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Published on December 7, 2015 — Comment 1

## Santísima Virgen de las Barrikadas | Te Takakau tapu o Barricades | Blessed Virgin of the Barricades

***Oracion – Prayer – Te Karakia*** (1)

*You, who were born on the street amid subversive graffiti, keep*

*alive the flame of rebellion*

*We whose multi-coloured spray made the miracle of your Incarnation*

*You, who stand on an old tyre, crush the demons of capitalist*

*domination*

Artist, eco-architect and champion of the people's media – the poster, Xavier de la Cueva Meade lives in the hills of Whaingaroa-Raglan with his partner, Carolyn Hart. His motherland is Mexico. You actually cannot take Mexico outta the boy. The spirit of Emiliano Zapata is his guardian angel and Santisima Virgen de las Barrikadas is always interceding on his behalf to the heart of indigenous Mexico. Meade is an artist suspicious of America and the many manifestations of colonial powers and multi-national corporations, or 'demonic' capitalism.

In 2003-4, I had the honour of teaching in the studio next to Meade, Xavier de la Cueva Meade at the School of Media Arts in the Drawing and Design faculty.

Slowly learning about the depth of conviction he had for the indigenous peoples of Mexico was one of the gems I gleaned in getting to know him. His exchanges and friendships with colleagues and family in his homeland of Mexico forged close ties with the famed ASARO (Socialist Assembly of Revolutionary Artists from Oaxaca). Oaxaca, Mexico is a city laden with graphic artists whose political images and texts wall-paper the city. Not just with aerosol, but with xylographs, stencilled works and hand-painted posters. There are many people who conscientiously object in this manner, and it has become somewhat of a widespread 'tradition' now. So for Meade, the project was also a way of reaching back home across the ether.

As a prolific collector of graphic works such as the poster, Meade has amassed hundreds of works from Mexico, Cuba and the world over.

In 2007 he collaborated with Professor Flor de Lis López Hernández (Cuba), a group of artists from Aotearoa and the famous printers – ICAIC (Instituto Cubano de Arte Industria Cinematografica) in Havana, Cuba. The result was a series of hand-cut and printed serigraphic posters entitled *Aotearoa Liberators*. The second poster series was entitled *Purakau, Mitos y Leyendas, Myths and Legends*, collaboration between artists from Aotearoa, Cuba, Mexico and Spain and again, Flor de Lis López Hernández.

It was this poster series for which the work *Santisima Virgen de las Barrikadas* was made.

Meade possesses a genuine and strong sense of social justice as a Mexicano living in Aotearoa since the 1980s. His natural aroha – love for Tangata Whenua –indigenous peoples of Aotearoa has inspired the collaborative and inclusive practice of representing each of his homelands through language. Each series of posters has been documented as a catalogue and each catalogue is tri-lingual: Te Reo Maaori, Spanish and English.

### *Retablo + The People*

Co-opted into the indigenous peoples' lexicon of deities in various parts of Meso-America and Mexico is *Our Lady of Guadalupe* along with other relative saints. Whether one actually believes or not in any kind of god, the retablo or shrine, is not an unusual object to have in the home. The indigenous beliefs always gave credence to a deity or protector, it just has a Catholic veneer. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the most well-known of the Catholic icons. Kind-of at-odds with one another, but in a very real way, both serving the purposes of 'the people'.

ASARO's secularised version of her is *The Blessed Virgin of the Barricades*; she *crushes* the head of the demons of capitalism and oppressive power. In the visual narratives that come out of the resistance of Mexico, there are various names for these powers:

United States of America

El Presidente

Monsanto and its subsidiaries

International Monetary Fund

The World Bank

Santisima Virgen de las Barrikadas made her first appearance on the walls of Oaxaca in 2006 by ASARO. Meade has immortalised her and her message. The message will continue to be transmitted to distant places around the planet, for the sake of the planet and the people, now and forever.

*From the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, free us*

*But keep alive our ancestral memories and our millenary cultures*

*For now, we will sell for free your image on every wall, in an effort*

*to adore and invoke you, and, respectful to our traditions,*

*preserve the local resistance... and, by the way, without global*

*copyright.*

SANTÍSIMA VIRGEN DE BARRIKADAS



*Leafa Wilson*

Curator (Art) Waikato Museum Te Whare Taonga o Waikato

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1. Excerpt from the original *Oracion Los Appo Stoles Irreverentes (reference to the Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca / Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca)* via Whaingaroa, Valencia and Akumal Xavier Meade, *Purakau Myths and Legends Mito y Leyendas International Poster Project Catalogue, 2011*
2. Excerpt from the original *Oracion – final stanza of the litany: Los Appo Stoles Irreverentes (reference to the Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca / Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca)* via Whaingaroa, Valencia and Akumal Xavier Meade, *Purakau Myths and Legends Mito y Leyendas International Poster Project Catalogue, 2011*

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