

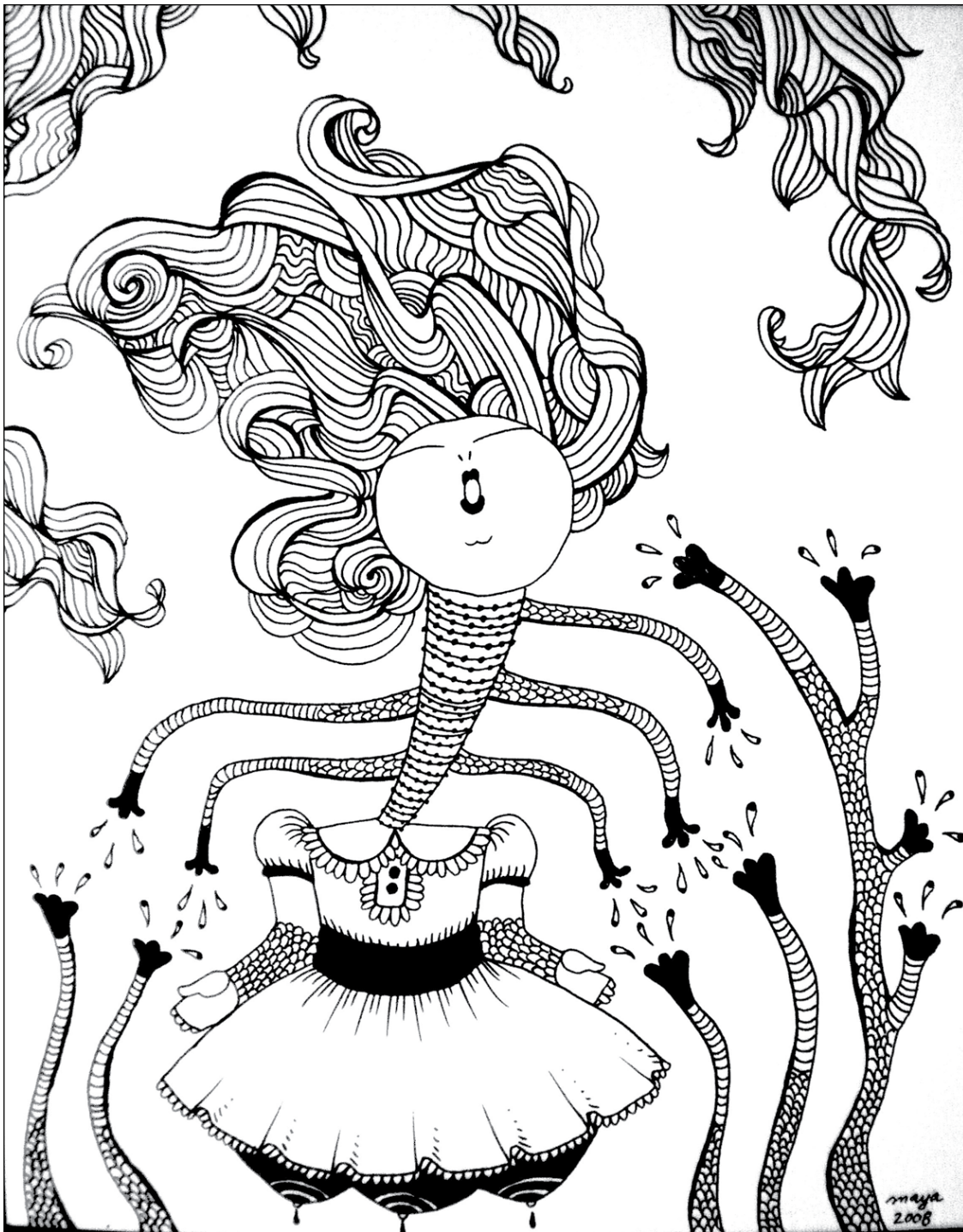
## CHICANA BADGIRLS

516 ARTS  
516 CENTRAL AVENUE SW, ALBUQUERQUE

**Chingada! Is the co-curator an ethnicist or a racist?** Laura E. Perez, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at U.C. Berkeley, opens her catalogue essay for *Chicana Badgirls: Las Hociconas* at 516 Arts in Albuquerque with the following: “Badgirl *hociconas* don’t behave in a world of double standards, whether these be men over women, heterosexuals over queer folk, haves over have nots, ‘white’ people over those ‘of color,’ and so on. They shouldn’t.”

Here’s some schoolin’ for the Ethnic Studies teacher. Pleasant as it sounds, “people of color” is an exclusionary racist term. It’s meant to exclude only those whose ethnic backgrounds result in being born pink. The phrase is premised on generalizations about the excluded group of “others” as defined by skin tone. That’s about as tight a definition of racism as they come. Does *Hociconas* (Latina for loudmouth) Perez just want to replace the old double standards with new ones? Is she seeking scapegoats and/or a sense of revenge? As a professor in Ethnic Studies, has she become what she hates? Does she hate “white, have, hetero males”? Why these specific examples of double standards when our world has so many?

She might have a point about the haves. Class is America’s true double standard.



Maya Gonzalez, *Flying Fur Gown Expanding Throat Black Gloves Falling*, pen and ink on archival paper, 2008

This is for you, and you, and you. Just celebrate yourself and your *camaradas* as Chicana women who are proud of who you are. Like you do in the rest of the essay and as your co-curator Delilah Montoya does in her shorter but more eloquent contribution. Fight specific injustices where you find them, but abandon your cliché, inaccurate, and over-determined master-narratives. Modernism is what’s really “over.” Stop trashing the “other,” whose cultures or ethnicities you haven’t really got a clue about. And stop playing the victim. It serves to alienate those who would be your allies and in the end it just drags us all down. *Que pinche hueva.*

So, no more double standards, cuz we shouldn’t. The show was *muy* disappointing all in all. Maybe the hype was too much. Opening night was packed for a bizarre performance that needed far more resolution. Santa Fe’s own Elisa Jimenez presented her “couture fashion performance, and we thank her for trying. The place wasn’t set up for performance and it ain’t 1972 anymore. A short woman (who got her place in the corner early) complained throughout that she couldn’t see. It took numerous admonishments by those around her before she would trade the joys of whining for a place up front. The professional dancers delivered, as they should, but it only made the amateurs look that much more so. The mock striptease by all ages of Eve was a sign-of-the-times reminder that in 1972 we all would’ve probably been nude, and it wouldn’t have been half as perversely awkward as going from scantily clad to scantier, but who’s complaining? Just me—and the short woman in the corner.

Every artist minus one in this eighteen-woman show incorporated the human figure predominantly in her art. Latina loudmouths are humanists apparently. None of the most interesting work involved the numerous images of the Lady of Guadalupe or the somewhat fewer of her boy, Mr. Christ, but I’ve saved the best for last.

Maya Gonzalez of San Francisco, the visually quietest of the *hociconas* popped up with her mysteriously detailed pen-and-ink drawings (based on the painted books of Mexico) in which a strange iconography functions as a visual linguistic system in a way that recalls the recent paintings of artist Andrea Carlson. Both bodies of work are well worth looking at.

And speaking again of bodies, the large-scale photographs of masked nudes by Cecilia Portal, while technically not as well realized as they could be, are also worth watching. Derived from her dreams and mythology, these masked figures have an archetypal magic quality as they confront the viewer. They are by turns eerie, sly, monstrous, and nearly comic, striking a chord of animism that leaves one spellbound.

Marie Romero-Cash’s *santos*-inspired sculpture of *Catwoman Rising* tussles with similarly shamanic themes, but in a much lighter way.

And that’s about it.

Maybe the idea makes more sense in Northern California. In New Mexico, *Chicana* is quite arguably the dominant culture, if you’re looking for such. It’s not exactly a huge exaggeration to say that the government, law enforcement, school boards, business, academic settings, and family life here are all run in large part by *Badgirl/Hociconas* types. It’s like having David Duke curate a *Fucked up Crackers* art show somewhere in Louisiana. Not exactly enlightening.

At least there aren’t any white, have, hetero-male oppressors in the large group of donors helping finance 516 Arts. And this critic identifies himself as a pink, middle class, omni-sexual, non-female—so no worries.

JON CARVER