

## LINDA CHRISTENSEN

*Writer, 2017*  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

## C. M. MAYO

# Tulpa Max

## Notes On the Afterlife of a Resurrection

In a manner of speaking, we historical novelists are in the resurrection business. But who, or rather, what precisely is it that we bring to life? These characters infused by our imaginations, yet based on beings who were once flesh, blood, and bone, can they escape the page and, like the *tulpas* of Tibetan esoteric tradition, take on a will of their own and haunt their creators? In the case of Maximilian von Habsburg, that Archduke of Austria who ended both his reign as Emperor of Mexico and his life before a firing squad in Querétaro 150 years ago, and whom I made a character in my novel based on the true story of Agustín de Iturbide y Green, *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire*, I must confess that yes, he haunts me.

To start with, soon after the novel's publication (more years ago than I would care to count), Tulpa Max, as it were, prompted a little avalanche of correspondence that continues rumbling into my email inbox to this day.

*Had I seen the mega alebrije, Amor por México, Maximiliano y Carlota?*

*Did I believe that Maximilian was a Mason?*

*What did I think of the legend of Justo Armas, was he really Maximilian, having escaped that firing squad to make a new life in El Salvador?*

From another reader, Maruja González, friend of a friend in San Miguel de Allende, I received, along with her generous permission to post it on my blog, a family story about the dessert prepared for Maximilian on his visit to that city in 1864. It so happened that Maximilian had stayed in her great-great-grandparents' house,

and there they made him a very solemn banquet with music and soloists, and all the ladies, their hair coiffured, lamented very much the absence of the empress, Carlota, as they were already calling her with affection. All these ladies of the cream of San Miguel society jostled to outdo each other in making the most elaborate, brilliant, and exquisite delicacies. One of my aunts had the honor of preparing some pears in syrup for the monarch, who turned upside down in praise for this most wonderful dessert.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My translation from the Spanish.