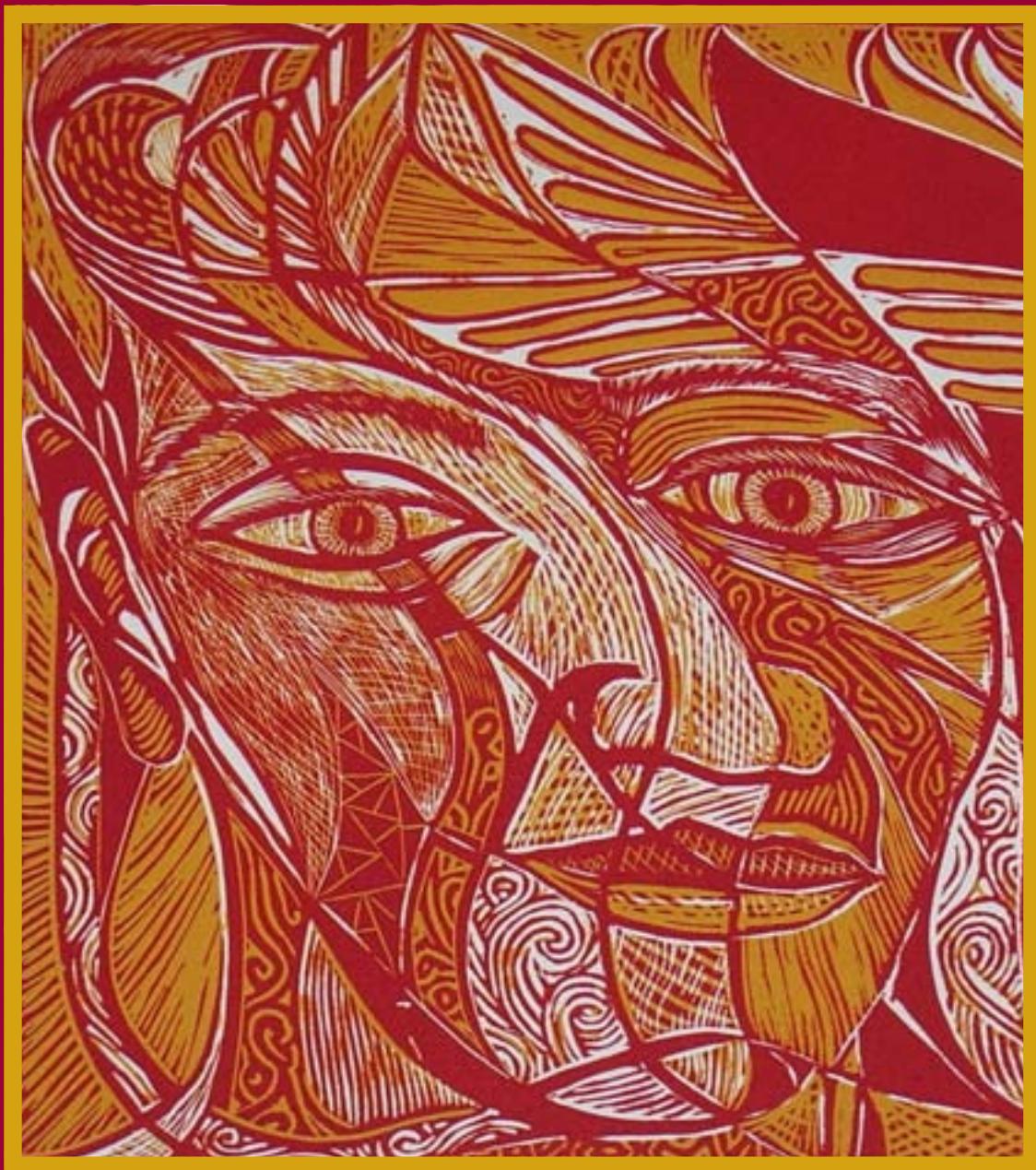


# RAIZ DEL TIEMPO



The Prints of René H. Arceo

# La Gráfica de René H. Arceo



# RAIZ DEL TIEMPO

Association Pour l'Estampe et l'Art Populaire  
Paris, France — October 2006

Casa Michoacan Gallery  
Chicago, United States — 2007



Volador celeste, 2003 Linocut

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am eternally grateful to many people who have, in one way or another, contributed to make this exhibition and publication a reality. I would like to acknowledge the continual dedication of my life partner, Beata Ewa Marek, who has never wavered in her enthusiastic support of my work. On more than one occasion she has urged me to assemble a publication, such as this one, to document and capture the spirit of my work as a printed memory.

Sincere appreciation is extended to the individuals who have supported and encouraged me over the years by exhibiting and/or purchasing my prints. These individuals include Michael Flanagan from the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater, WI; Gilberto Cardenas from Notre Dame University at South Bend, IN; Gary Keller from Arizona State University at Tempe, AZ; John Graham from Western Illinois University at Macomb, IL; Claude Villeneuve in Montreal, Canada; and Benjamin Varela in Edinburg, Texas. In México, to Carlos Ochoa at the Universidad of Guadalajara; Gerardo de la Barrera in Oaxaca; Leopoldo M. Praxedis in Tlaxcala; Alejandro Nava in Zacatecas; and Mizraim Cardenas and Juan Guerrero in Morelia.

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I am most appreciative to those printmakers who have provided me with the opportunity to exhibit in Paris, in particular Kristin Meller and Raoul Velasco. Kristin, a master of all trades, has been my channel of communication over the past two years, steadily e-mailing back and forth until this culminating point. Genuine thanks and sincere gratitude go to all the members of the *Association Pour l'Estampe et l'Art Populaire* in Paris.

This publication is dedicated to my children,  
artists of the future:

Ixtla Renée  
Atlan Tenoch  
Ollin Yarema

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Homage to Carlos A. Cortez, 1999 Linocut

## RAIZ DEL TIEMPO

Au Mexique, la gravure ayant une portée de critique sociale constitue un courant artistique à part entière. Depuis le début du XX siècle et à différence d'autres formes de l'estampe touchant un public restreint, la gravure critique s'est insérée dans le débat public. Elle est aussi percutante qu'une épigramme, aussi aigüe qu'un texte de dénonciation, construite sur le socle d'une synthèse de la force ancestrale de l'iconographie mexicaine.

C'est donc sa vigueur plastique qui a permis à cette forme de l'estampe d'aller au-delà de l'immédiateté journalistique. Ainsi, les gravures publiées dans la presse par José Guadalupe Posada pendant la révolution mexicaine de 1910 et nourries d'une critique féroce à caractère politique et sociale, ont aujourd'hui une portée atemporelle.

Les gravures que René Arceo nous propose ici se situent dans ce double versant esthétique et social. Elles se réclament de l'école des graveurs combatifs du Mexique du début du XX siècle – tels que J.G. Posada et Leopoldo Mendez – mais aussi du discours plastique post-révolutionnaire des peintres muralistes – principalement les trois grands : Rivera, Siqueiros et Orozco. Cependant, les courants d'avant-garde en Europe ont nourri aussi l'œuvre de René Arceo.

A partir de ses éléments, ses gravures sont d'un grand dynamisme, véritables récits par elles-mêmes : parfois d'une dimension tellurique et d'autres fois extrêmement contenues. Elles communiquent un sentiment d'urgence tout en étant des riches créations plastiques qui réclament un regard attentif de la part du public.

Ce n'est pas pour rien que son travail est irrigué par la thématique sociale : l'histoire des migrants aux Etats-Unis est une lutte continue pour la justice et pour la dignité. C'est ainsi que la réalité politique dans ce contexte s'offre à nous et, tel qu'une force qui nous empoigne, s'impose à notre regard.

Cependant, ce n'est pas le propos didactique qui est à la base du travail d'Arceo. La force iconographique de ses images nous demande un regard aigu pour en déceler le lyrisme, mais aussi les forces souterraines de leur origine : la « Muchacha con rebozo », qui nous fixe intensément ; la femme en « Méditation », qui se repose, tournée vers son monde intérieur ; ou bien l'indien « Tarahumara », dont la main noueuse est insinuée entre les lignes fuyantes de ses habits. Tous sont des portraits d'une grande expressivité qui se dévoilent sur un fond plat et dépourvu d'autres éléments. Le vide depuis lequel nous regarde l'enfant lacandon accentue sa présence, tout en faisant écho à la précarité dans laquelle vivent les indiens et les paysans au Mexique et en Amérique du Sud.



Calavera Curandera, 1984 Lithograph

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Dans d'autres gravures, par contre, les formes cohabitent et se transforment dans l'espace et ceci grâce au maniement adroit de la ligne comme source des constructions complexes, des décors riches en détails qui se métamorphosent en nouveaux visages, courbes amples qui dessinent des profils humains et d'objets perceptibles, des formes animales et végétales.

La musicalité et le sens ludique transmis par ces lignes, l'impression de légèreté presque instinctive de « Spiritual Dance » et « Central America » s'opposent à la gravité de « Guatemalan Woman » et à la rage manifeste de « Madre con rebozo ».

Il est aussi impossible d'ignorer, dans le travail d'Arceo, la présence sous-jacente des éléments préhispaniques sous la forme de masques ou de sculptures (les visages parallèles de « Bolivian Woman »). On trouve aussi l'omniprésent *calavera* mexicaine immortalisée par Posada et les glyphes aztèques dans le splendide « Alacran ». La riche tradition plastique des codex et des bas-reliefs taillés dans la pierre par les anciens peuples d'Amérique sont une source dans laquelle Arceo a su s'abreuver sans faux-semblants folkloriques.

L'exposition des gravures d'Arceo présentée ici, est un témoignage de la vigueur de cette forme d'Art parmi les créateurs latino-américains vivant aux USA. Ils sont dans une exploration continue de leurs racines culturelles, tout en étant plongés dans un présent en convulsion. Ainsi, l'œuvre d'Arceo est remarquable par sa connaissance et sa maîtrise de la tradition de la gravure, mais aussi de part la fraîcheur et la créativité de son propre langage.



Stop Nukes, 1990 Woodcut

Julio Rangel, Chicago, IL



Guatemalan Women, 1989 | Linocut

## ROOT OF TIME

Themes reflecting social issues are frequently portrayed in Mexican printmaking and are current artistic *sui generis*. Printmaking differs from other artistic expressions which are often confined to limited socio-economic circles. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century printmaking has become part of public life like a decisive epigram, expressing sharp social commentary and a synthesis of the ancestral Mexican iconographic force.

It is the artistic vigor of this genre that has enabled it to last beyond the journalistic immediacy. Let us remember the prints of José Guadalupe Posada published during the

Mexican Revolution of 1910. These prints were harsh political and social commentaries which, even today, remain timeless works of art.



Los Ricos (Armamento), 1983 Woodcut

The prints presented in this exhibition by René Arceo have a dual social-aesthetic perspective where several currents converge. First, the viewer makes a connection between Arceo's work with the combative Mexican prints from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, like those of José Guadalupe Posada and Leopoldo Méndez. Second, the post-revolutionary artistic discourse of the muralists – mainly of the three great Mexican muralists: Rivera, Siqueiros and Orozco. And third, the artistic European styles that have nourished his artwork are evident.

Just as in the above-mentioned artistic tendencies, his works synthesize, in full dynamic compositions, narratives that resolve within themselves—at times telluric, at times controlled. They are social and cultural commentaries which transmit a sense of urgency while at the same time elaborate artistic creations that ask for the attention of the spectator.

It is not without cost that his work is impregnated with social themes; the history of Latino immigration to the United States is a continuous struggle for justice and respect. Frequently, the political reality stands firm in front of us and grabs us by our lapels, even when we may not want to see it.

Nevertheless, it is not mere didacticism that breathes within his prints, rather the iconic force of these images ask us to look at a slow pace to reveal its lyrical current within its many layers.

The “Muchacha con rebozo” that directs an intense look at us; the woman in “Meditación” that rests and retreats into an interior world; and the indigenous “Tarahumara” that shows his knotty hands between the nervous flow of lines on his clothes are all figures with concentrated expressions that appear over a flat background, deprived of the elements. The emptiness from which the “Lacandon Boy” sees us accentuates his figure and echoes the precarious conditions in which the indigenous farm-workers live in Mexico and South America.

In other prints, on the other hand, forms mutate and cohabit in space at the mercy of an astute handling of the line, generating intricate constructions, rich depths of details that evolve into new figures, expanding curves that form human profiles, animal and vegetable forms, and discernable objects. The musicality and the playful sense that those lines transmit, the impression of almost instinctive looseness in “Spiritual Dance” and “Central America” contrast with the gravity of “Guatemalan Women” and the indignant rage of “Madre con rebozo.”

It is impossible to avoid the underlying presence of pre-Hispanic elements in the shape of masks or sculptures (the parallel faces in “Bolivian Woman”), the omnipotent Mexican skeletons that Posada immortalized, and the Aztec glyphs in the splendid “Alacran.” The rich artistic tradition of the codex and low-relieves sculpted in stone by the ancient settlers of our American continent are a fountain from which Arceo has known how to successfully soak without folkloric theatricality.

This show of prints testifies to the vigor of this genre among Latino visual artists in the United States. These artists are continually exploring their cultural roots while immersing themselves in the agitation of the present day. Arceo’s work, in particular, stands out not only due to his assimilation and knowledge of the printmaking tradition, but also because of his fresh and creative approach in how he creates his own language.

Julio Rangel, Chicago, IL



Black Sisters, 1983 Linocut



Blue Angel, Warm Heart, 2001 Linocut

## RAIZ DEL TIEMPO

El grabado mexicano de tema social es una corriente artística *sui generis*, pues a diferencia de otras manifestaciones, confinadas a círculos restringidos, desde principios del siglo XX se ha insertado en la vida pública con la contundencia de un epigrama, un afilado comentario social, y una síntesis de la ancestral fuerza iconográfica mexicana.

Es el vigor plástico de este género el que lo ha hecho perdurar, más allá de la inmediatez periodística (recordemos que los grabados que José Guadalupe Posada publicó en la prensa durante la Revolución Mexicana de 1910, ácidos comentarios políticos y sociales, hoy se sostienen como un arte atemporal).

Los grabados que ahora presenta René Arceo tienen esa doble vertiente estético-social, y en ellos convergen tanto la escuela de los combativos grabadores mexicanos de principios del siglo XX, como José Guadalupe Posada y Leopoldo Méndez, y el discurso plástico posrevolucionario de los muralistas —primordialmente los tres grandes: Rivera, Siqueiros y Orozco—, como las corrientes europeas vanguardistas, que también han nutrido su obra.

Como en las tendencias mencionadas, sus grabados sintetizan, en composiciones llenas de dinamismo, narraciones que se resuelven en sí mismas —a veces telúricas, a veces contenidas. Son comentarios sociales y culturales que transmiten un sentido de urgencia, pero son también elaboradas creaciones plásticas que piden la atención del espectador.

No es gratuito que su arte esté impregnado de temática social; la historia de los inmigrantes en Estados Unidos es una continua lucha por la justicia y el respeto, y a menudo la realidad política se planta ante nosotros y nos toma de las solapas aunque no queramos verla.

No es, sin embargo, un mero didactismo lo que alienta sus grabados, pues la fuerza icónica de estas imágenes nos pide una mirada detenida para revelarnos su corriente lírica, sus capas profundas.



Alto a la Intervención, 1984 Woodcut

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La “muchacha con rebozo” que nos dirige una mirada intensa, la mujer en “Meditación” que reposa, replegada en un mundo interior o el indígena “Tarahumara” que asoma su mano nudosa entre el nervioso fluir de líneas de su indumentaria, son figuras de expresividad reconcentrada que aparecen sobre un fondo plano, despojado de elementos. El vacío desde el que nos mira el niño lacandón acentúa su figura y hace eco a la precariedad en la que viven indígenas y campesinos en México y Sudamérica.

En otros grabados, en cambio, las formas mutan y cohabitan en el espacio, merced a un diestro manejo de la línea, generando intrincadas construcciones, fondos ricos en

detalles que devienen nuevas figuras, dilatadas curvas que forman perfiles humanos y objetos discernibles, formas animales y vegetales. La musicalidad y el sentido lúdico que transmiten esas líneas, la impresión de soltura casi instintiva de “Spiritual Dance” y “Central America” contrastan con la gravedad de “Guatemalan Women” y la rabia indignada de “Madre con rebozo”.

Imposible soslayar la presencia subyacente de los elementos prehispánicos en forma de máscaras o esculturas (los rostros paralelos en “Bolivian Woman”) la omnipresente calavera mexicana que Posada inmortalizó, y los glifos aztecas en el espléndido “Alacrán”. La rica tradición plástica de los códices y los bajorelieves esculpidos en piedra por los antiguos pobladores de nuestra América son una fuente en la que Arceo ha sabido abrevar con acierto, sin aspavientos folclóricos.

Esta muestra de grabados da testimonio del vigor de este género en los artistas plásticos latinos de Estados Unidos, en continua exploración de sus raíces culturales e inmersos en el presente convulso. Particularmente, la obra de Arceo destaca por la asimilación y el conocimiento de la tradición del grabado, pero también por la frescura y la creatividad con que crea su propio lenguaje.



Guilty, 1983 Woodcut

Julio Rangel, Chicago, IL



America Central Hoy, 1984 Lithograph



El Artista , 1983 (Detail) Woodcut



Guatemala in the 80's, 1992 Linocut



Untitled, 1984 Linocut



Desacuerdo, 1992 Linocut



Calaca Descansando, 1995 Linocut



Tradición Mexicana, 1984 Linocut



Bolivian Woman, 1986 Linocut



Woman Weaving the Future, 1999 Linocut



Meditación, 2003 Linocut



Mujer con rebozo, 1994 Linocut



El Alacrán, 1998 Linocut (from the portfolio "La Lotería," Taller de Gráfica Galigo)



Rescuing Mexico, 1986 Linocut



Dos experiencias, una identidad, 2003 Linocut



Tarahumara, 1990 Linocut



Man, 1995 Linocut



Tension, 1992 Linocut



Lacandon Boy, 1990 Linocut



Spiritual Dance, 2001 Linocut



Ollin Yarema, 2005 Linocut (from the portfolio: Mnemonic: To Aid the Memory, Arceo Press )



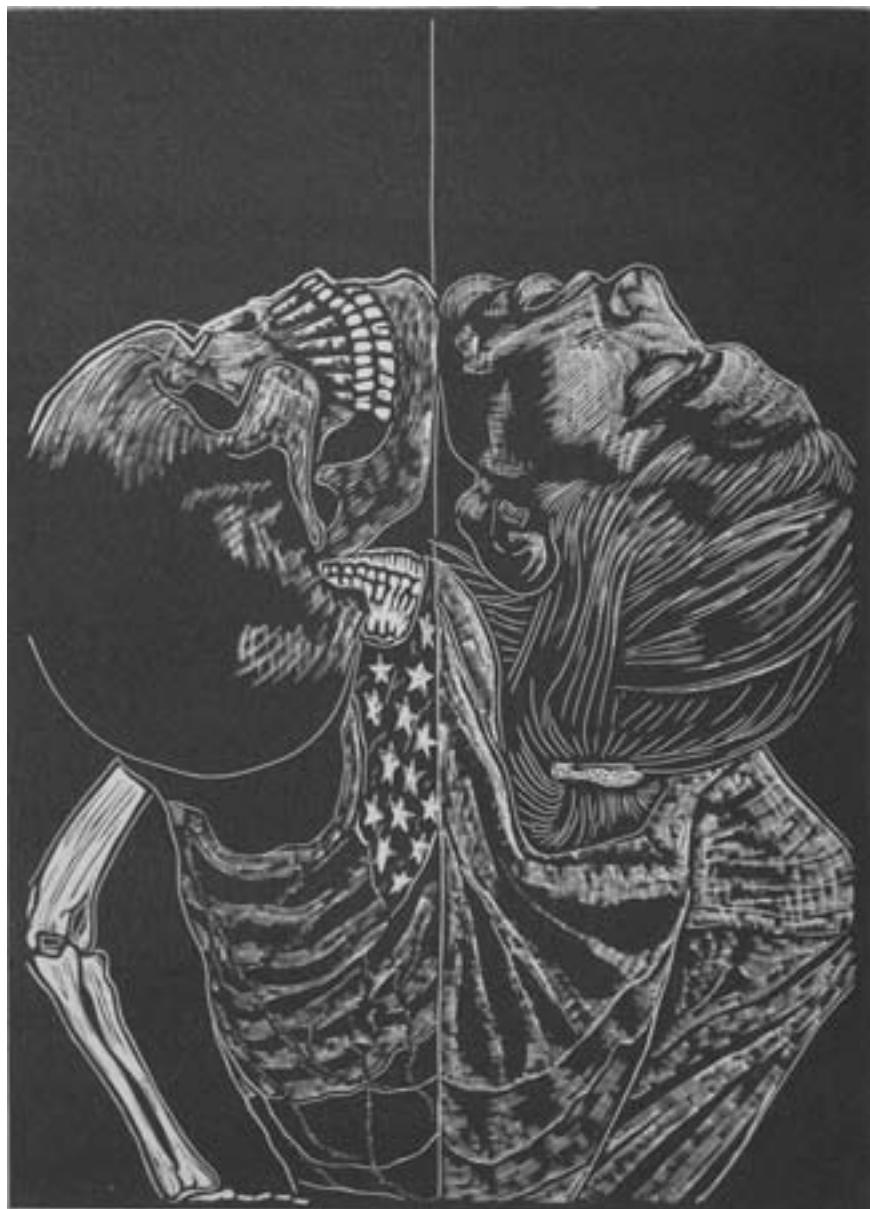
Dualidad, 1992 Linocut



Calaca con disfraz, 1986 Linocut



Discusión, 2001 Linocut



Bushism, 2004-05 Linocut



They Have Dried the Earth with their Tears, 2005 Linocut

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2006 Raiz del Tiempo** – Association Pour l'Estampe et l'Art Populaire – Paris, France
- 2004 Rene Arceo Prints & Paintings** – Art Gallery of the Oak Park River Forest High School, Oak Park, IL  
**Ritmo de la Naturaleza II** – Kristoffer's Café, Pilsen-Chicago, IL  
**Ritmo de la Naturaleza I** – Palacio de Gobierno, Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico
- 2002 Energía Unilateral II: Recent Works by Rene Arceo** – Indiana University Southeast, New Albany, IN  
**Nowe Ekspresje: Antyczne Korzenie** – Academickie Centrum Kultury, Lublin, Poland  
**Nowe Ekspresje: Antyczne Korzenie** – Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych Galeria Zamojska (BWA), Zamość, Poland  
**Energía Unilateral: Recent Works by Rene Arceo** – Jumping Bean Cafe, Chicago, IL
- 2001 René Arceo: Hilos del Espíritu** – Expressions Graphics, Oak Park, IL  
**René Arceo: Retrospective** – La Llorona Art Gallery, Chicago, IL  
**Parangaricutirimicuaro Y2K** – Jumping Bean Cafe, Chicago, IL
- 1995 René Arceo: Recent Works** – Randall Shapiro Art Gallery, Oak Park, IL
- 1992 René H. Arceo: Obra Reciente** – Palace of Culture, Tlaxcala, Mexico
- 1991 René H. Arceo: Obra Reciente** – Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Morelia, México; Museo José Guadalupe Posada, Aguascalientes, Ags., México.
- 1990 René H. Arceo: Obra Reciente** – Museo de Arte Francisco Goitia, Zacatecas, Zac., México; Galería Gabriel Flores, Guadalajara University, Guadalajara, Jal., México;  
**René H. Arceo: Graphic Works** – El Rebozo, Oak Park, IL  
**René H. Arceo: Recent Works** – North Lakeside Cultural Center, Chicago, IL
- 1989 René H. Arceo: Recent Graphic Works** – Julio Ruelas Workshop, Zacatecas, Zac., México and Museo Nacional de la Mascara, San Luis Potosi, SLP, México
- 1988 René H. Arceo: Recent Drawings & Prints** – El Rebozo, Oak Park, IL
- 1986 Galería Ink Works, Pilsen** – Chicago, IL  
**Lawndale Bank, Little Village** – Chicago, IL
- 1985 Malcolm-X College** – Chicago, IL



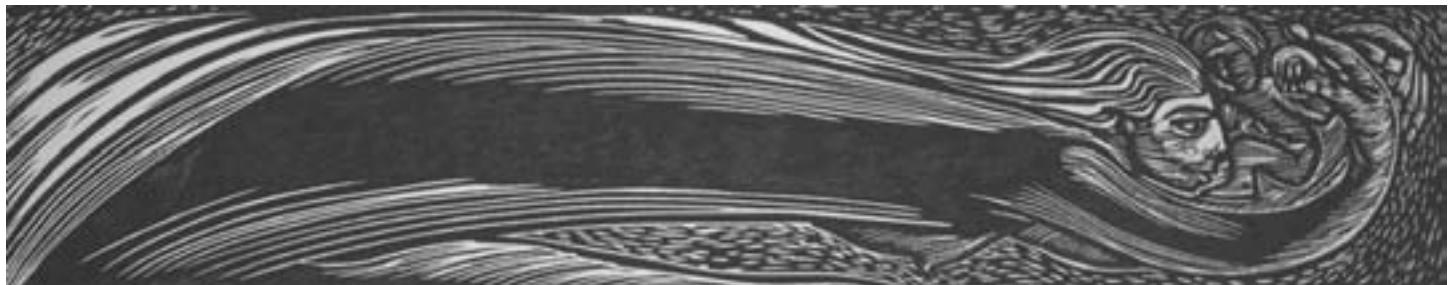
## AWARDS

- 2006** Governor's International Arts Exchange Program of the Illinois Arts Council (France)
- 2002** Governor's International Arts Exchange Program of the Illinois Arts Council (Poland)
- 1994** Purchase Award in the 60 Square Inch National Exhibition, Purdue University, Lafayette
- 1993** Regional Artists' Projects Grant offered to artists in the Midwest through Randolph Street Gallery
- 1991** First place purchase award "A Salute to Cultural Diversity," Norstrom, Oakbrook, IL
- 1990** Chicago Artists Abroad Grant to exhibit in and travel to Mexico. Program funded by the Paul and Gabriella Rosenbaum Foundation
- 1989** Chicago Artists Assistance Grant, Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), Chicago
- 1987** Chicago Artists Assistance Program, Department of Cultural Affairs, Chicago

## COLLECTIONS

### **Private collections in Mexico, United States and Poland**

- Academickie Centrum Kultury, Lublin, Poland
- Arizona State University, Hispanic Research Center, Tempe, AZ
- Autonomous University of Tlaxcala, México
- Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych Galeria Zamojska (BWA), Zamość, Poland
- Concordia University, River Forest, IL.
- Greater Lafayette Museum of Art, Lafayette, IN
- Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL
- Laumeier Sculpture Park, Saint Louis, MO
- Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, Chicago, IL
- Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Alfredo Zalce, Morelia, Mexico
- Museo Nacional de la Estampa, Mexico City, Mexico
- Purdue University Galleries, Lafayette, IN
- University of Wisconsin, Whitewater, WI
- Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL
- Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI



Mother &amp; Child, 1995 Linocut

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Many of the influences and sources of inspiration for my work come from the artists of the Mexican School of Art. Specifically from printmakers such are Alfredo Zalce, Alberto Beltran and Leopoldo Mendez and from the muralists Jorge Gonzalez Camarena, Fernando Leal and Xavier Guerrero.

Human, social, and some times political commentaries are the common themes addressed in my prints. I feel that as a member of a given society the artist should, in a non-dogmatic fashion, artistically react or respond to social, economic or even political accounts and events taking place in our world today. This wouldn't be in place of, but rather in addition to, expressing other universal concerns and feelings and artistic explorations.

My feeling is that artists must reflect, in lesser or larger commitments, their own time and place.

Prints have a special beauty and magic for me. On one hand, the beauty and the enjoyment of the process while carving each individual line and texture. On the other hand, the magic and often surprising results after pulling the first impression. I enjoy working with and printing on paper. An additional element of great interest to me is the fact that multiplicity can contribute to reaching larger audiences while subsequently making the artwork affordable or more accessible to a larger group of people.

In most cases my works evolve as a product of a spontaneous act. The act of drawing lines, on a surface, which evolve into shapes and forms defined in the spontaneous process of creating them. Most often, while creating art I do not depart from a specific idea or concept I want to address. Rather, it evolves out of the process of drawing lines spontaneously.



Madre con rebozo, 2003 Linocut



Estado Psiquico, 1985 Woodcut



La aparicion, 2001 Linocut

Corazón Rítmico, 2005 Linocut



ARCEO PRESS & STUDIO

5016 N. MELVINA AVE. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60630

[www.arceoart.us](http://www.arceoart.us) • [renearceo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:renearceo@sbcglobal.net)