

## Mariana Núñez Artist Statement

### Semilla de la Discordia (Seed of Discord)

This was a very challenging piece for me to create for several reasons. I have always aimed to create art which is pleasing to look at, but serves no purpose otherwise. I have never been bold enough to address sensitive topics or make any kind of open criticism about society. And while I was willing to get out of my comfort zone for this project, I still had no idea how to approach it. Before I had even decided on an issue, I looked to the works Ken Chu and Phyllis Bramson for their collage-like composition, hoping that working in the same format would help communicate my story more clearly. For content, I wanted to find a subject I was not only passionate about, but one which was not an obvious choice. I settled on a topic close to home, addressing the racism which I have witnessed in various aspects of Mexican culture today.

Initially, I thought to take a more superficial approach, portraying discrimination based on physical appearance (especially skin color) amongst people of Mexican heritage and examining Eurocentric standards of beauty which I know affect many cultures besides my own. However, it seemed too simple. As I dug deeper I realized that these issues which have been rooted in our culture for centuries are far more complex than that. I began to piece together a collage of my own, taking pieces from photography of landscapes of Mexico and various portraits, as well as other works of art. I split the canvas, one side dedicated to pre-hispanic cultures and symbolism (particularly the astronomical omens with which the Aztecs predicted the arrival of the Spanish) and the other to conquest and forced conversion to Catholicism. At center, I painted an indigenous woman from my own imagination to represent various things: the distress of native people, ideas of colorism and racism imposed by colonialism, and yet at the same time a sort of resilience in the fact that she (or we) exist at all. What I sought to convey was the sense of a loss of identity that can still be felt 500 years later, in contrast to the birth of a new culture altogether.