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Résumé de l'article

Cet article considère que les statues de saints hispaniques du Nouveau-Mexique, les *santos*, sont de puissants vecteurs de différence, dont le potentiel en cette matière transcende les contextes interethniques — sacré, laïc, de l'art mondial et des marchés — dans lesquels ils se déplacent. En décrivant comment les *santos* sont investis du pouvoir de dépasser les formes disparates, et comment un *santo* génère un puissant halo au-delà de sa propre forme, je soutiens que cette « situation dans l'espace » permet aux *santos*, non seulement de résister aux définitions lorsqu'ils sont placés dans des arrangements spatiaux larges tels que « le centre », « la scène » ou les « frontières », mais qu'en réalité ils redéfinissent ces espaces plus larges dans leurs propres termes. Ils peuvent être altérés, déplacés et revendiqués indépendamment des grands espaces ; aussi, ces objets qui portent en eux-mêmes un tel « positionnement spatial » devraient être reconnus comme partie intégrante du répertoire des pratiques culturelles de résistance ; ce sont des véhicules sémiotiques « premiers » que les participants peuvent utiliser dans des contextes de revendications de position, d'autorité et d'autonomie, à travers des affirmations, des contestations ou des négociations portant sur l'espace.

AN OBJECT IN ITS OWN DOMAIN

How Hispano New Mexican *Santos* are situated in space¹

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Culture is an expression — it's not a thing. It's not a *bulto*, it's not a *retablo*. It's an expression of life that's going on around you at a particular moment (Luis Tapia, *Crossing Boundaries*).

In 1998, as part of field research investigating how cultural difference is represented and negotiated in Santa Fe museums and festivals, I interviewed a renowned saint-maker [*santero*] about his work and his position as an acclaimed artist, important Hispano cultural expert and powerful citizen of northern New Mexico.² As I was leaving his home and studio, he took a sliced, polished rock out of a small alcove [*nicho*] by the door. He handed it to me, telling me that a poor wanderer had sold it to him one day at the Flea Market. I said something like “Hmmm”. He said, “You should look at it in the light”. I commented that it was beautiful. He said, “Yes, isn't it wonderful to find such a thing”, and paused. I didn't respond, realizing, as the pause dragged on, that I was supposed to be seeing something in this rock that I just wasn't seeing. Then, I recognized that as the curves on the rock's polished surface moved toward what had been its center, they formed a shape remarkably like the figure in images of the Virgin of Guadalupe. “Incredible”, I said. “It looks like an image of Mary”. He then reclaimed the rock, placing it back in its *nicho*. Later, I heard from others that they too had been shown this rock when leaving the *santero*'s home.

1. For guiding me through the territory, many thanks to Chris Wilson, Ramon Jose Lopez, Charlie Carrillo, Paul Rhettts and Barbe Awalt. For providing the map, thanks as always to Rick Parmentier.

2. The term “Hispano” refers to traditionally Spanish speaking communities of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado who claim the Spanish *Conquistadores* as their ancestors.

I often wondered what would have happened if I had not recognized the Virgin's image. I believe we would have simply remained standing there, while I gazed at the rock and he prompted me to look at it in different ways, until the image was revealed to me and I validated the saint's presence. Here, in an ethnographic interview conducted by an outsider, Anglo woman anthropologist and probing the contested status of images of saints [*santos*] as ethnic emblems and artworks, the *santero* used the *santo* and my recognition of it to reestablish the inherently sacred character of his work. He asserted his authority as a Master *santero* to characterize our interaction as a teaching where he instructed me about the most important way to understand *santos*, that is, as sacred objects whose creation and use is motivated foremost by forces that reveal the spiritual essence of the world and everything in it.

This article argues that Hispano *santos* are powerful mediators of difference whose potency in that capacity transcends the interethnic sacred, civic, art world, market and, indeed, even the research contexts in which *santos* move. *Santos* might be seen as prototypical commodified folk art objects targeted to tourist markets that threaten or effectively undermine their cultural authenticity and performative power. This is particularly true because they are primarily produced and exchanged in Santa Fe, where the ideologies and practices of romanticized tourism and the consumption of cultural difference have been refined to the highest levels (Weigle 1989, 1990; Wilson 1997). But this characterization depends on a decontextualization of *santos* that narrows rather than expands our understanding of how they function in complex interethnic situations.

In order to constitute objects as fully alienable and readily subject to commodification and appropriation, "Western" ideologies tend to decontextualize them, conceiving all of an object's meanings, functions and values as inherent to some formal property it possesses. In cultures of Capitalism, "mechanical reproduction" demands the utter decontextualization of "originals" such as authentic artworks (Adorno 1982; Benjamin 1968). Descriptive and analytic approaches dominant in art history and material culture studies have tended to further obscure the salience of context by focusing on an object's form (Musello 1992). Critical approaches to artworks and material culture have recontextualized objects in a variety of ways, recognizing that an object's meanings, functions and values are constituted not just in relation to form but also in relation to abstract classificational structures (Sahlins

1976), social imperatives (Bourdieu 1984; Tambiah 1984), concrete practices (Appadurai 1986; Miller 1983) and individual histories (Hoskins 1998). These reconceptions have enabled some valuable insights about how the cultural, ideological and political importance of objects is tied to the ways in which they reflect the complex dynamic between stasis and change (Herzfeld 1992): objects are naturalized and reified (Barthes 1988), while, at the same time, objects move in circuits of inheritance, exchange and plunder and they decay (Weiner 1992). Resting at this intersection, objects are a fertile semiotic ground for representing the tension between forms as constituted, reproduced, negotiated and endangered and as inherently natural and fundamentally unchangeable.

One of the most important ways in which the mutable aspect of objects is “held still” is through cultural practices that regiment an object’s situation in space, for example, the placement of an object in a formal arrangement such as an altar, monument, exhibit or display (Barthes 1988; Clifford 1991; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Williams 1982). In this discussion, I use the term “space” to denote the patterned arrangement of material form, which may exist as an actual entity and also as a set of cultural conventions for properly arranging forms. Of course, these conventions may be sites of political and ideological contest, as may be the processes of producing, siting and categorizing particular arrangements, and the exclusion or marginalization of some parties from those processes (Jacobs 1998; Pile 1997). Further, similarly patterned arrangements are found in varied contexts: altars are found in churches, in homes, at political rallies, in neighborhood centers, in museums. These contexts also have a spatial dimension, and arrangements may be reconceived as relatively more “object-like” within a larger, more inclusive “space” that enpatterns forms in its own characteristic kind of way: a statue in a monument on a city’s central plaza may have a distinctively civic dimension that some other statue in a monument may not. However, certain objects not only resist this kind of broader spatial recontextualization by asserting their proper placement in a particular, cross-contextually distinct arrangement of forms, but actually characterize these larger “spaces” in their own terms. *Santos*, I suggest, are objects that possess this kind of semiotic potency.

In this article, I argue that *santos* are objects with a characteristic situation in space, that they are invested with the power to enclose or encompass disparate forms drawn into a powerful halo a *santo* generates

beyond its own single material embodiment. I examine this power of *santos* as it is made concrete or demonstrated in two highly salient forms of Hispano cultural practice: procession and historical pedagogy. Further, I discuss how the sacred space centered by a *santo* encompasses *differentiated* forms, transcending their difference and generating commonality between them. I argue that because of their characteristic spatial situatedness, *santos'* power to transcend difference retains its force even in highly contested contexts such as “staged” displays, arenas for assessing “cultural authenticity” and venues of commodity exchange. By considering how *santos* are situated in space, their complex status as sacred embodiments, vehicles of ethnic identity, authentic artworks, and valuable commodities can be conceived in a way that allows their potency to be acknowledged even as they move through these interethnic sacred, civic, art world and market contexts³.

An object in its own domain

Santos are typically made by hand-carving cottonwood or Ponderosa into three-dimensional statues (*bultos*) or plaques (*retablos*). These carvings are cured and painted, varnished and, occasionally, ornamented with cloth, metal or beads. Pigments used range from browns and whites to deeply saturated blues, reds and yellows. *Santos* range in size from small pieces made for domestic shrines to enormous altar screens and processional works. Historic and contemporary *santos* in the Spanish Colonial style often depict the Virgin of Guadalupe, Christ on the Cross, the Sacred Heart, San Ysidro Labrador (patron saint of farmers), The Death Cart, and San Pasqual (patron saint of cooking or the kitchen). Some contemporary *santeros* use this style to make objects depicting lowrider cars and motorcycles, skulls, devils, and other emblems associated with contemporary Chicano identity.⁴

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3. This analysis of *santos* is based on two years of field research in New Mexico from 1997 to 1999. The fieldwork included: participant observation of three annual ritual cycles including Santa Fe Fiesta, Holy Week processions, and a series of other processions in Santa Fe and throughout northern New Mexico; extensive observation of the administration of the Spanish Colonial Arts Society and the production of Spanish Market accomplished by volunteering with the organization and attending all of their member functions; extensive interviews with Master *santeros*, experts on *santos*, *santo* collectors, museum curators and Hispano artists; research and analysis of exchange, display and exhibition venues that include *santos*.
 4. For descriptions of technique see Briggs (1980) and of styles see Kalb (1994).

Santos are material embodiments of spiritual beings, mediators to the sacred realm, a connection that gives them an energy recalling the halo of spikes of powerful light surrounding images of the Virgin of Guadalupe. This excess potency drives *santos* to “materialize” the sacred space around them, to create or attract material tokens that embody and make evident the reach of the sacred space they center. *Santera* and cultural expert Marie Romero Cash describes how the corner of a living-room or the top of a television or a chest in the bedroom of a Hispano home becomes anchored by images of saints that accumulate material tokens of the worship, prayers and petitions performed within their purview. Through a process of accumulating photographs, baby shoes, rosaries, graduation programs, souvenirs from pilgrimages, offerings, these spaces become household shrines. Sacred, *santo*-centered spaces exist in a range from the smallest domestic shrine, to the private family chapel, to the blessed communal lands, to a Holy nation of the faithful.

The sacred space centered by a *santo* can be manifested through a process of accumulation like the one described by Cash. It also is instantiated in the practice of procession. In procession, a *santo* leads a line of followers who walk an encircling path, enclosing a space, and defining it as centered by that object and characterized by the special spiritual powers or qualities of the saint represented. Processions also inscribe this space as belonging to that particular community of followers. Procession, particularly the annual blessing taking a *santo* of San Ysidro through a village and its farms and ranches in order to promote their fertility, is one of the central and most recognized forms of Hispano cultural practice.

An essential characteristic of these *santo*-centered spaces is the way they function to encompass social differentiations. Domestic shrines are typically associated with mothers and encompass within one lineage kin differentiated by generation. Family chapels are an essential built element of historic Hispano households and encompass within a marriage a husband and wife differentiated by gender. Commonly blessed lands define Hispano villages and encompass within one community individual landholders differentiated by economic stratification (Briggs 1980: 17). The Holy nation of the faithful connects Hispanos with their Spanish homeland and encompasses within one tradition those differentiated by culture.

Santos connect past and present, expressing and reproducing continuity, tradition and history. As such, they are often associated

with another important historical form, Hispano proverbs [*dichos*]. *Santero*, cultural expert and anthropologist, Charlie Carrillo explains the association:

In my teaching, I hope that my students and others interested in the *santero* tradition of New Mexico understand that the same information or iconography that was important two hundred years ago is even more important today. ... Those interested in *santos* for any reason — devotional, aesthetic, anthropological — cannot but learn from them. There is a “dicho” or old saying in New Mexico that relates: “*A cada Santo se llega su funcion*” or “Each Saint has his day”. My ancestors told stories about the *santos*, imparting wisdom, morality and spirituality to each succeeding generation, and the *santos* created by the *santeros* of the past can continue to do the same. For a *santero* like myself, the old *santos* speak to me. They communicate an understanding about a past that is still very much a part of Hispanic life in New Mexico, and it is this silent communication that becomes the aesthetic that shapes and influences my work (Carrillo in Salvador 1995: 102).

In his ethnography of the northern New Mexico village of Cordova, Charles Briggs shows how “talk of the elders of bygone days” is employed in performances where Hispano elders instruct younger generations about the necessary and binding connections between past and present. Analyzing how *dichos* function pedagogically, Briggs explains that an elder’s success in using these forms depends on “competence in performance”:

Successful proverb performances are akin to logical proofs of the performer’s position in the conversation... The logic runs as follows: 1) the previous “owner” of the proverb was a respected elder; 2) the proverb text is a quote from the deceased elder, thus constituting a segment of the talk of the elders of bygone days; 3) the speaker has the right to perform the proverb; and 4) the general principle that is presented by the speaker is accepted as being implicit in the proverb... The second half of the proof... asserts that the performance is relevant to the preceding discussion... [and] establishes the bearing of the proverb text and the general meaning on the situation at hand... Once the performer establishes a firm link between an irrefutable precedent and a particular point of view, the proof is complete. If another elder validates the performance, it becomes even more difficult for a younger person to oppose the performer’s contention (Briggs 1988: 125).

This relation between *dichos* and performances resonates with the one between *santos* and processions in that both *dichos* and *santos* are defined not only by their own formal properties but also by a necessary association they have with particular practices enacted by communities of participants. Both proverb performances and processions serve to draw together differentiated participants and to assert commonality between them. When using these forms pedagogically, Masters reveal those commonalities and demonstrate those assertions as binding.

Each differentiation that *santo*-centered space transcends — generation, gender, class, culture — is particularly problematic for Hispano culture and its colonial histories. Young Hispanos are moving away from the villages, the agricultural foundations of Hispano communities are eroded, the Spanish language is lost to many. The Spanish colonial emphasis on “purity of blood” is undermined by the increasing influence of Chicano politics, while the undeniable reality of having “intermixed” with Native New Mexicans complicates ideologies and political economies that polarize Hispanos and Native Americans in contests over land and water rights. Elaborations of aristocratic lineage from the *conquistadores* are belied by the economic situation of many Hispano New Mexicans, particularly those living in rural areas outside of Santa Fe. And, of course, the colonizers have been colonized, and are both held accountable for the violence of the *conquistadores* and denied the status of having civilized the territories. Caught up in these discourses, *santos* gain their particular poignancy and relevance.

I have shown how, in Hispano culture, *santos* are situated in an enclosing space that they center, and how the differentiated forms enclosed within this space through the practices of accumulation, procession or pedagogy are defined as common to one another through their common relation to the saint. I now examine three situations in which the sacred and culturally autonomous character of *santos* is destabilized, suggesting that their efficacy as vehicles of cohesion retains its force even in these contexts.

Santa Fe Fiesta: staging difference/claiming space

Anglos have long been fascinated by Hispano processions, especially in the form of the pilgrimages that take place throughout northern New Mexico during Holy Week. Sensational, racist images of Hispanos

condensed around the Holy Week practices of *Los Hermanos* or the *Penitentes Brotherhood*, and these images have remained virulent:

In 1969, a journalist... asserted that “it has been rightly said that even Klaus Fuchs, the Rosenbergs and others who betrayed the atomic secrets of Los Alamos would have been afraid to tamper with the soul-shattering secrets of the black-hooded, naked flagellants who enact a sacrament of torture, agony and death each Easter and then soak the New Mexico soil with the blood of their ‘Christ’” (Lefebure quoted in Weigle 1976: 109).

In the early 1900s, prominent Anglo citizens of Santa Fe decided they should hold a “yearly historical event as they do in New Orleans at Mardi Gras” (Seligman quoted in Chauvenet 1983: 150). Calling it the “De Vargas Parade”, they appropriated an annual Mass and procession commemorating the 1692 “Entrada” into Santa Fe by Don Diego de Vargas and the Spanish *conquistadores* who had been exiled after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. The parades, costumes and dances of the De Vargas Parade were embellished in the 1920s by Museum of New Mexico Director Edgar Lee Hewett to create a “Grand Spectacular Commemorative Historical Pageant”, the Santa Fe Fiesta. During my



Fiesta procession leaving the Plaza to enter St. Francis Cathedral.
Hal Malone, 1998

fieldwork, Fiesta was Santa Fe's key civic event — prominent businesses and politicians sponsored floats in the “Hysterical/Historical Parade” and Santa Feans danced and promenaded on the Plaza at the *Balle de la Gente*⁵; it was an almost uncontrollable tourist spectacle — booths selling crafts and food filled the Plaza and tens of thousands watched an enormous effigy of Old Man Gloom burst into flames and fireworks during the Burning of Zozobra; and — it was the most important performance venue for the display of Hispano ethnicity — crests of the *conquistadores* were emblazoned across the Plaza and the De Vargas Entrada was reenacted in all its pageantry.

Hewett boldly promoted his Fiesta as a tourist event, but he also emphasized its civic value:

One of the fine things about the Fiesta is its influence toward welding together in spirit and sympathy the people of the two main branches of our population; Anglos reenacting the roles of heroic Spaniards, native people commemorating the upbuilding of the American state, and venerating the flag for which they have made their full sacrifice. The Fiesta is, we believe, a strong amalgamating force, striking down what barriers the ignorant and those without vision seek to raise. Celebrating the Castilians and perpetuating the beauty they have bequeathed us, hand in hand with an honest and vigorous effort to bring their descendants every advantage that American progress and enlightenment affords — this is the way to fullest amalgamation (*El Palacio*, 1 September 1925: 116).

This 1925 rhetoric is striking in light of current debates about the ethnic character of Fiesta. Since the 1970s — after Hispanos had fully reappropriated performance of the Entrada and Native American protests over the celebration of their subjugation had finally been heard — the emphasis at Fiesta has shifted, privileging De Vargas' 1692 reclamation of Santa Fe over the military reconquest that took place one year later. The image of a bloodless retaking of the city through conversion and reconciliation is explicitly contrasted with the history of Anglo dishonesty, theft and impoverishment of the inhabitants of territories previously part of Mexico (represented by the U.S.

5. See Wilson for an important discussion of how Masons, Odd Fellows and other Fraternities contributed to the production of Fiesta in its earliest forms. As Wilson notes, these civil society organizations banned Catholic membership. Hispano participation in early Fiestas was led by Hispano members of the Knights of Columbus (1997: 185-204).

government's failure to abide by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) and of decimation of Native American people throughout the Western U.S. As Archbishop Sheehan reminded those gathered at the Fiesta Mass in 1997, "there's no Indian Market in Boston".

The Spanish capacity to reclaim Santa Fe without force is attributed to a *santo* of Mary called *La Conquistadora*, said to have given protection and blessing to the reconquest. De Vargas proclaimed that "Our Lady of Peace" would always be celebrated by Santa Fe's inhabitants and it is this celebration that was later appropriated for the Fiesta. Claims to the amalgamating potency of *La Conquistadora* are made rhetorically but, more importantly, are expressed in the form of four Fiesta processions that annually reinscribe the city as her domain and that of her followers.

Preparations for the Fiesta begin each spring, when a Fiesta Council made up of prominent Hispano citizens delegate the sought after roles of De Vargas, the Fiesta Queen and an entourage of *caballeros* and princesses to a group of worthy young Hispanos. The results are published in local newspapers and, in June, this cohort is presented to the public as they lead *La Conquistadora* out from St. Francis Cathedral at the head of the Santa Fe Plaza. The *santo*, dressed and decorated for her journey by a cadre of worshippers, is taken through the town center to



The DeVargas Entrada.
Hal Malone, 1998.

Rosario Chapel, located where Spanish missionaries and *conquistadores* were buried after being killed in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

La Conquistadora stays in Rosario Chapel until August, when Fiesta begins with the Entrada bringing the *santo* back into the Plaza. On a stage facing the Palace of the Governors (colonial seat of government, and now a museum of New Mexico's colonial history), De Vargas accepts the Pueblo Governor's surrender of Santa Fe in the name of *La Conquistadora*. On Fiesta Sunday, *La Conquistadora* is again taken from the Cathedral, carried in procession around the head of the Plaza and back into the Cathedral for the Fiesta Mass. This procession includes the Archbishop and the priests of St. Francis, the Mayor and other political leaders, the Fiesta Council, De Vargas and his *caballeros*, the Fiesta Queen and her princesses, and assembled community members. Finally, Fiesta closes on Sunday night with a candelit procession from the Cathedral to the Cross of Martyrs, set high on a hill overlooking the city.

In this series of processions, the relationship between *La Conquistadora* and the contemporary Hispano community of Santa Fe is reestablished, the historical position of the *santo* as centering and defining Santa Fe is redrawn, the connection between this historical position of the *santo* and the civic order is reasserted, and the inherently sacred character of this space and these relations is revealed. While these reiterations of Hispano claims to Santa Fe in the form of the *La Conquistadora* processions do sublimate difficult political, economic and bodily (sexual and violent) relations between Hispanos, Anglos and Native Americans, the processes through which the processions are produced — composing the Fiesta Council, selection and presentation of Entrada participants, dressing *La Conquistadora* — undeniably contribute to reproducing the Hispano community of Santa Fe. Moreover, enactment of the processions responds, term for term, to the colonial claims elaborated in Fiesta by the Anglo New Mexicans who invented it.

In the Spanish Colonial style: cultural authenticity and historical pedagogy

At Fiesta, a *santo* is used to define Santa Fe as a space that Hispanos may claim, but *santos* are also used to make claims about Hispanos themselves. *Santos* have been produced in New Mexico for over 300

years, but their standardization as a revival style began with the founding of The Spanish Colonial Arts Society (SCAS). In 1924, Anglo art patrons opened a “Native Market” in Santa Fe to promote local economic development by selling Hispano crafts, mainly domestic products targeted for consumption in the bourgeois home. These carved trunks, rugs, furniture, draperies, Lazy Susans, and record racks were marketed as recreating “the glamorous tradition of the Hacienda [that] lives on in the highly skilled crafts of the Spanish-American” (Native Market advertisement quoted in Wroth 1994: 90)⁶. Artist Frank Applegate and writer Mary Austin founded SCAS in 1925 as a means to foster a more authentically “artistic” revival based in large part on the work of their contemporary, woodcarver and *santero* Jose George Lopez of Cordova, New Mexico. The codification of the revival was furthered through WPA vocational education programs and, later, through the curatorial work of E. Boyd at the Museum of New Mexico.

Today, SCAS sponsors the primary exchange venue for *santos*, the “Spanish Market” that takes place over one weekend each July. The administration of SCAS and the production of Spanish Market are sites of highly complex interethnic relations. All Spanish Market artists claim Hispano heritage. During my fieldwork, SCAS retained an overwhelmingly Anglo administration, a majority Anglo Board, an Anglo and Hispano membership and an overwhelmingly Hispano production crew. There is a prevalent perception that Spanish Market customers are Anglo; this is attributed to the high price of *santos* sold at Spanish Market. Yet, the Market provides key venues for bringing together the old “Spanish” families of Santa Fe, those Hispanos who trace their lineage directly to the original *conquistadores*.

The most important thing about Spanish Market, says this year’s co-manager, is not that it encourages the Spanish Colonial or contemporary Hispanic arts, although Heaven knows that’s significant. The most important thing is the way it brings local people, particularly native Hispanic people, together in the heart of their hometown. “It’s kind of like Fiestas used to be,” Maria Padilla says. “People come down to the Plaza who normally never come downtown anymore. It brings the community together.” Her favorite event at Spanish Market is the Friday-night preview. “All the artists are nervous.

6. Of course, the *patron* of these modern Haciendas would not be a member of the contemporary Hispano population, but a consumer of objects made by them. Hispanos would retain their “folk culture” by providing the means to authentically furnish and “preserve” this “traditional” sphere.



Santos at Spanish Market.
Hal Malone, 1998



Buyers await the opening of Spanish Market.
Hal Malone, 1998

They've put their best stuff out there to be judged. You feel the excitement in the air," Padilla says. Her second favorite event is the Sunday Mass. "It kind of ties the market in with everything else — religion, family, the art." (*Santa Fe Reporter*, 23 July 1997).

These complex interethnic relations are made volatile by SCAS' strict guidelines disallowing work deemed outside the Traditional Spanish Colonial style to be presented at Spanish Market:

When it comes to celebrating Spanish market in Santa Fe, contemporary Hispanic artists have been relegated to a small market on a side street next to the central traditional market. Many who call themselves contemporary artists feel marginalized because their art is not part of the main market. Young heirs to the *santero* tradition quietly complain about not being able to use modern materials (such as acrylic paint), or expand into non-religious themes. But to depart from "tradition" can prevent access to a lucrative market. According to the guidelines established by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society, Daniel Blea was denied participation in Spanish Market because of his imagery: he incorporated devils into his retablos. (Antonio Lopez, *Santa Fe New Mexican Pasatiempo*, 5 June 1998).

These standards are imposed through jurying that screens out work considered nonstandard, award judging that rewards excellence according to the standards, and Standards Committee reviews that enable SCAS to remove artists from Spanish Market if their work is assessed nonstandard. This set of processes marginalizes "inauthentic" work, garners additional social and commodity value for exemplary work and creates settings for public display and sanctioning of these evaluations — the magazine SCAS produces for the market, the Market Preview, the Market Award Ceremony. During each of these display and sanctioning events, *santos* are amassed together in comparative categories they would never be found in otherwise and which would seem to usurp their singularity. Of course, enforced codification, standardization and classification raise tremendous tension given the asymmetrical power relations between Hispano artists and SCAS administrators, museum professionals and buyers that are embodied both in the governance structure of SCAS and in the commodity relations at Spanish Market.

However, the integral place of standards and the emphasis on their enforcement is consistently underwritten by Master *santeros* and other Hispano cultural experts and elites. This might be interpreted as protection by social elites of *santos'* interethnically negotiated surplus

value as symbols of cultural authenticity. However, remembering that *santos* operate as vehicles of pedagogy, standards for preserving their authenticity historical forms should be recognized as appropriately furthered by Master *santeros*. These standards serve as means for tying young Hispanos firmly to tradition. It is the case that the process of enforcing standards tends to be discussed in reference to and have greatest impact on younger artists (particularly those from renowned *santero* families and those who have had art school training) and that the public Awards Ceremony focuses on giving awards in multiple youth categories. These standards and the arenas in which they are displayed further provide a means for demonstrating to the broadest audience not only that the traditions have relevance today but that the Hispano Masters retain ultimate authority over their interpretation.

***Santos* and desire: commodification or devotion?**

In processes where stylistic standards are imposed, *santos* function as tools of authority for Hispano elders, but *santos* are also valuable commodities easily appropriated from poorer Hispano communities by richer Anglo patrons and institutions. Here is a rare account of how one curator acquired three works at Spanish Market:

The official rules of the Spanish Colonial Arts Society prevent artists from selling their works during the Preview. This is a night for displaying art and celebrating awards, not vending... Nevertheless, sales are a major aspect of the Spanish Market Preview. Unofficial negotiations between patrons and artists prevail... A carved and polychromed chess set with figures fashioned as saints caught my eye... I knew the artist... so I set out to find her... At the preview's end, I found [X], who agreed to sell me her chess set the following day.

On Saturday morning, I came to the Plaza at 6:30, vying for [Y]'s [work]... The grounds were quiet, with artists setting up their booths and a few serious collectors looking for the artists whose works they wanted to buy. A man who reached the Plaza before me, an art dealer from Boston, was also waiting for [Y]. I felt sure that as the market began [Y] would sell the art dealer whatever *bulto* or *retablo* he wanted. On the other hand, the Boston art dealer had heard I was from a West Coast museum. He was convinced he had no chance of acquiring the work he had asked the *santero* to craft. Certain we were competing, we waited anxiously and quietly. After a few minutes, ... [Y] walked in. I spoke up first, asking for [one piece]. The man from Boston

immediately asked for [another]. I put down a cash deposit, took my receipt and remaining bill, and breathed a huge sigh of relief.

While waiting for [Y] to arrive at the market, at 6:30, I ran into another *santero*, my old friend [Z]... [He] once sold his painted *santos* at market but stopped a few years ago... The artist simply had too many “orders”, or commissions, from private collectors. He had no time to produce a cache of *santos* to sell at Spanish Market. Although I knew that [Z] rarely had extra *santos* available, I took a chance and asked if he had anything for sale... Two *santos* were available... Without considering my other purchase plans, I simply told [him] I would buy his piece. Because he knew me, the artist had no need of a deposit. He would wait for a check from the museum.

There was still an hour before the official opening of the market. Having arranged the business of my three acquisitions... and having spent \$10,000, I walked around the plaza, viewing the range of other crafts for sale (Kalb 1994: 18-25).

Yet even subject to such elaborate processes of commodification, *santos* are invested with an efficacy to quicken the “spirituality” of those who purchase them⁷. On Sunday before Spanish Market officially opens, a special Spanish Market Mass is held where *santeros* bring works to be blessed. This is a kind of rite of passage for Traditional Spanish Market artists, and one *santera* told me that the first year she exhibited at Market she was most excited about being able to bring a favorite piece to be blessed. She was so proud and happy when she brought it back to her booth, sure that someone would come to buy it soon. As the day wore on and no one bought it, she became discouraged. She went to another artist to ask if there was something wrong with the piece. The experienced artist laughed, saying, “But, isn’t that the one you took to the blessing?” Telling the story, this *santera* laughed, too. Of course, the

7. In his important treatment of this issue, Briggs quotes George Lopez: “What happens when people who don’t believe in God buy the carvings? Well, nothing. This block of wood is nothing more than wood. It’s the same thing to make a carving for those people or for a church... But if the father blesses them, well, then, they are images of the Apostles in Heaven... If not, they are just blocks of wood, no more. It’s the same with you, if you are not baptized, you are just the same as a block of wood” (George Lopez, quoted in Briggs 1980: 193). However, the need for the church to “sanctify” works in order for them to be considered “holy” was never communicated to me. Rather, *santeros* and cultural experts drew clear differentiations between the inherent “holiness” of *santos* and their more specifically “devotional” character as objects of petitions and prayers.

pieces you take to the blessing are the hardest to sell. By being blessed, these pieces become “devotional” and will only be purchased by someone with the proper intentions, whether they are conscious of them or not.

The Spanish Market Mass is enormously popular. It was standing-room-only every year that I attended, with tourists packed in at the rear of the Cathedral. Mariachis played northern New Mexican songs, and much of the Mass was given in Spanish. After Mass, the *santeros* retrieved their blessed *santos* from the foot of the altar and the Priests and *santeros* led a procession out of the Cathedral. As they made their way down the aisle and out the door, the congregants followed them. Many of the tourists assembled at the rear of the Cathedral left before the procession began and stood in the courtyard, forming a pathway along the sides of the door and watching the long line of *santeros* carrying their works exit. Many waited until the procession passed them by, and then fell in behind it. The procession passed slowly down the stairs of the Cathedral, and circled the Plaza, stopping just in front of the Palace of the Governors. The Archbishop mounted the central stage and then he blessed the Market. In 1997, he said:



Santeros in procession to the Blessing of the Market.
Hal Malone, 1998.

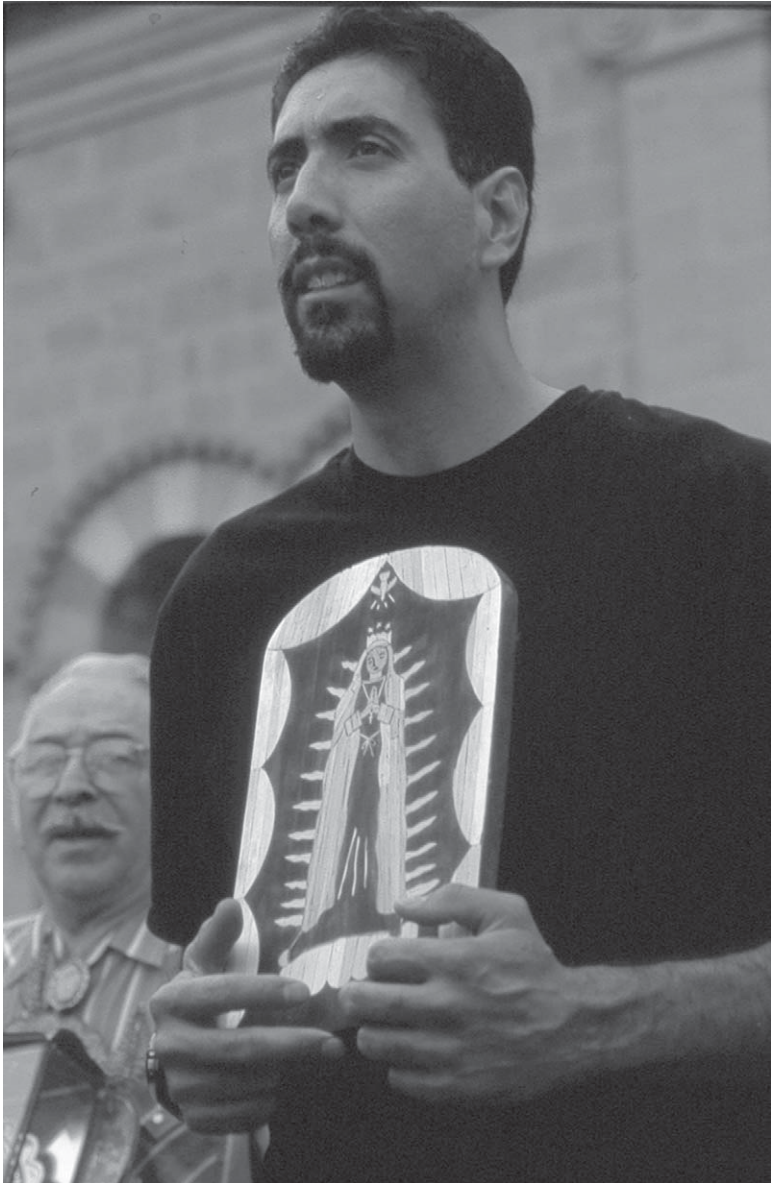
Santeros show us where God is. Artists participate in the creative power of God... Those of you who are selecting religious art will see this not just as art but as objects with spiritual value, because art is food for the soul, both a blessing for the artists and for those who purchase it.

When the procession of *santos* takes place during the Blessing of Spanish Market, the division between “insiders” and “outsiders”, “performers” and “viewers”, “producers” and “consumers” is displayed and then usurped. Viewers are made self-conscious of their status as an active participant and, moreover, they are given the chance to follow, to choose their place as insider or outsider⁸. This openness is a claim to power, a power specific to *santos*: that is, the power to encompass all kinds of social difference within their domain. This makes the complex interethnic character of all the practices at Spanish Market maximally relevant: the more divisions it must overcome, the greater is the power demonstrated by the *santo*. In reference to this power, the commodity exchanges through which buyers acquire *santos* come to be defined not as instances of appropriation, but rather as indications of a common relation to the saints. The devotional relation asserted to exist between a buyer and the bought *santo* incorporates these outsiders into the sacred space motivated by the *santo*, one that they must share with Hispanos.

How *santos* are situated in space

Santos are sacred objects used to make political claims in the civic domain. They are traditional objects interrogated as to their claims to history. They are embodiments of sacred beings, yet they are bought and sold. They may be appropriated as easily as the land and water no longer owned by Hispanos, and though they are representations of cherished cultural principles and practices, *santos* often rest isolated in public museums or in the homes of wealthy Anglo patrons. Not only are all of these different facets of *santos* undeniable, they are made apparent and reiterated at interethnic, ritually relevant and specific times and places: at Fiesta, during the Spanish Colonial Arts Society’s Preview and Awards Ceremony for Spanish Market, and at Spanish Market itself. These contexts foreground the spatial dimension in

8. In her discussion of “Blackness and the politics of memory” in New Orleans, Regis characterizes second line parading and the claims to space that African-American second liners make through these practices in strikingly similar terms (2001: 755).



Santero returning to the Plaza after Spanish Market Mass.
Hal Malone, 1998.

important ways: Fiesta and Spanish Market both take place on Santa Fe's central Plaza, the heart of the city's civic domain; the Spanish Market Preview and Awards Ceremony are gatherings where *santos* and the old families who "never come down there anymore" are amassed together rather than disbursed and are presented as common to one another; at Spanish Market *santos* are exchanged across the boundary of the marketing table and the pathway formed by watching tourists breaks down as they fall into the procession that passes by.

During these events, *santos* move through the spaces of the center, the stage, the boundary. But *santos* are objects that not only move through the patterned arrangements of form that materially define a space, they themselves act on forms, establishing patterned relations among forms by enclosing and centering them. In some cases, these patterned relations are simply imputed by the presence of the *santo* which is conceived to accumulate forms around it, in some cases they are inscribed through the practice of procession, and in some cases they are asserted through pedagogy. *Santos* are particularly well-suited, then, to engage in these spatially conceived contexts where Hispano claims to place, authority and autonomy through history are made.

This relationship between how *santos* are situated in space and the spaces that *santos* are situated in — that is, between the material arrangements within which *santos* configure themselves and the broader material arrangements within which they move — is of a kind that is worthy of further research. Because they can be altered, relocated and reclaimed in ways that larger spaces cannot, objects that carry a "spatial situatedness" are prime semiotic vehicles for participants to use in arenas where claims to space are asserted, contested and negotiated. The kind of active refiguring of the structural arrangements defining a space that *santos* enable — from center or stage or boundary to inclusive enclosure — should be recognized as part of a whole repertoire of cultural practices of resistance (marching, protesting, defacing, reconstructing, squatting) whose potency stems specifically from their engagement with space. Investigating how certain objects and arrangements function semiotically to give meta-commentary on spatial relations can deepen our understandings of how spaces are conceived and how claims to space are made.

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