



Moctezuma's Table: Rolando Briseno's Mexican and Chicano Tablescapes (Rio Grande/Río Bravo: Borderlands Culture and Traditions)

Norma E. Cantú

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The table provides the food that sustains physical life. It is also the setting for people to share the fellowship that sustains cultural, community, and political life. In the vision of artist Rolando Briseño, food is a powerful metaphor, a way of understanding how culture nurtures the spirit. When cultures collide—as they inevitably do in borderlands settings—food, its preparation, and the rituals surrounding its consumption can preserve meanings and understandings that might otherwise have been lost to the mainstream social narrative. Briseño's exhibit, *La Mesa de Moctezuma/Moctezuma's Table*, originally hosted by San Antonio's Instituto Cultural Mexicano and later by the Instituto de México, Montreal, Canada, brings to vivid life the artist's conception of food as life source, social symbol, and embodiment of meaning. Now, editor Norma E. Cantú has gathered the art, along with the words of fifteen poets, writers, artists, and scholars who reflect in various ways on the layers of interpretation to be derived from Briseño's works. Their thoughts provide focal points for musings about food, transborder relationships between food and art, personal connections to food, individual works within the exhibit, and the intense and immediate connections among culture, food, and self.

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