



Smithsonian
Institution

Handout: Artist Statements

Carmen Lomas Garza

Carmen Lomas Garza is a Chicana (Mexican American) artist who now lives in San Francisco but grew up in Kingsville, a medium-size town in southern Texas. Her family history in the Americas dates back to the 1520s when Spanish ancestors on her father's side first came to Mexico from Spain. Her father was born in Nuevo Laredo just before his parents fled from the hardships of the Mexican Revolution by crossing the Rio Grande into Texas. Lomas Garza's mother's family had worked for generations in Texas as ranch hands or vaqueros (cowboys) and on the railroad. A great-grandfather on her mother's side walked from Michoacán, Mexico, to Kingsville to work as a chuck-wagon cook on the King Ranch. Lomas Garza has many stories to tell about her family's rich heritage, about her memories of growing up in south Texas, and about how supportive her parents were of her desire to become an artist. In fact, *Sueños* (Beds for Dreams) is dedicated to her mother, who also wanted to be an artist:

I have a very vivid memory of what people were doing, where they were, what they were wearing, the time of day, the colors of the atmosphere, and so when I recall something, I have the whole picture in my mind. So when I'm getting ready to do a certain painting, I rely on what I already have in my mind, and then I do move some things around. I do have poetic license to make the picture be able to tell the whole story with all its details. . . . That actually is me and my sister Margie up on the roof. We could get up on the roof by climbing up on the front porch. . . . That's . . . my bedroom, actually it's the girls' bedroom. . . . My sister and I would hide there [on the roof] and . . . we also talked a lot about what it would be like to be an artist in the future because both of us wanted to be [artists]. And I dedicated this painting to my mother because she also wanted to be an artist. And she is an artist, she's a florist now, so her medium is flowers. . . . She gave us that vision of being an artist. . . . That's her making up the bed for us.

Carmen Lomas Garza, from an interview with Andrew Connors, May 1995, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The self-defining purpose behind Lomas Garza's art is to make it as easy, simple, and direct as possible. She wants the Mexican American population to see themselves in her work, recognize that fact, and celebrate their rich cultural heritage as a result. It is Lomas Garza's hope that, in this process, others will see similarities to their own cultures or differences that are interesting to them and that they are curious about. She also wants her work to educate others as to who the Mexican Americans are as a people.

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Jesse Treviño

The Chicano (Mexican American) artist Jesse Treviño came from Monterrey, Mexico, to the United States as a child with his family. While a student at the Art Students League in New York City, Treviño was drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces and sent to Vietnam. He was seriously injured, losing his right arm when his platoon was hit by sniper fire.

Treviño spent two years in hospitals recovering from his injuries and learning to paint with his left hand. Subjects for Treviño's striking paintings usually include contemporary street scenes, buildings, and people from the Mexican American barrios (neighborhoods) of San Antonio, as is the case with *Mis Hermanos* (My Brothers). In essence, his paintings, rendered in a style described as both realistic and photo-realistic, are like snapshots, capturing the experience of community life for Mexican Americans today:

The Chicano community is an integral part of the family structure and a social organization providing a point of reference for my work. The images are a natural outgrowth of interrelating my environment with the family structure. These very personal portraits are also visual representations of the diverse aspects of the Chicano culture.

Jesse Treviño, quoted in "The Canadian Club Hispanic Tour" (exh. cat., El Museo del Barrio, 1984, n.p.).