fashion will continue to be fraught with contradiction, however, because, unless one makes all one's own clothes, it is difficult to circumvent oppression because of the exploitive nature of mainstream mass-produced products (Macías 2016).

In the following discussion, we outline three techniques that meXicanas employ to self-fashion clothing and accessories that reflect a rasquache domesticana aesthetic and politics: simple modification (adding flourishes to mass-produced garments), restructuring modifications (combining two or more garments into one), and professional modification (creating items to sell rather than for personal use). In other words, these technologies allow meXicanas to forefront their intersectional identity constellations

(Hurtado and Cantú 2020) of ethnicity, class, sexuality, race, and gender in their attire—a political statement validating their identity. Importantly, we understand these movements as intentional interventions to address meXicana's exclusion from mainstream fashion. We also recognize that their politicized creativity, adaptability and resourcefulness through self-adornment results in a distinctive aesthetic style.

Self-Fashioning Through Rasquache Domesticana

Technology Number One: Simple Modification

Making the family's clothing has historically been considered women's work (Jones 2010).[2] Until the advent of large-scale manufacturing, one of the main activities of womenfolk was to dress the entire family and the home—from diapers and work clothes to tablecloths, window curtains, and quilts.[3] For many women, the creation of clothing afforded them the opportunity to gather and bond with each other in the domestic sphere (Klein and Myrdal 1956). Obviously, this feminized labor has been affected by technology, with the invention of the sewing machine having the most radical impact on clothes production. The sewing machine was introduced to homes in the 1850s and was quickly anointed by the popular and influential *Godey's Lady's Book* (1860)[4] as "the queen of inventions." The sewing machine "was heralded as a labor-saving device that would transform the domestic lives of women everywhere."[5] In addition to reducing the time and effort in clothes production, the sewing machine has provided an opportunity for women to apply their creativity to self-adornment. While clothing manufacturing has become a global industry over the decades, the uneven progress of textile industrialization has meant the home-based sewing machine continues to be central to domestic activities within many Latina/o/x families. The uneven progress of industrialization has influenced how much the sewing machine is still central to women's domestic activities in producing family wear.

One of the many ways meXicanas practice rasquache domesticana[6] is to use a generic garment and, through simple modification, turn it into an expression of meXicana aesthetics, which encompasses ethnic and racially determined components.[7] The modifications are made with everyday products––a sewing machine, a glue gun, découpage materials, paints, and bedazzling tools––and/or accessorized with jewelry. Many meXicanas have written eloquently about their experiences with la máquina de coser (literally, the machine that sews) as they came to appreciate that the construction of clothes, a time-consuming job, no longer had to be completed by hand once a sewing machine was acquired. Norma E. Cantú, a professor and writer from Laredo, Texas, relates, "My mother, an accomplished seamstress, taught me to sew on my Grandmother Celia's old Singer sewing machine when I was seven or eight years old. As I grew older, I sewed garments for myself and my siblings as well as for friends. By the 1960s, I was also embellishing my clothing with intricate embroidery" (2020, 25). Cantú's narrative is echoed by another professor and author Josie Méndez-Negrete (2020) who spent the early years of her childhood in Mexico, eventually immigrating to San Jose, California.

> Some of my fondest memories are of the magical times spent by my Tía Hermelinda on my tiny chair, peddling the sewing machine while she put together the clothing she designed. I learned to value the uniqueness of clothing produced by sewing and embroidering the garments I made for my dolls. By her side, watching her piece together her creations, I imaged decorating my own dresses with hand-stitched flowers and other images, inadvertently developing my Mexican aesthetic: nopales, magueys, sombreros, and even burros—cactus, magueys, Mexican hats, and even donkey images adorned those early pieces. I soon began to sketch ideas for embroidery projects (53).

The sewing machine holds a personal and political space in meXicana history. On the one hand, as Cantú and Méndez-Negrete relate, it is associated with heartwarming domestic memories of learning something new, useful, and pleasurable. In Mexico and other Latin American countries, the sewing machine continues to be used to make clothes across generations.[8]

Simple modifications to mainstream clothing and outfits are also accomplished with mainstream-produced accessories. These modifications are created in the domestic space by individuals for personal use. The general availability of modifiable "clothing and accessories give the consumer the ability to easily manipulate his or her appearance. This ability to generate a self-image offers an agency of self-creation" (Hernandez 2009, 110). For example, accessorizing an outfit with earrings, rings, belt, bracelets, shoes, purse, hair accessories, and makeup can modify a mainstream piece of clothing—say a plain white shirt—into a distinct style, such as the one often associated with the iconic singer Selena (Figure 1).[9]

Practitioners of meXicana rasquache domesticana require considerable knowledge of where to obtain the materials necessary for clothing modifications at a reasonable price. The list of outlets changes regularly–– with old standbys like Goodwill stores and new ones that suddenly pop up and are disseminated by word of mouth. One relatively new, largely popular addition to the list is the Los Angeles-based chain store Forever 21. This retail outlet offers a wide selection of accessories at affordable prices that can be used to ethnicize an outfit. The LA-based company is owned by Korean immigrants, and its product affordability is largely due to its access to the Chinese and Latina immigrant labor force within the city's garment industry. In addition, the company's continual success in providing fashion forward garments and accessories stems from the CEO's young daughters Linda and

Figure 1. Selena, singer and fashion icon, wearing her iconic white shirt, jeans, red lipstick, and large gold hoops.

Esther Chang, who oversee marketing and visuals (Moore 2010). The Chang sisters are formally educated in the fashion business and, in combination with being in touch with the latest LA youth trends, they rapidly translate high-end styles into fast fashion.[10] Korean culture has many aesthetic elements similar to meXicana fashion—colorful, embroidered garments, similar silhouettes (e.g., gathered skirts), and elaborate layering. These

traditional elements are translated by the Chang sisters to contemporary clothing, and it is not inconceivable that growing up in Los Angeles, a predominantly Mexican and Latina/o/x city, has also influenced their stylistic preferences for the clothing sold at Forever 21.

Because of the wide range of clothing styles available at Forever 21, there are multiple possibilities for simple modifications. Furthermore, much of the merchandise offered exemplifies one of the primary characteristics of the rasquache aesthetic—bright colors, chillantes, which are favored over muted and somber hues (Ybarra-Frausto 1991). The culturally specific color palate further suggests an overlapping of Korean and meXicana style and sensibilities that lend themselves well to being altered with a rasquache domesticana aesthetic.

As Cantú (2020) and Méndez-Negrete (2020) indicate in their narratives, the working-class origins of many meXicanas makes them especially sensitive to cost when purchasing garments. True to rasquache domesticana practice, grandmothers and mothers pass down the skill of finding bargains at discount outlets like Ross, K-Mart, Sears, Marshall's, T.J. Maxx, Goodwill stores, and tiendas de segunda (second-hand stores) in general. The garments are bought at bargain prices and then modified. An illustration of a simple modification is a white shift dress, which was bought for nine dollars and ninety-nine cents in the junior section at Ross, a chain discount store (Figure 2). The dress was extremely short, designed for a young adolescent girl. The owner of this dress, a meXicana faculty member, added a border of embroidered white cloth salvaged from a discarded DKNY duvet cover. The embroidered material was too lightweight so the material was doubled, adding heft to the four-inch border.

Figure 2. White shift dress bought for $9.99 in the junior section at Ross, a chain discount store, and modified by adding length with a remnant from a DKNY duvet cover. (Right) Simple modification detail on a white shift dress.

Another rasquache domesticana practice is to venture beyond discount stores and purchase sale garments at upscale clothing outlets. Many meXicanas, especially those who have become educated professionals, have noticed that upscale stores often have an assortment of ethnicized clothing on their sale racks. Mainstream consumers seem to avoid these garments, seemingly preferring clothing with more muted colors and less embellishment. While Méndez-Negrete (2020) notes in her narrative that second-hand stores became her "treasure trove" for finding materials for modifications, many professional meXicanas find upscale stores like Nordstrom's, Bloomingdale's, J. Crew, and Anthropologie to be treasure troves of mass-produced ethnicized garments at extremely discounted prices. Once modified, these garments fit the rasquache domesticana aesthetic. For example, a

Figure 3. Embroidered Anthropologie dress. The modification entailed adding a strip of blue satin material with rickrack to the hem of the dress. (Right) Simple modification detail on a blue embroidered dress.

young meXicana lawyer with a limited budget purchased an embroidered blue dress at the exclusive chain store Anthropologie (Figure 3). This store specializes in high-end ethnicized clothing. The price of dresses ranges from ninety-nine dollars to over five hundred dollars. This particular dress originally priced at one-hundred and forty-eight dollars ended up on sale for thirty-seven dollars. Anthropologie's ethnicized clothing usually includes intensely colored fabrics and the addition of lace or other trims. The blue dress in Figure 3 illustrates a trim that is akin to Oaxacan-embroidered fabric. This store targets relatively young consumers and therefore many of the dresses they sell are too short for older women. The dress was lengthened by a costurera (a seamstress) who added a strip of satin fabric embellished with rickrack trim at the bottom. The satin strip was

purchased at a fabric store and is usually used as a border for baby blankets. The rickrack is often found on folklórico dresses from the state of Jalisco in Mexico.

Clothing is not the only object meXicanas modify. Accessories, including tote bags and purses, also undergo modification. Figure 4 features a "purse" that was originally a baby bag priced at one-hundred and forty-eight dollars at Ross but was on sale for twenty-five dollars and ninety-five cents. It came with a baby bottle warmer and mat for diaper changing. The purse, purchased by a meXicana resident of the farming community in Watsonville, California, was modified by adding a lentejuela (sequined) Virgen de Guadalupe patch. The patch was bought for seven dollars at a Mexican store in Santa Cruz, California, and was attached, rasquache style, with a couple of safety pins. And in true domesticana tradition, the bottle warmer and diaper mat were offered to a pregnant meXicana professor in a university Ethnic Studies department. The two women were friends and had frequently exchanged clothing as part of their relationship.

While many meXicanas purchase clothing and accessories at retail stores these days, some inject a rasquache domesticana style into their garments through the use of simple modifications, embellishing store-bought outfits with trims and accessories that are often of Mexican origin. It is not vital where the clothing was obtained, but how the clothing is fashioned and worn. These modifications, while simple, are bold reflections of rasquache domesticana in style and intention. Additionally, these movidas (seeking out bargain mass-produced pieces, identifying ribbons, buttons, beading, patches, ribbon, fabric, etc., and personally sewing them on or working with a costurera) serve to disrupt mainstream style while allowing one to personalize an outfit in meXicana style. Through relatively minor, these acts of self-fashioning allow meXicanas to claim an "agency of self-creation"

Figure 4. Baby bag purchased at the discount store Ross modified by adding the lentejuela (sequined) Virgen de Guadalupe patch. (Right) Simple modification detail of a baby bag.

(Hernandez 2009, 110), represent their intersectional identities, and resist patriarchal restrictions and dominant fashion codes.

Technology Number Two: Restructuring Modifications

The restructuring of mainstream clothes and accessories is a second modification technique employed by meXicanas (Lopez Lyman and Hurtado 2021). This modification is accomplished by transforming mass-produced attire, requiring a greater level of creativity and skill beyond simple modification. Restructuring sometimes takes the form of extreme embellishment and bedazzling to the point that the original garment is not apparent. Another form is the creative restructuring of one garment, say a t-shirt, by adding it to another garment, for example, a jacket. The restructuring of the garments results in a unique piece of clothing whose previous form or function may not be recognizable. Figure 5 illustrates this technique.

A meXicana staff member at a California university was inspired to restructure three jean jackets by adding sections of three different t-shirts: one from a Lila Downs concert, the second from the El Mundo Zurdo conference, and the third from Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles. This selection of t-shirts is deliberate as they represent critically minded individuals or social justice issues. Lila Downs is a musical artist whose father is white and mother is a Mixtec Indigenous woman from Oaxaca. She is best known for incorporating her multiethnic background in her music as well as in her fashion aesthetic, emphasizing her Mexican Oaxacan heritage (Guevara 2014). In 2013, she received a Grammy for Best Regional Mexican or Tejano album. The t-shirt was bought outside of her concert in Napa, California. Downs allows anyone to reproduce her image and to make a profit from their labor. In this case, the t-shirts were sold by young Latinas/os/xs for a mere ten dollars. The El Mundo Zurdo conference (The World of the Queer) sponsored by the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa which is featured on the second t-shirt, represents a congregation of Chicana/x and Indigenous scholars who continue to explore the work of Anzaldúa after her untimely passing in 2004. The international conference, held every eighteen months, is named after her theory that called for unity among oppressed people and highlights the continual study of Anzaldúa's spiritual and intellectual work (https://elmundozurdo.wordpress.com). The third t-shirt is from an LA-based organization Homeboy Industries, which is dedicated to training previously incarcerated men. Homeboy Industries officially began in 2001 under the guidance of Catholic priest Gregory J. Boyle and has become the largest gang reintegration program in the world (www.homeboyindustries.org). The restructuring modifications made to these three jean jackets are so seamless and aesthetically integrated that most individuals cannot tell where the prints came from and few can guess that in a previous life they were t-shirts.

Figure 5. Three restructured jean jackets with t-shirts from Lila Downs concert, Gloria E. Anzaldúa conference, and Homeboys Industries.

Similar restructuring modifications have been accomplished by meXicanas from the Midwest and Texas by applying cushion covers from Guatemala onto jean jackets, tailoring skirts and blouses from Mexican tablecloths, and inserting home-embroidered textiles in blue jeans' side seams to increase leg flare (Méndez-Negrete 2020). These are just a few examples of garments restructured in the meXicana rasquache domesticana style, in which meXicanas stitch their identity as well as their political concerns and admired historical figures into the practice of self-adornment.

In addition to purchasing new or used clothing and modifying it by adorning or restructuring the garments, meXicanas with more advanced sewing skills may use fabric from old curtains, sheets, and other nonconventional materials and transform them into unique articles of clothing. In nearly every meXicana community, whether in Northern and Southern California, Chicago, New York, San Antonio, Houston, and

South Texas, one can find talented individuals who transform clothes from repurposed materials into elegant masterpieces. Many of these women assign a name to their craft and give themselves the title of costureras (seamstresses), although the translation does not do justice to their highly developed skills. In U.S.-Mexico border towns like Brownsville, McAllen, and Laredo, Texas, meXicanas often cross the border to have clothing custom made by costureras, especially for formal occasions like weddings, quinceañeras, and high school proms (González 2019). meXicanas also cross the border to buy fabric, embroidery materials, and textiles. As Josie Négrete-Mendez recounts (2020), during high school she made sketches of the clothing she wanted to make (or others in her community wanted made), and she would scour las segundas (second-hand stores), Korean stores, and fabric stores to find the right materials for repurposing.

> Once we settled in Santa Clara, California, having left field work behind, I began to repurpose used clothing because I had to make clothes for my sisters and me. …Building on the knowledge of textiles I learned from Tía Hermelinda [in Mexico], I began to seek out expensive material at second-hand stores. If we were going to wear used clothing, it would be those I made with the finest material. It was in Santa Clara that I found my treasure trove. It was also then that embroidering became a creative outlet for fashioning the skirts and blouses I constructed from pre-owned clothing that would become our very own (57).

Repurposing then becomes the most transformative technology of rasquache domesticana and requires a more advanced skill set. These talents comprise the second recognizable technology, a movida meXicanas employ to resist the dictates of mainstream style, supplanting homogeneity with personalization and political intent.

Technology Number Three: Professional Modification

More recently, the practice of the rasquache domesticana aesthetic has extended beyond the home setting and individual self-fashioning, yielding considerable commercial success for meXicana vendors. With the numbers of Latinas/xs increasing in the United States, new markets for clothing consumption are growing (Stepler and Brown 2016). Capitalizing on this opportunity, some meXicanas who create rasquache domesticana clothing using the first two forms of technology have also developed entrepreneurial skills and are now offering their products for sale through online marketing (Lopez Lyman and Hurtado 2021). This commercial strategy to rasquache domesticana makes up technology number three, professional modification.

Professional modification is initiated by individuals who are interested in selling the modified/recreated/new products for profit. A good number of these individuals have had training in fashion, art, and marketing.

Designer and entrepreneur Diana Cabral, who we interviewed through a series of questions via email, is an example of this growing number of proficient Latina/x entrepreneurs selling hand-made garments and accessories with a rasquache domesticana aesthetic. The creator of Sin Fin Designs (designs with no end), Cabral obtained her master of arts degree in 2014 in interdisciplinary studies from California State University, Northridge. Her master's thesis was titled "Fashion Aesthetics: The Legacy of Chicana Fashion on Identity Development." Cabral has combined her academic preparation, her creativity, ingenuity and cultural knowledge to design and market merchandise with a rasquache domesticana aesthetic, exemplifying the meXicana technology of professional modification (see Figures 6 to 8). According to Cabral, the professional modification of products promises unique and expressive pieces of clothing and accessories.[11] Each piece of attire is custom made to fit exactly, and

Figures 6, 7 and 8. Black wedges from Sin Fin Designs, each with different fabrics, to create a unique pattern and style.

the possibilities of personalization are endless. Cabral states, "Sin Fin Designs is about merging different elements such as fashion styles, art, colors, images, fabric patterns, and textures to give each fashion piece a unique look."[12] An example of Cabral's custom work are how she transforms typical black wedges into wearable meXicana art. As shown in Figure 6, pieces of fabric are collaged

onto the wedge heel to create a unique pattern and style; meXicana heritage and pride are expressed through the use of bright colors and iconic images of La Virgen de Guadalupe[13] and Dia de los Muertos affixed to the base of the shoe.[14] The technique of collaging different fabrics obtained from second-hand and discount fabric stores, and even repurposing dish towels, is used to form a unique meXicana design that reflects meXicanas' Mexican/U.S. mixed heritage and survival struggles. This form of professional modification transforms mundane shoes into a creative staple of contemporary meXicana wearables where identity and politics are transformed into fashion that is made for a meXicana consumer, not the producer.

The private practices of rasquache domesticana gain public exposure online via cyber vendors who broadened the reach of this aesthetic. An extensive search of Internet sites using key words such as "Chicana fashion," "Chicana apparel," and "Chicana clothing" allowed us to identify a multitude of online vendors. Most of these cyber vendors are women who successfully made the leap from the private and domestic to the public and virtual as a result of their business skills and or flair for fashion. While growing up, these vendors were exposed to the varying technologies of rasquache domesticana such as sewing clothes, shopping in secondhand stores, and embroidering. These activities usually took place in the company of mothers, grandmothers, and other female relatives. As Cabral (2014) explains:

> Ever since I can remember, clothing and fashion have had a big significance in my life. My mother taught me how to sew by hand when I was about nine years old; she learned how to sew when she was a young girl too, her tía (aunt) taught her. The first thing my mother showed me was how to sew shut a hole in a sock. She explained that by

> placing a light bulb inside a sock and pressing the fabric closely to the bulb I would avoid pricking my fingers with the needle. (1-2)

Cabral's experience is not uncommon; other vendors, such as Diane Tellez from Chicana Apparel, also related learning to sew from their mothers and other family members (Lopez Lyman and Hurtado, 2021).

Cabral produces products for sale that elevate the aesthetic beyond that produced in the family circle and community. As Cabral describes the process:

> My fashion designs are fusions of different fashion styles, colors, images, fabric patterns, and fabric textures. Combining different fashion elements is my stylistic focus. By taking this designing approach, my choices of what I can do are never ending, sin fin. Also, when I fuse different styles into one garment, new and one of kind designs develop. In fact, my designer label is Fusionista; a woman that fuses different elements together, which mirrors my Chicana identity, a rich mixture of biological and cultural influences. I enjoy replicating garments from past eras and adding my personal touch to them to make them slightly different, such as 1950's Rockabilly and mid 1940's Pachuca clothing. I also modify existing garments to give them a fashion boost and at the same time recycle used clothing.…. I call my designs Chicana fashion. … Chicana fashion represents the cultural and political context of the present in dialogue with Chicana social history (4-5).

Cabral extends and transforms the childhood practices of rasquache domesticana learned in the familial sphere to an aesthetic that embraces her complicated experiences, history, and social justice commitments.

Emboldened with newly acquired entrepreneurial skills, vendors like Cabral use both simple modification and restructuring modifications to produce products for a growing meXicana/x and Latina/x market. However, this technology is unique because these pieces are sold rather than worn by the creator. Moreover, because online vendors fabricate this aesthetic for the public sphere, their creations qualify as formal fashion. Thus, this third technology of meXicana rasquache domesticana is not only a creative way to individually express cultural pride, heritage, and activism, it also becomes a way to pursue a career in fashion design (Cabral 2014; Lopez Lyman and Hurtado 2021).

Conclusion

meXicanas have learned to see beyond a basic item of clothing item and instead imagine how it might authentically represent their history, culture, and language. They envision and actualize aspects of their heritage, assembling or reassembling garments and accessories for their own purposes. Stacy Macías (2016), a meXicana professor, gives an example of this when she describes how her working class sixty-five-year-old mother restyled a leopard print blouse she bought for a mere four dollars and ninety-nine cents. Her mother was not satisfied with how the neckline fit, so she rushed over to her neighbor, a costurera, and together they refashioned the garment to produce a flattering form for Macías' mother. The solution—a simple modification—entailed a neckline showing a little cleavage, befitting a leopard skin print.

Indeed, all three rasquache domesticana technologies—simple modification, restructuring modifications, and professional modification—are manifestations of the resourcefulness imagination, and sense of style captured by Ybarra-Frausto's rasquachismo; the feminized and feminist

attention to household chores and sites articulated by Mesa-Baines; and the subversive devices meXicanas used to undermine hegemonic ideologies delineated by Sandoval. By mapping the fashion practices of meXicanas, we discerned these various approaches and made sense of them by drawing from and coalescing these theoretical constructs. These technologies typify what Sandoval, in elaborating on Ybarra-Frausto's and Anzaldúa's work further articulates as a movida—a mechanism used by the oppressed to recapture agency even under circumstances of disempowerment. Creating a movida—in Sandoval's terms, remaking a dress, enhancing a blouse, adding length to a dress, bedazzling a bag—allow a meXicana to self-glamorize while simultaneously showcasing one's history, identity, critical consciousness and defiance in a shoe, a necklace, or a skirt for themselves, or for other meXicanas.

Notes

[1] Our analysis focuses on working-class meXicanas; however, the proposed technologies overlap with practices used by other U.S. Latinas/x and we encourage other scholars to explore the aesthetics specific to the histories, immigration patterns, and national cultures of other Latina/x groups.

[2] Jacqueline Jones (2010) discusses mending and making clothes by women who were enslaved and worked in the master's house. African women had sewing skills before arriving at the plantation.

[3] According to Alice Kessler-Harris (2003), in the United States white women were contracted as house servants and one of their many duties was sewing clothes. In the 1830s, the poverty of the "sewing women" became a national scandal because, although these women had household skills (sewing), they could not earn an income from it. Their sewing skills were not at an industrial level and were considered only good for household labor.

[4] *Godey's Lady's Book* (1860) began publication in 1830 in Philadelphia and was known as an American women's magazine. Initially, the magazine was named *The Lady's Book* and *Godey's* was added in 1840. *Godey's Lady's Book* included short stories, poetry, lyrics to songs and music sheets, patterns for sewing clothes for dolls, patterns for embroidery, food recipes, current fashion trends, and socially and culturally acceptable behavior for women. Publication ended in 1898 and was replaced by *The Puritan*. (http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=godeylady)

[5] Threading the Needle: Sewing in the Machine Age Exhibit. The exhibit traced the development of the sewing machine in the 1850s to the 1970s. The exhibit also highlighted homemade fashions throughout the decades. (http://www.flysfo.com/museum/exhibitions/threading-needle-sewing-machine-age)

[6] Domesticana ends in an "a," which in Spanish indicates female gender.

[7] meXicanas are both ethnically (which includes language as well as culture) and racially distinct from whites in the United States. Ours is an intersectional analysis that takes into account the intersectional identity constellation of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. We examine women's domestic practices when women include cis-women, trans women, lesbians, and gay men who engage in rasquache domesticana practices.

[8] Many meXicanas also recognize that politically and economically that the sewing machine has become part of a dark legacy, especially in relation to the Los Angeles garment industry, as many Latina/o/x people are sweatshop laborers (Ross 1997; Soldatenko 2000). Therefore, the relationship meXicanas have with sewing machines and the textile/fashion industry is one of creativity but also tension and contradiction. Fashion, with its inherent conflict of influencing beauty norms and dictating what is "in style," calls into question the role meXicanas take given their personal and economic relationship to the industry.

[9] Selena Quintanilla-Pérez is commonly known as "The Queen of Tejano Music." Breaking barriers in the male-dominated Tejano music scene, Selena was nationally recognized as the first Tejano musician to win a Grammy Award for best Mexican/American album in 1994. She is remembered for her music, her tragic murder by the president of her fan club, and her contributions to Chicana fashion. Selena's personal style and curvy body make her a Chicana fashion icon (Paredez 2009). Her legacy continues to impact Chicanas, made evident by a petition from a fan to start a Selena MAC cosmetic collection (Lopez 2016). On October 29, 2016 MAC released the collection, which sold out nationally, having to re-release the line later that year (Feldman 2016).

[10] Both Linda and Esther Chang are Ivy-League educated. Linda Chang studied management at the University of Pennsylvania and Esther Chang studied merchandising and fashion at Cornell University (Moore 2010).

[11] Email interview with Diana Cabral conducted on December 11, 2011.

[12] Email interview with Diana Cabral conducted on December 11, 2011.

[13] La Virgen de Guadalupe is the Catholic patron saint of Mexico. Her origins stem from the Aztec mother goddess named Tonantzín. She is said to have appeared to an Indigenous man, Juan Diego, on December 9, 1531, on the hill of Tepeyac. Chicanas have redefined La Virgen de Guadalupe as a symbol of anti-patriarchy and feminism, and a reminder to her followers of her Indigenous background. Through literature and art, Chicana feminists have reclaimed La Virgen de Guadalupe as a Chicana icon (Castillo 1996; Davalos 2008; Pérez 2007).

[14] Dia de los Muertos is a mix of Indigenous and Catholic religious practices originally observed in Mexico. It is celebrated on November 1 and 2, during which many honor the dead. The celebration includes creating altars for the deceased that are adorned with their personal items, food, and calaveras (sugar skulls). Dia de los Muertos has become popular in the United States, made evident in the multiple products sold with calaveras and in the production of the animated films *A Book of Life* (2014) and *Coco* (2017) (Marchi 2009).

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