

¡MURALES REBELDES!

L.A. CHICANA/CHICANO MURALS UNDER SIEGE



ERIN M. CURTIS
JESSICA HOUGH
GUISELA LATORRE

FOREWORD AND AFTERWORD BY
GUSTAVO ARELLANO

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Foreword

Gustavo Arellano

ESSAYS

¡MURALES REBELDES!

Remembering the Lost Work



All that remains of Yreina Cervántez and Alma López's *La Historia de Andentro/La Historia de Afuera* are the mural's decorative ceramic tiles, Huntington Beach, 2016

Courtesy of California Historical Society/LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes; photo by Oscar R. Castillo

HISTORY CENSORED

Barbara Carrasco

L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective

1981; censored 1981

16 x 80 feet

Intended site:

330 South Broadway, Los Angeles



***L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* by Barbara Carrasco, 2016**

Courtesy of California Historical Society/LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes; photograph by Sean Meredith

Barbara Carrasco's mural contains 51 scenes depicting the history of Los Angeles, with an emphasis on the experiences of marginalized groups, told from a Chicana perspective. It survives today because of Carrasco's determination to protect a mural so contested that it was both censored and threatened with destruction. This essay examines the mural's controversial content and a city uncomfortable with its own past.

TOO CHICANO?

Roberto Chavez

The Path to Knowledge and the False University

1974–1975; whitewashed 1979

30 x 200 feet

East Los Angeles College, Monterey Park



This monumental mural at East Los Angeles College was not only a heroic undertaking at 30 by 200 feet long but also an important landmark for Chicana/o students at a critical moment when Southern California universities were establishing Chicana/o Studies departments. This essay examines both Roberto Chávez's unique surrealist-influenced style and the societal forces that resulted in its obliteration.

A LEGAL LEGACY

East Los Streetscapers

(David Botello, Wayne Alaniz Healy, George Yepes)

Filling Up on Ancient Energies

1980; destroyed 1988

1,200 square feet

Corner of 4th and Soto Streets



Filling Up on Ancient Energies, Reduced to Rubble, 1988

Courtesy of East Los Streetscapers; photograph by David Botello

The members of East Los Streetscapers—David Botello, Wayne Alaniz Healy, and George Yepes—found themselves in the middle of a legal battle when the wall that held their mural *Filling Up on Ancient Energies* was destroyed. The court's decision in their favor also set a precedent that would come to the aid of muralists who followed.

DIVERSITY COVER-UP

Yreina D. Cervántez and Alma López

La Historia de Adentro/La Historia de Afuera

1995; whitewashed 2009

14–24 x 105 feet

526 Main Street, Huntington Beach



Detail, *La Historia de Adentro/La Historia de Afuera* by Yreina D. Cervántez and Alma López, c. 1995
Courtesy of Yreina D. Cervántez; photo by Alma López

Much of the work for Cervántez and López's *La Historia Adentro, La Historia Afuera* (*The History from Within/The History from Without*) took the form of their research into the historical ethnic communities of Huntington Beach. This more hidden history informed the mural's design but may have also determined its fate. The mural was left to degrade and was eventually whitewashed. The artists' distinct perspective on local history was erased, when the mural was whitewashed by a new building owner in in 2009.

TAGGED FOR DESTRUCTION

Willie Herrón III

The Wall That Cracked Open

1972; partially whitewashed 1999

25 x 18 feet

4125 City Terrace Drive, City Terrace, Los Angeles



***The Wall That Cracked Open* by Willie Herrón III, 1972**

Courtesy of the artist

Figures appear to break through the wall in Willie Herrón III's emotionally wrought mural, *The Wall That Cracked Open*, painted the night Herrón's brother was stabbed in a gang-related incident in the alley behind the family bakery. This essay looks at the radical nature of this work of public art—including Herrón's intentional incorporation of graffiti. His intimate relationship with the community graffiti writers, however, were misunderstood by graffiti abatement agencies that whitewashed the tags.

DISAPPEARED AND DISAPPEARING

Ernesto de la Loza

Resurrection of the Green Planet

1990–1991; deteriorating

15 x 50 feet

Cesar E. Chavez Avenue and Breed Street, Boyle Heights



Detail, *Resurrection of the Green Planet* by Ernesto de la Loza, c. 1991

Courtesy of the artist

El Nuevo Mundo: Homage to the Worker

1996; destroyed 2000

16 x 40 feet

2011 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles



Detail, *El Nuevo Mundo: Homage to the Worker* by Ernesto de la Loza, 1999

Courtesy of the artist; photo by Annika Dahlen

Ernesto de la Loza has completed over 40 murals in Southern California but only 8 remain. Despite this, his career-long struggle to share his vision with the public hasn't dampened his commitment to the art form. This essay examines two murals with different fates. *Resurrection of the Green Planet* fell into disrepair and accumulated graffiti, while the building on which *El Nuevo Mundo: Homage to the Worker* was painted was torn down to make way for a public library.

THE COST OF CONTROVERSY

Sergio O’Cadiz Moctezuma

Fountain Valley Mural

1974–1976; destroyed 2001

6 x 625 feet

Calle Zaragoza, Colonia Juarez, Fountain Valley



Detail, Immigrants, *Fountain Valley Mural* by Sergio O’Cadiz Moctezuma, c. 1976

Private collection of the O’Cadiz Family

When the City of Fountain Valley refused to pay him his promised fee, Sergio O’Cadiz worked without compensation to complete a mural of over 600 feet. But his battle wasn’t over. Deliberately neglected by the city, the mural was left to decay and then bulldozed. This essay examines the controversial segment of O’Cadiz’s mural that pitted his artwork against an Orange County city and the mural’s subsequent fate.

AFTERWORD

Gustavo Arellano

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FROM THE DIRECTORS' NOTE

¡Murales Rebeldes! draws its inspiration from the controversial mural *América Tropical* (1932), created by Mexican master David Alfaro Siqueiros on Olvera Street, across from LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes. The mural, which graphically depicts the crucifixion of a Mexican Indian on a cross crowned with an American eagle, was considered dangerously anti-American and whitewashed within a year of its completion. Siqueiros's works, along with those of his Mexican muralist contemporaries, fueled the artistic fires of the many Chicana/o muralists who emerged beginning in the 1960s. Like Siqueiros, they used their art form to express their frustrations, dreams, hopes, and grievances against a society they viewed as largely oppressive. At a time when Chicanas/os had limited outlets of communication, murals served as a newfound form of artistic expression and community building, coloring the landscape of Chicana/o neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles and beyond.

Many of these works have been lost in the intervening decades, whether to the elements, development, or intentional whitewashing. For whatever reason, removal of a mural is no less than the silencing of a voice; intentional erasure represents an act of blatant censorship.

Recovering the histories of even a few contested murals was challenging and time consuming. In some cases, images of finished murals no longer existed; complete imagery of these works had to be pieced together from photographs taken over time. In other cases, the multifaceted relationships between the authorities, local communities, and murals were difficult to document.

Through this book, these murals speak to us again. We are eternally grateful to all who have played a role in helping us share a vibrant and powerful chapter of California history.

John Echeveste
CEO, LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes

Anthea M. Hartig, PhD
Executive Director and CEO, California Historical Society

ARTISTS

David Botello (b. 1946)

East Los Streetscapers

Artist and muralist David Botello has over forty years of experience working with art and the communities of East Los Angeles. A Los Angeles native, he has trained as a painter, muralist, sculptor, designer, and art restorer.

In 1969, Botello and brothers Jose Luis and Juan Gonzalez co-founded the Goetz Art Studio & Gallery as a space for local artists to create, exhibit, and sell art. Four years later, he was among the first artists to paint murals at the Estrada Courts public housing project in Los Angeles. Botello reunited with his elementary school friend Wayne Alaniz Healy in 1975, and they co-founded Los Dos Streetscapers, known later as East Los Streetscapers. Together, they have produced a wide range of public artworks using a variety of media, including canvas and tile murals as well as porcelain, enamel, and concrete art installations.

Botello's solo and collaborative artwork has been exhibited throughout the United States and Europe. He and Healy continue to work together at their studio in Commerce, California.

Barbara Carrasco (b. 1955)

A Los Angeles-based muralist and artist working in a variety of media as well as a collaborator of the United Farm Workers of America, Barbara Carrasco has given key visual representation to the social justice movements of the late twentieth century. Her banners for the UFW, large-scale public art projects, paintings, and drawings have been featured in numerous publications, including *Ms.*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Artforum*, *The Boston Globe*, *New England Journal*, *High Performance*, and *Flash Art*. She has also exhibited in the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

Carrasco's mid-career survey exhibition, *A Brush with Life*, was held at the Vincent Price Art Museum in East Los Angeles College in 2008, the same year that the Girl Scouts of America created a merit patch based on her iconic image of Dolores Huerta. Her original mural sketches and drawings are included in the permanent collection of the Library of Congress, while her oral history and documentation of her mural work are archived at the Smithsonian Institution. A permanent collection of her papers is held at Stanford University.

Carrasco received her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts and earned her BFA from the University of California, Los Angeles. She has taught at the University of California, Santa Barbara and Loyola Marymount University, and was appointed the 2002–2003 University of California Regents professor at the University of California, Riverside. Carrasco has been awarded numerous fellowships and grants, including the J. Paul Getty Fund for the Visual Arts Visual Artist Fellowship; the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department Window Grant for Literature and COLA Award; and the LACE/Rockefeller Foundation/Andy Warhol Foundation/NEA Artists Projects Grant. She currently serves as a board member of the Dolores Huerta Foundation.

Yreina D. Cervántez (b. 1952)

Yreina D. Cervántez is a third-generation Chicana, born in Garden City, Kansas, raised in Southern California, and currently based in Los Angeles. She earned a BA in Fine Arts from the University of California, Santa Cruz and an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles. Presently, she is

a tenured professor in the Department of Chicana/o Studies at California State University, Northridge.

Working primarily in painting, printmaking, and muralism, Cervántez's art combines imagery and ideologies from indigenous cultures and urban Los Angeles. She has exhibited at Avenue 50 Studio, the Hammer Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Self Help Graphics and Art, the Skirball Cultural Center, the Social and Public Arts Resource Center (SPARC), and Tropico de Nopal Gallery Art-Space. Her work is held in number of collections, including LACMA, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and the Smithsonian Institution, and appears in publications such as *Ero-Ideologies: Writings on Art, Spirituality, and the Decolonial* and *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities* by Laura E. Pérez; Clara Roman-Odio's *Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions*; *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenous Murals of California* by Guisela Latorre; Chon Noriega's *Just Another Poster?: Chicano Graphic Arts in California*; and *The Road to Aztlan: Art from a Mythic Homeland* by Virginia M. Fields.

Roberto Chavez (b. 1932)

Artist and educator Roberto Chavez profoundly influenced the first-wave Chicana/o art movement in East Los Angeles, where he was born. He earned a BA and an MA in Pictorial Arts from the University of California, Los Angeles. A United States Navy veteran, he trained as a Photographer's Mate during his service. Chavez began his teaching career at UCLA Extension and in 1969 joined the faculty at East Los Angeles College (ELAC), where he co-founded the Chicana/o Studies Department and developed new courses in Mexican Art, Pre-Columbian Art, Chicana/o Literature, and Teatro. He taught at ELAC through 1981.

Chavez showed with the Ceeje Gallery in Los Angeles, which specialized in figurative art from a diverse group of Los Angeles-based artists, many of whom graduated from UCLA. He has exhibited in galleries and museums throughout the United States, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Autry Museum, and the Pasadena Museum of California Art. In 2014, the Vincent Price Art Museum presented a retrospective exhibition of his work, *Roberto Chavez and the False University*.

Ernesto de la Loza (b. 1949)

Born in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles, Ernesto de la Loza has created artwork for the city's communities for over forty years. As an active member of the Chicana/o mural movement, he brought art to working-class Chicana/o communities, filling concrete walls with images that inspire unity, consciousness, and hope. De la Loza served as the project director for the Estrada Courts murals and has painted some forty-five public artworks throughout Los Angeles to date. Additionally, he has used muralism as a platform for training young, self-taught artists to take chances and develop new public art forms and visual languages that represent cultures often rendered invisible within U.S. society.

De la Loza's aesthetic palette takes cues from his travels abroad and his commercial work as well as his public art. He has studied *plein air*, airbrush, oil, and easel painting, and as a commercial artist, he developed skills in painting signs and billboards, hand lettering, and typography, developing the versatility and technical skill needed to explore painting in numerous aesthetic styles. Many of his working experiences are incorporated into his designs. He has served on the board of the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles and taught courses at Self Help Graphics. He continues to produce new art and restore his murals.

Wayne Alaniz Healy (b. 1946)
East Los Streetscapers

Despite being the grandson of muralist Adolfo Alaniz and a member of a highly artistic family, Wayne Alaniz Healy initially pursued a BS in Aerospace Engineering and a BS in Mathematics from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and later received an MS in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Cincinnati. He worked as an aerospace engineer before becoming a full-time artist and muralist in 1991; eight years later, he officially earned his MFA in Art from California State University, Northridge.

Healy began selling his paintings in Cincinnati during the late 1960s. He later returned to East Los Angeles, where he had been raised, and immersed himself in the mural movement through the Mechicano Art Center. In 1975, he cofounded Los Dos Streetscapers (now East Los Streetscapers) with grade-school friend and fellow artist David Botello. After two decades of painting murals, the Streetscapers developed multimedia public art projects using sculptural and architectural elements, combining Healy's talents in art and engineering.

Healy's solo work includes serigraphs, silkscreens, and etchings in addition to drawings and paintings. He has participated in exhibitions around the world, and his art is held in private collections on six continents. He has also worked as an educator, training young artists through East Los Streetscapers and offering workshops, lectures, and participatory projects for K-12 youth. He has taught at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; California State University, Northridge; and Otis College of Art and Design.

Willie Herrón III (b. 1951)

Willie Herrón's artistic career spans over forty years of nationally and internationally recognized performance and conceptual art, including music (as a member of the punk band Los Illegals and founder of the East Los Angeles venue The Vex) and iconic, world-class murals. He was one of the founding members of Asco, an East Los Angeles-based Chicana/o artists collective (1972–87). He studied art at East Los Angeles College, Otis Art Institute, and Art Center College of Design.

Herrón's artworks are seen in films, music performances, and museums throughout the United States and Europe. Many of his pieces were included in *Asco: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972–1987* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2011. He also has shown at the Williams College Museum of Art in Massachusetts, the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo on the campus of the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City, and the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago. His vast experience as an art restorer and conservator of public landmarks has gained wide media attention as he continues the restoration of the historic 1984 Olympic Freeway Murals, commissioned by the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles.

Alma López (b. 1966)

Over the last two decades, Alma Lopez's art has been exhibited in over one hundred national and international solo and group exhibitions in Mexico, Italy, Ireland, and throughout the United States. Collections of her work are at the Museum of International Folk Art, the Oakland Museum of California, and the McNay Art Museum. Born in Mexico and raised in Los Angeles, López received her BA with Distinction in Art from the University of California, Santa Barbara and her MFA from the University of California, Irvine.

In 1999, *La Gente* magazine dubbed López a “Digital Diva” for her groundbreaking, photo-based digital series *Lupe & Sirena*. That series, and most of López’s visual work, raises questions about popular Mexican icons from a radical Chicana feminist lesbian viewpoint. One of those images, *Our Lady*, is the subject of the book *Our Lady of Controversy: Alma López’s “Irreverent Apparition,”* which López co-edited with Alicia Gaspar de Alba.

López continues to work as a visual artist and teacher and currently teaches courses on Chicana/Latina art and artists, Arts Censorship, and Los Angeles Queer Art and Artists for the César Chávez Department of Chicana/o Studies and the LGBTQ Studies Program at the University of California, Los Angeles. Through her work, activism, and popular website, López is considered one of the most visible and cutting-edge queer Chicana feminist activist artists.

Sergio O’Cadiz Moctezuma (1934–2002)

After migrating to California in 1961, Sergio O’Cadiz studied architecture at the University of Mexico before settling in Huntington Beach and establishing an art and architectural design studio on Newport Boulevard in Costa Mesa. He later moved his studio to the City of Orange, becoming an important presence in Orange County’s gallery scene and gaining notoriety in the community. The publicity generated from his gallery exhibits and the connections forged through his architectural design work created opportunities for O’Cadiz to make significant contributions to the public art landscape in Southern California. He participated in the Chicana/o mural movement and also created public architectural designs and sculptures.

O’Cadiz developed an eclectic style and expansive body of work, informed by European masters as well as pre-Columbian and Catholic iconography that reflected his Mexican identity and Jesuit education. Exploring the many facets of human experience and cultural expression, he painted the sublime aesthetic of everyday life, the joy and pain of love and lust, mythical and historical figures, real world landscapes, and surreal visions.

A muralist in the most Mexican of traditions (drawing inspiration from Diego Rivera, José Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros and their Aztec and Mayan precursors), O’Cadiz invented an original poured-concrete relief mural technique exemplified in the stunning façades of the Santa Ana City Hall and the Cypress College Auditorium. He worked as an architect, freelance designer, and consultant locally, nationally, and internationally while passionately pursuing creative activity as a prolific painter and sculptor until his sudden death in 2002. His distinctive artistic legacy lives on in his many public works throughout Southern California.

George Yepes (b. 1955) East Los Streetscapers

George Yepes participated in the Chicana/o mural movement as a founding partner of key muralist collectives, including the Public Art Center, El Centro de Arte Publico, Concilio de Arte Popular, and Corazon Art Productions. From the late 1970s to 1985, he worked with muralists David Botello and Wayne Healy, forming the collective East Los Streetscapers. Yepes co-designed and co-painted twenty-eight murals credited to the team.

Yepes was born in Baja, Mexico, and raised and educated in East Los Angeles. After earning a degree in business administration from California State University, Los Angeles, he took painting classes at East Los Angeles City College, working for many years as both an accountant and a muralist. In 1992, he established the Academia de Arte Yepes, the first free mural art academy for students in Los Angeles. Since then, he has taught more than two thousand students from low-

income neighborhoods in Chicago, San Antonio, and Los Angeles. In 1993, Yepes and his students, in partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the European Space Agency, and the Agenzia Spaziale Italiana, began a fourteen-year series of projects resulting in *The Marriage of Art, Science and Technology*, the first national education model for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. That year, he also partnered with architect Ricardo Legorreta to design seven public transit stations beneath East Los Angeles for the Los Angeles Subway project.

In 1998, Yepes was selected to create a 70-foot vaulted ceiling mural, *The Promise*, at the state capitol in Sacramento. He has painted social, historical, and sacred images seen in museums, churches, and hotels; on guitars, record albums, and book covers; and in movies. His work is in forty museum collections and numerous private collections. He was named *El Fuego de Los Angeles* (The Fire of Los Angeles) by Councilman Richard Alatorre and the Los Angeles City Council in 1992 and a "Treasure of Los Angeles" by Mayor Richard Riordan and the Los Angeles City Council in 1997.

CONTRIBUTORS

Gustavo Arellano

Gustavo Arellano is the editor of *OC Weekly*, an alternative newspaper in Orange County, California and writer of *¡Ask a Mexican!*, a nationally syndicated column. He is the recipient of awards ranging from the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies to the Los Angeles Press Club President's Award to the Impacto Award from the National Hispanic Media Coalition and was recognized by the California Latino Legislative Caucus with a 2008 Spirit Award for his "exceptional vision, creativity, and work ethic."

Erin M. Curtis

Erin M. Curtis earned a PhD in American studies at Brown University, where she also earned an MA in public humanities. From 2009 to 2010, Curtis was a Smithsonian Institution Predoctoral Fellow at the National Museum of American History. She worked for the interactive design firm Local Projects as Exhibition Media Researcher before becoming Assistant Curator at the Skirball Cultural Center.

Jessica Hough

Jessica Hough earned her MA in curatorial studies from Bard College and her BA in art history from Occidental College. She is director of exhibitions at the California Historical Society, where she has worked since 2012, overseeing the production of several exhibitions each year and serving on the senior management team. Previously she was director, exhibitions, publications, and programs at the Hammer Museum at UCLA. She was director of the Mills College Art Museum and curatorial director at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.

Guisela Latorre

Guisela Latorre earned a PhD in art history from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an MA in art history from University of Cincinnati, Ohio. She specializes in modern and contemporary U.S. Latina/o and Latin American art with a special emphasis on gender and women artists. Her first book, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals from California* (University of Texas Press, 2008), explores the recurrence of indigenous motifs in Chicana/o community murals from the 1970s to the turn of the millennium. She currently teaches classes on Latina/Chicana feminism, visual culture, and Latina/o art at Ohio State University.