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Chicano Art

Xavier Viramontes, *Boycot Grape*, 1973

The notion of "artivism," using art as a political tool to combat injustices, is one that I have discovered and learned more about throughout the past 4 years or so. Particularly, through local Latinx and other artists of color in the southeast Los Angeles scene. A lot of these artists have used their art, whether digital, on canvas, or on paper, to combat modern day injustices, quite similar to what artists did in the 1960s and 1970s during the farmworkers and Chicano movements. For example, Xavier Miramontes' print, "42. Boycott Grapes" (1973), was used to create a strong political statement in favor of the U.S. farmworkers (many whom were undocumented and of Latinx origin) during the Farmworkers Movement and boycott against grapes.

In this print we can see an indigenous man, perhaps Aztec, angrily squeezing grapes in his hands. As the man squeezes the grapes, the juice flows onto the words, "Boycott Grapes," which are in bold yellow letters and surrounded by the farmworkers movement's symbol. The contrast between the red grape juice and the yellow strikingly resembles blood flowing onto a movement. Meaning, we can see this as the blood of the farmworkers, who are exploited and taken for granted by U.S. farmers. In many ways, the grape juice that resembles blood can be seen as a bold statement that indicates farmworkers are no longer willing to "pour" their "blood, sweat, and tears," into a dehumanizing and unsustainable job. Thus, allowing viewers across cultures and social classes to understand how important and serious this movement is to them. Farmworkers are boycotting in a large scale manner in order to show the U.S. and the world that they are no longer going to accept dehumanizing conditions U.S. farmers and Viramontes' print is another manifestation of this powerful statement.

Additionally, this print is also a call to action for others, especially those of Mexican or Latinx, indigenous decent. By having an indigenous man stare boldly and directly at viewers, with the words at the bottom, "Support the United Farmworkers Union," Miramontes was perhaps hoping to capture support by other Latinx individuals who might connect to this character on a deeper level. Given Mexican American and Latinx-Americans' connections to an indigenous past, I think Miramontes wanted these particular viewers to stand in solidarity with the farmworkers by not consuming grapes. Therefore, making another political statement which went against the U.S. government directly since they were helping U.S. farmers by purchasing grapes in large amount for U.S. troops and even using taxpayers' money at one point. Ultimately, Viramontes' print is considered "artivism" because of the political stances it took to go

against the U.S. government and farmers in order to support farmworkers, therefore, helping to create social change.

Image: #42 (page 60) in "Viva la Huelga" Exhibition catalogue.