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Tewa Tales of Suspense!

Posted on January 7, 2019

In 2016, the Newberry acquired a suite of seven prints by Jason Garcia (Santa Clara Pueblo). The prints, with the collective title *Tewa Tales of Suspense!*, illustrate the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

In his own words, Garcia (also known as Okuu Pin) uses his art to “blend ancient Pueblo designs, stories and scenery with images taken from Western popular culture.” In the case of *Tewa Tales of Suspense!*, the important historical event of the Pueblo Revolt is told in the idiom of the comic book.



Using the idiom of the comic book, Jason Garcia's *Tewa Tales of Suspense!* Series considers the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 while leaving a deep and memorable impression.

For more than 100 years beginning in 1540, the Pueblo people of present-day New Mexico were subjected to successive waves of soldiers, missionaries, and settlers. These encounters, referred to as the *Entradas*, were characterized by violent confrontations between Spanish colonists and Pueblo peoples.

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was a concerted effort mounted by Pueblo peoples to resist Spanish attempts to destroy their religion by banning traditional dances and destroying religious icons such as the *Kachina* (a wooden figure thought by Pueblo peoples to

embody a spirit being). Anti-Spanish feeling was inflamed by accusations that Spanish missionaries were in the practice of whipping Native Americans who failed to participate in Christian religious activities. (These accusations were almost certainly true: investigations conducted in New Mexico between 1620 and 1680 mentioned many cases of missionaries severely punishing Native Americans.

One of the final events leading up to the Pueblo revolt occurred in 1675 when Governor Juan Francisco Treviño ordered the arrest of 47 Pueblo medicine men and accused them of practicing “sorcery.” Four medicine men were sentenced to death by hanging; three of those sentences were carried out, while the fourth prisoner committed suicide. The remaining men were publicly whipped and sentenced to prison.

When news of this reached the Pueblo leaders, they sent forces to Santa Fe, where their medicine men were being held as prisoners. Because a large number of Spanish soldiers were away, Governor Treviño was forced to comply with the Pueblo demand for the release of the prisoners. Among those released was Po’Pay, a Tewa leader from O’ke Owingeh (San Juan Pueblo, New Spain, present day New Mexico). Following his release, Po’Pay, along with a number of other Pueblo leaders, planned and orchestrated the Pueblo Revolt. Po’Pay took up residence in Taos Pueblo, far from the capital of Santa Fe, and spent the next five years seeking support for a revolt among the 46 Pueblo towns.

As Garcia explains in his introduction to *Tewa Tales of Suspense!*, “[t]he revolt was the most successful of Native American efforts to turn back European colonists, and for over a decade the Pueblos were free from intrusion.” For this reason, the event is of great historical interest.

The Newberry houses some accounts of the Revolt from the non-Native perspective in its [Edward E. Ayer Collection of American Indian and Indigenous Studies material](#). (See, in particular, a [collection](#) compiled around 1627 or 1628 by the Franciscan missionary Father Gerónimo Zárate Salmerón and an [oration](#) given at the funeral of 21 priests who were killed in the revolt, printed in Mexico in 1681.) Yet no comparable contemporary accounts of the Revolt from the Pueblo perspective are known to exist.

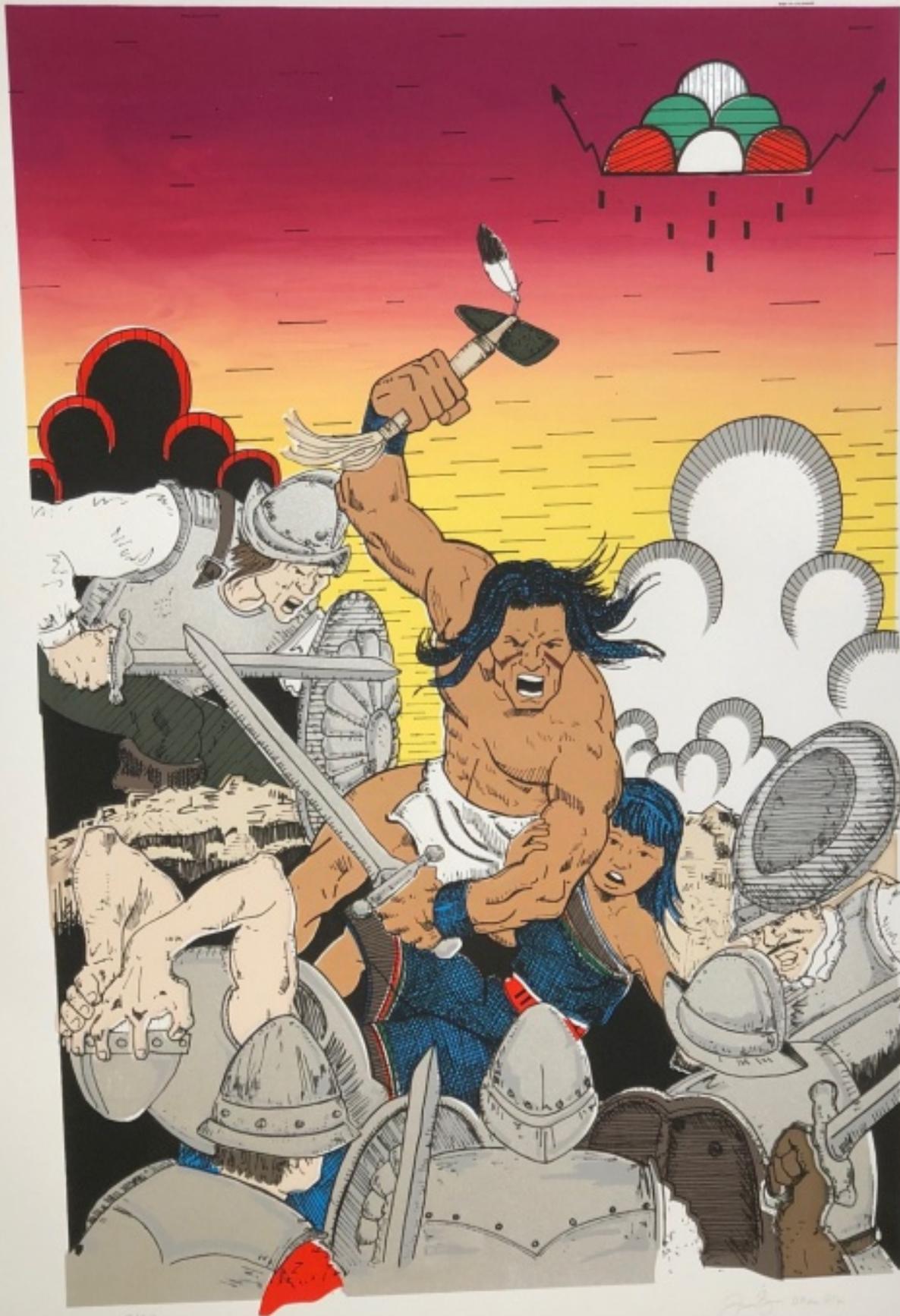
Garcia's *Tewa Tales of Suspense!* is in many ways an attempt to provide this perspective. His bold take on the protagonists of the Revolt as “superheroes” fighting for truth, justice, and the Pueblo way offers an important corrective to the imbalance in the historical record.

In the print “Danger in the Air,” for example, we see a Tewa messenger carrying the knotted cord that ignited the countdown to the Pueblo Revolt running towards the viewer, immediately drawing the audience into the action. Behind the runner, a mission church has been set ablaze. The scene is set against a turquoise sky in which a multicolored Pueblo raincloud pours down rain amid black and white clouds billowing up.



The print "Danger in the Air," from Jason Garcia's *Tewa Tales of Suspense!* series of prints

"To Conquer a Colossus!" takes a similar approach. Against the backdrop of a red and golden sky, a lone Pueblo warrior, protecting a female figure, fights off six Spanish conquistadors. Drawing on comic book conventions, the print depicts the warrior, tomahawk in hand, as a superhero outnumbered by his better-armed opponents.



The print "To Conquer a Colossus!," from Jason Garcia's *Tewa Tales of Suspense!* series of prints

With such powerful imagery, Garcia brings the 1680 rebellion to life. The comic-book format allows him to present a troubling aspect of American history in a non-threatening manner. The use of vibrant, comic-book colors helps the artist draw the viewer into considering controversial aspects of our country's history while also leaving a deep and memorable impression. In so doing, Garcia makes a painful episode in Native American history accessible to a wider audience.

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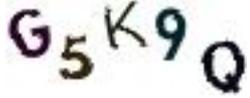
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