

Milk Moon Gallery



Artist Statement **Kelly Tapia-Chuning**

Within my practice, the serape is reimagined as a site of decolonization. Dismantling this traditional Mexican textile reveals the histories, erasures, and ancestral knowledge within it. Removing and reconfiguring the weft exposes the vulnerability and resilience of identity—unfurling a history that cannot be erased. The narrative, however, can be re-centered and re-contextualized.

By utilizing the serape, I aim to acknowledge history while reimagining the future. The serape's dual Indigenous and colonial origins prompt questions surrounding assimilation and reclaiming lineage. Deconstructing the serape becomes a ritualized act, symbolizing the healing and reconnection of broken cultural threads—creating space for new narratives to emerge. These ritual actions shape my process of becoming, with viewers serving as witnesses to this transformation.

My family's history and lineage are complex, and I am the culmination of that assimilation and erasure. However, my work results from re-rooting practices in which I participate. In "Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality," Chicana Feminist and Cultural Scholar/Theorist Gloria E. Anzaldúa describes the "process of falling apart" as a prerequisite for healing. Within this framework, the serape serves as a source of tension and rebirth.

My ancestors and living relatives have endured multiple waves of assimilation. First Hispanicized, then Anglicized. As a descendant of this colonial violence, *susto* is the sickness that follows generationally. In Chicana/x/a/o and Latinx/a/o communities, *susto* (meaning fright) refers to an ailment linked to a traumatic event that results in the soul's departure from the body. This phenomenon is often tied to the violence and loss of land and culture from colonization. Within my work, dismantling the serape is an act of healing this generational *susto*.

The meticulous process of dismantling the serape becomes a metaphor for researching my "lineage"—each thread removed mirrors unraveling lost connections to ancestors. The serape itself serves as a site of visual inquiry into this research, with its layers revealing the fragmented nature of my history. I am continuously piecing together and searching for ancestors, and although definite answers may remain enigmatic, I take heart in the knowledge I have found, gained, and restored. For I carry the blood of my ancestors, both known and once-known; my existence is their resistance.

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Artist Biography

Kelly Tapia-Chuning

Kelly Tapia-Chuning (b. 1997, California) is a mixed Xicana artist with Indígena ancestry, currently based in Miami, FL. Recognized for her textile- and research-based practice that critically examines 'mestizaje'—the blending of cultures—and assimilation, Tapia-Chuning's work seeks to heal ancestral trauma and reconnect with long-forgotten familial histories and cultural roots.

Tapia-Chuning received an MFA in Fiber from Cranbrook Academy of Art, where she was awarded a Gilbert Fellowship. In 2025, her work was selected for the 18th International Triennial of Textile in Łódź (PL). Other honors include CAA's 2023 Professional Development Fellow in Visual Arts Award and the 2024 Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award from the International Sculpture Center. Tapia-Chuning's work has been included in exhibitions at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, UT; The Shepherd, MI; The Bunker Artspace, FL; Kimball Art Center, UT; Liliana Bloch Gallery, TX; Cranbrook Art Museum, MI; Onna House, NY & FL; David Castillo Gallery, FL; Clubhouse Gallery, FL; Milk Moon Gallery, CO, among others. She has held residencies at Ucross (WY) and Stove Works (TN). Her work has been featured in Artnet News, Southwest Contemporary, Surface, and Juxtapoz Art & Culture Magazine, among others. Tapia-Chuning's work is held in numerous private and public collections across the US, including the Cranbrook Art Museum, MI; Tang Teaching Museum & Art Gallery, NY; The Bunker Artspace, FL; Onna House, NY & FL; the State of Utah Alice Merrill Horne Art Collection, the Southern Utah Museum of Art, and the Salt Lake County Visual Art Collection.