

Marie Romero Cash's *Our Lady of Guadalupe* (left) and *Spiritual Reflection I* (right)

by [John Kohan](#) in the [May 2025](#) issue

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The revered image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is said to have miraculously appeared on the cloak of Juan Diego, an Indigenous peasant in Mexico, after a Marian apparition in 1531. This Mary of the Americas is a treasured theme today for artists who are *santeros* (saint makers) in the American Southwest. Marie Romero Cash is a New Mexican painter, sculptor, and art historian who has been a leader in the resurgence of a unique regional form of iconography, one that long predates US western expansion. She has made images like *Our Lady of Guadalupe* using traditional techniques for private devotions and large installations in historic

churches in the Santa Fe area.

Around her 80th birthday in 2022, Cash began experimenting with bold, more abstracted compositions in acrylic on canvas. She remains grounded in her Roman Catholic faith, and she took on the challenge of deconstructing traditional imagery of the Virgin of Guadalupe in a painting in her new style.

In *Spiritual Reflection I*, there are elements of the Guadalupe story in outlines of the winter roses Juan Diego gathered for a doubting archbishop, represented by a miter and crozier. There is a symbolic Aztec bird and markings for the road to the sacred site at Tepeyac. And in the star-spangled blue edge of Mary's robe and the flaming Halley's Comet, Cash nods to the unusually high amount of celestial activity in 1531—and to the map of constellations embedded in the outline of traditional Virgin of Guadalupe images. "It was mind boggling to learn" about the latter, she told the century. "I see the image in a different way now."