

Santiago Robles\*

# THE MEXICO 68/18 100 Poster Collection

**W**hen violent events that have left open wounds in our society are commemorated—at least by those who are sensitive to violence—I have contradictory feelings. On the one hand, I agree that we have to fight tooth and nail to retain both our individual and our collective memories. On the other hand, I ask myself how much people really make an effective commitment, with real participation in causes, and not just automatically commemorate something.

As I am writing this, in addition to the 50 years that have passed since the '68 student movement, we are commemorating other events that have been very painful for our society: it has been four years since the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa Normal School students; and recently we commemorated the first anniversary of the September 19 earthquake that shook Central Mexico, leaving what official figures cited at almost 300 dead.

Although it is true that these unfortunate events sparked big social mobilizations, it is also true that as time has gone by, the levels of active participation and

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"October 2, Neither forgive nor forget," Ricardo Ceceña.



"A wounded country cannot move forward," Joan Vázquez.

community labor have dropped precipitously, despite the fact that none of them have received the justice they deserve.

I think that cultural production linked to events in society is an essential part of confronting the political system and the authoritarian, corrupt government that made them happen—we still are not capable of creating earthquakes, but direct responsibility does exist with regard to the administrative reactions to the natural phenomenon. However, I would like to believe that that cultural production is not an end in itself, because, although it is very important, it is insufficient.

In my view, art directly linked to politics, whether literature, design, or anything else, fulfills the function of greater signification if it fosters encounters that go beyond the parameters of the respective disciplines—do those borders actually exist? This happens, for example, when it contributes to creating auton-

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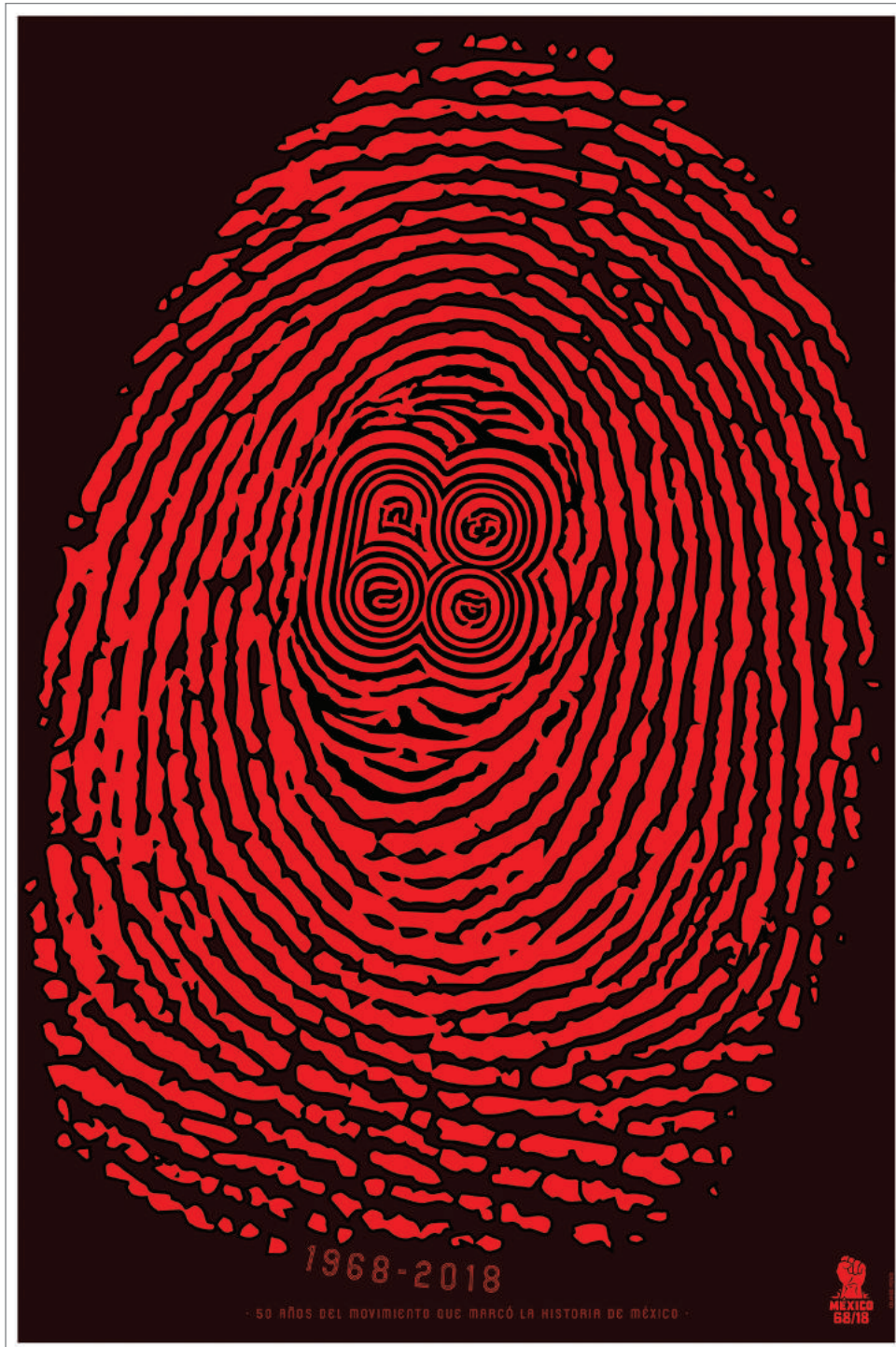


Manuel Guerrero.

omy, to strengthening community causes that crystalize in concrete actions and movements of true social solidarity, not just discourse; that is, when it transcends café chit-chat or the hermetic discussion that takes place on the great Internet social network or at a gallery exhibit.

In this emotionally complicated context, I am writing to present some of the images in the “Mexico 68/18, 100 Posters” collection, organized at the Veracruz University Visual Arts Institute by designers José Manuel Morelos, Abraham Méndez, and Alfredo Ayala. I want to believe that this enormous effort of bringing together the voices of 14 states throughout Mexico is on the side of a new col-

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Eduardo Picazo.

lective way of doing national politics. I have certain reasons for thinking about this way of doing politics as something that is never fully concluded, as an infinite road, but a road that we can take step by step, one of which is the renovation of elected positions in our country with the recent federal elections. That change was decided on by the population at large.

As a society, we deserve a government equal to its task, but we must also think and act in accordance with the political and social responsibilities assumed. This should always have been the case, although it is never too late to start again.

As a population, we do not deserve, nor should ever we allow the government to commit again a crime of the magnitude of October 2, 1968, in Tlatelolco. Nor should we allow the investigations about it to become an infinite bureaucratic labyrinth in the hands of successive administrations and framed as supposed “historic truths”.



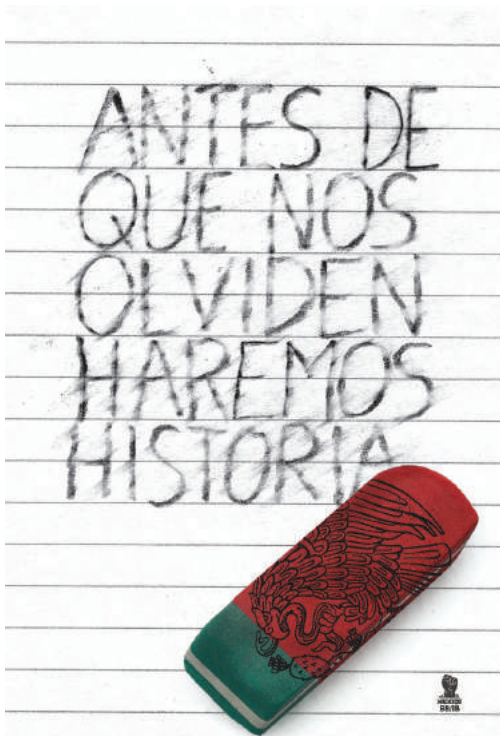
Élmer Sosa.



“The crime is there, covered in sheets of newsprint, by televisions, radio, by Olympic flags.” Jaime Sabines. Poster by Adán Paredes.

As inhabitants of this land, we neither deserve, nor must we accept that official discourse advance in the opposite direction from the daily lives of the citizenry, nor that the government attempt to keep busy disguising itself and presenting a friendly face to the world community while our compatriots are murdered (see Adán Paredes’s poster).

As a collective, we neither deserve, nor must we accept the system’s discourse, like Enrique Peña Nieto’s speech justifying corruption as something inherent in Mexican culture,<sup>1</sup> that it blur our political identities, our capacity for empathy with other social groups, or the conviction that things can be changed for the better (see Eduardo Picazo’s poster).



"Before they forget us, we'll make history," Alejandra Guerrero Esperón.

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Belinda Ugalde.

As a community, we neither deserve, nor must we allow the continued media manipulation that attempts to convince us that the channels for dialogue and agreements with the system are open while it runs roughshod over our individual guarantees and violently silences those who do not agree with it (see Belinda Ugalde's poster).

As participants in social and affective movements, we must maintain a critical stance, separating ourselves and openly pointing to the voices that say they are representative and that use media platforms to betray the principles of society's initiatives.

Hopefully, this and other art will seek to accompany an effective commitment, real participation in popular causes and not be understood as an act of creation that has fulfilled all political responsibilities, discarding the possibility of undertaking other actions.

October 2, never again. **MM**

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See *Animal político*, "La corrupción es un asunto cultural": Peña Nieto," September 4, 2014, <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2014/09/la-corrupcion-es-un-asunto-cultural-pena-nieto/>. [Editor's Note.]