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Murals without Walls, Muralism without Borders: Women Artists and Their Portable Murals of
the Chicano Art Movement in California, 1978-2020

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor
of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Gabriela Rodriguez-Gomez

2025

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2025

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Murals without Walls, Muralism without Borders: Women Artists and Their Portable Murals of
the Chicano Art Movement in California, 1978-2020

by

Gabriela Rodriguez-Gomez

Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles

Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black, Chair

Abstract

This interdisciplinary study focuses on portable murals created by artists Juana Alicia, Judith F. Baca, Barbara Carrasco, Sandra de la Loza, Carmen León, Alma López, Patricia Rodríguez, and Josefina M. Quezada. Their portable murals visualize what I argue are Chicana, Latina, and Mexicana re-visions of history representing women, Indigenous Mesoamerican, Native American, Mexican American, Chicana/o/x, and Latina/o/x communities as protagonist figures who were integral to the establishment of rural towns and urban cities in northern, central, and southern California. This dissertation contributes to existing scholarship on the Chicana/o art and mural movement by demonstrating that the production of Chicana/o murals continued well after their peak in the 1970s. These women artists and their portable murals redefined the genre through their experimentation with unconventional mediums creating large scale images of conceptual and historical figures rooted in Indigenous Mesoamerican and Native

American culture. Their murals presented iconography that evoked the phrase “la cultura cura,” or cultural healing, to repair the wounds of the past through a re-conceptualization of the present and future. In remembrance of Patricia Rodríguez and Josefina M. Quezada, my analysis serves as an *ofrenda* or an offering of gratitude for their perseverance as muralists but also honors each artists’ legacy as integral to the Chicana/o art movement.

The dissertation of Gabriela Rodriguez-Gomez is approved.

Karina Alma

Alicia Gaspar de Alba

Alma López Gaspar de Alba

Guisela Latorre

Chon A. Noriega

Charlene Villaseñor Black, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2025

Dedication:

Para mi mamá, mis abuelas y bisabuelas

To women muralists past and present, this *ofrenda* of appreciation is for you

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VITA

GABRIELA RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ

EDUCATION

- 2019 M.A. César E. Chávez Department of Chicana/o and Central American Studies (UCLA)
- 2012 M.A. Department of Art History, University of California, Riverside (UCR)
- 2008 B.A. Department of Art and History of Art and Visual Culture, University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC)

PUBLICATIONS

- 2025 “*Our Mother Portable Mural: Yolanda M. López’s Nuestra Madre (1981-1988)*” in *X as Intersection: Writing on Latinx Art*, October 29, 2025, accessed November 15, 2025. <https://uslaf.org/essay/our-mother-portable-mural-yolanda-m-lopezs-nuestra-madre-1981-1988/>
- 2024 “Chicana/o/x Photorealist Murals in California: Agency, Community, and Photography” in *Ordinary People: Photorealism and the Work of Art since 1968*, edited by Anna Katz. Los Angeles: DelMonico Books, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2024. 205-211.
- 2023 Review of *Diego Rivera’s America, Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, vol. 5, no. 4 (October 2023): 118-119. <https://online.ucpress.edu/lalvc/article/5/4/118/197429/Review-Diego-Rivera-s-America-edited-by-James-Oles>
- 2022 “History sin Fronteras: Antonio Bernal’s Chicano Murals in Del Rey and East Los Angeles” in *The Artist as Eyewitness: Antonio Bernal Papers 1884 to 2019*, edited by Charlene Villaseñor Black. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2022. 21-28.
- 2020 “Introduction.” *Califas: The Ancestral Journey / El Viaje Ancestral*, with art contributions from Guillermo Aranda, Ralph D’Oliveira, Eduardo Carrillo, Carmen Leon, and Amalia Mesa-Bains. Edited by Felicia Rice. Santa Cruz: Moving Parts Press, 2020. 1-2.
- 2019 “Diego Rivera. La historia de la medicina en México: People’s Demand for Better Health, mural in 1953 aún vigente.” “Diego Rivera, The History of Medicine in Mexico: People’s Demand for Better Health, mural 1953 still current” Co-written article with Dr. Felipe C. Cabello (New York Medical College). *Revista Chilena de Pediatría* vol 90, no. 3 (June 2019): 351 – 355. https://scielo.conicyt.cl/scielo.php?pid=S0370-41062019000300351&script=sci_arttext
- 2018 Review of *Give Me Life: Iconography and Identity in East LA Murals* by Holly Barnett-Sanchez and Tim Drescher, *Azilán Journal of Chicano Studies* vol. 43, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 275-279. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2018.43.1.275>

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2024 – 2025 UCLA Graduate Division, Dissertation Year Award
2024 Stanford University’s Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity and Cantor Arts Center, Latinx Art Fellow, Fall 2024
- 2023 – 2024 UC President’s Pre-Professoriate Fellowship (PPPF), part of the UC-Hispanic Serving Institutions Doctoral Diversity Initiative (UC-HSI DDI)
- 2023 – 2024 Collegium of University Teaching Fellows (CUTF) — declined
- Summer 2023 Smithsonian Archives of American Art and American Art Museum Fellow in Latinx Art, with support from the National Museum of the American Latino’s Latinx Pool Initiative
- 2022 – 2023 Institute of American Cultures Fellowship, Research Travel Grant
- Summer 2022 UCLA Keck Humanistic Inquiry Graduate Research Award. Keck Graduate Fellow
- 2021 – 2022 Employing and Amplifying Rhizomes (EAR) Fellowship, Rhizomes of Mexican American Art Since 1848, Funded by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS)
- 2021 – 2022 Edward A. Dickson Fellowship in the History of Art, UCLA Department of Art History
- 2018 – 2019 Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division
Mentor: Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black
- 2018 – 2019 Institute of American Cultures Fellowship, research conducted at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC)
- Summer 2018 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division
Mentor: Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black
- Summer 2017 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division
Mentor: Professor Judith F. Baca at Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC)

CONFERENCES AND SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS

- 2025 Midwest Art History Society (MAHS) Annual Conference, Denver Art Museum, Denver Colorado, April 3-5, 2025. Presentation titled, “In Anticipation of the U.S. Semi-Quincentennial, Let Us Honor Carlotta D.d.R. Espinoza’s portable mural Pasado, Presente, Futuro.” April 3, 2025
- 2024 Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity and Cantor Arts Center Latinx Art Fellowship at Stanford University. Presentation titled, “Reflection, Recovery, and Chicana *Domesticana* Aesthetics: Cantor Arts Center’s Collection of Chicana/o/x Art, Honoring Dr. Amalia Mesa-Bains.” December 2, 2024
- 2023 ALAA Sixth Triennial Conference, “Encounters with the Archive in Latin American and Latinx Art, at MUAC-UNAM, CDMX. Panel 1: “Feminist Strategies to Combat Erasures.” Presentation titled, “Re-Engaging Archives in the U.S. and Mexico, A Chicana Feminist Approach to Writing Chicana/x and Latina/x Women Artists and their Murals into Art History.” March 15, 2023

Introduction

This interdisciplinary study focuses on portable murals created by artists Juana Alicia, Judith F. Baca, Barbara Carrasco, Sandra de la Loza, Carmen León, Alma López, Patricia Rodríguez, and Josefina M. Quezada. Their portable murals visualize what I argue are Chicana, Latina, and Mexicana re-visions of history representing women, Indigenous Mesoamerican, Native American, Mexican American, Chicana/o/x, and Latina/o/x communities as protagonist figures who were integral to the establishment of rural towns and cities in northern, central, and southern California. This dissertation contributes to existing scholarship on the Chicana/o art and mural movement by demonstrating that the production of Chicana/o murals continued well after their peak in the 1970s. These women artists and their portable murals redefined the genre through their experimentation with unconventional mediums, creating large scale images of conceptual and historical figures rooted in Indigenous Mesoamerican and Native American culture. Their moveable murals presented iconography that evoked the phrase “la cultura cura,” or cultural healing, to repair the wounds of the past through a re-conceptualization of the present and future. In remembrance of Patricia Rodríguez and Josefina M. Quezada, my analysis serves as an *ofrenda* or an offering of gratitude for their perseverance as muralists but also honors each artist’s legacy as integral to the Chicana/o art movement.

My research aims to demystify the idea of the master muralist by deconstructing patriarchal structures within the study of Chicano and Mexican muralism. The following set of questions prompted this investigation of women muralists and their portable murals of the Chicano art movement. Why are there no great women muralists? This question was inspired by Linda Nochlin’s famous 1971 essay, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” where she critiqued the discipline of art history and its oversight of women’s art. Nochlin’s approach presented a standpoint that challenged the idea of “great” artists by inserting a feminist point of

view in her research on European art.¹ However, Nochlin's inquiry in the 1970s did not account for the experience of women of color artists and muralists in the U.S. or Mexico.

By the 1980s and 1990s, scholarship in art history and Chicana/o studies gradually integrated the point of view of women of color muralists like Judith F. Baca or Barbara Carrasco as well as the all-women muralist group Mujeres Muralistas from San Francisco, California. In 2011 Chicana artist and muralist Patricia Rodríguez, co-founder of the Mujeres Muralistas, revealed one of the reasons she created the all-female team. Per Rodríguez, "one big motivation for us was recognizing that there had been no successful women muralists in the Mexican mural movement. We wanted to show that women could also paint large outdoor murals."² Her statement was the catalyst that sparked my investigation into the historiography of women muralists. I ask, what do we know about Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana artists participating in the Chicano and Mexican mural movements? Have Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana artists achieved their goals as "great" muralists as defined by the Chicano art movement? Was that the purpose of the Chicano Movement's social and cultural activism?

My investigation also proposes to view these women muralists and their portable murals as reinventions of the mural making process. Thus, their experimentation with various mediums becomes a liberating act of resilience. Why portable murals? I chose to write about these unconventional moveable murals instead of the traditional painted walls because of its innovative

¹ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 145-178. See also Dina Comisarenco Mirkin's essay titled "Diego Rivera and Rina Lazo in Context: Crossing the Boundaries of Art Practice, Education, and Gender," *Voices of Mexico* CISAN UNAM, Issue 101 (Center for Research on North American of the Office of the Coordinator of Humanities, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Summer 2016), 53. Comisarenco Mirkin resurfaced this question stating, "since Linda Nochlin's famously asked, Why have there been no great women artists?" the pernicious effect of the male-dominated educational structures has been widely recognized."

<https://ru.micisan.unam.mx/handle/123456789/19534?show=full>.

² Patricia Rodríguez, "Mujeres Muralistas" in *Ten Years That Shook the City: San Francisco 1968-1978* ed. Chris Carlsson (San Francisco: City Lights Foundation Books, 2011), 81.

practice that expanded my understanding of muralism. Furthermore, portable murals demonstrate emancipative qualities of muralism that allowed women artists to illustrate their ideas and concerns about the past, present, and future without restrictions. When the practice of having to obtain permission to paint on a wall is removed, the authority to create a large-scale image that can be displayed anywhere is redirected to the artist.

What is a portable mural? I propose to understand the portable mural as an enlarged image transferred onto a moveable or semi-permanent surface. These murals can also exist digitally or in different physical environments, both in situ and transportable. The scale of the image and medium varies, but the accessibility of the image and engaging story indicates the essence of a mural. The portable mural is a significant form because artists were able to respond to the social-political events of the time using functional, digital, and transportable mediums that can exist in various locations. This study proposes to view the portable mural as a mural either detached or affixed to a wall or other surface existing both in situ and in virtual reality. These murals distribute Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana her-stories through large images but more importantly via grand, powerful ideas rooted in community and cultural healing.

My positionality, as a Chicana feminist scholar, instills a Chicana/x re-visioning of the Chicano mural movement through an intersectional analysis of primary and secondary sources centering women's art and portable murals. I re-examined scholarship in art history, Chicana/o/x, and Latina/o/x studies to re-contextualize concepts and theories from the 1980s to the 2000s as an intervention into the canonical narrative surrounding Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x art and muralism. The following texts also informed my theoretical framework executed as a Chicana re-visioning or re-interpretation of Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x identity and aesthetics that challenges the nationalist-patriarchal imagery often seen in Chicano murals during the 1960s and 1970s. This pairing of portable murals and Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana muralists expands

the Chicana/o art movement's androcentric past to imagine new futures where women, and Indigenous peoples and culture are celebrated and honored by the next generation.

Literature Review

These texts were instrumental in developing an interdisciplinary study of women artists in the Mexican and Chicano mural movement. This literature review is organized into topics that I explore in my analysis of portable murals and women artists. First, I assess publications that explored the history of portable murals, frescos and other mediums in European, Mexican, and Chicano art. Then, I explore literature on the participation of women artists during the Mexican mural movement. My approach was to integrate and translate content from Mexican authors to show how our research is interconnected, in the process of unsettling the monopoly of male artists in the Mexican mural movement. Lastly, I discuss texts that focused on the first- and second-generation of artists participating in the Chicano art movement in California. These authors traced the contributions of Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x artists since the beginning of the Chicano Movement, including the production of experimental murals like the banner or billboard mural. This re-examination of foundational literature demonstrates the knowledge gap specific to women muralists of the Chicano art movement as well as their portable murals that signified resilience and a Chicana/x or Latina/x aesthetic.

Portable Mural History

The following publications were instrumental in understanding the history of portable murals produced by European, Mexican, and U.S. artists. I developed the first part of the manuscript's title, "murals without walls," after reading Anna Indych-López's *Muralism Without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927 – 1940*. Her book discussed

Diego Rivera's portable frescos, produced as several concrete panels as early as 1930-31, displayed in the exhibition *Mexican Arts* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. She explained Rivera's portable frescos as "didactic tools" to bring Mexican murals to U.S. audiences. In the process, they demonstrated the Mexican muralist's technique as they transported the sensation of Mexican muralism to U.S. audiences.³ However, the reception of these heavy concrete panels was not favorable. Critics and the public did not appreciate these artworks due to their impression of them as "watered-down" versions of the original frescos.⁴ Indych-López's investigation inspired my own interpretation of these precursor portable frescos and how they transformed the practice of muralism after the 1930s. The phrase "murals without walls" highlights the idea of the portable mural as a large, sometimes weighted, object in motion that can be displayed anywhere in the world. My analysis views the portable mural as a tool to express an emotion or an idea that is both educational and radical.

Romy Golan's *Muralnomad: The Paradox of Wall Painting, Europe 1927-1957*, introduced Le Corbusier's concept of the "muralnomad" to understand the portable mural as a functional but also nomadic medium. Golan explained these artworks as "mural paintings that

³ Interview with Anna Indych-Lopez conducted via Zoom on September 20, 2023. This interview is not published. See also Indych-López, "Mexican Curios," in *Muralism without Walls; Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 78. See also, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective* ed. Cynthia Newman Helms, Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts (Penguin Books, 1986), 331. In 1930, Rivera produced "the first so-called portable fresco panel in the history of Mexican muralism: *Market Scene*, a stand-alone 4-by 3 ½ foot plaster-covered slab of concrete" for the exhibition *Mexican Arts* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He then made more moveable frescoes, *Agrarian Leader Zapata*, *Indian Fighting or Indian Warrior*, *Liberation of the Peon*, *Sugar Cane*, *The Uprising (Soldiers and Workers)*, *Electric Power*, *Frozen Assets*, *Pneumatic Drilling*, and *The Knight of the Tiger*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 170. Nine years later, the Museum of Modern Art commissioned José Clemente Orozco to produce the portable fresco titled *Dive Bomber and Tank* for the exhibition *Twentieth Centuries of Mexican Art* in 1939-40. Rivera's panels received stark criticism from Orozco, he noted the 1930 portable frescoes were in a "bad state" by 1940 and it was Orozco's *Dive Bomber and Tank* was a response to Rivera's "failed attempts" with the portable fresco medium.

are not really convinced that they belong on walls,” referring to their mobile qualities.⁵ The portable mural was described as an object that is not limited to the surface of an architectural site. Its purpose was to be mobile to avoid censorship or destruction during the world wars. From a European perspective, Le Corbusier’s term is a reminder of the post-World War II period when nomadism was essentially a mode of survival, and the tapestry mural embodied this strategy because of its tactile and monumental qualities.

The discussion of portable murals or banner murals produced during the Chicano art movement was first discussed in *Toward a People’s Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement*, by Eva Cockcroft, James Cockcroft, and John Pitman Weber, with a Forward written by Jean Charlot. This publication provided a comprehensive documentation of urban murals in multicultural and ethnic communities across the U.S. This book also introduced the banner or billboard mural produced by Chicana/o artists. Eva Cockcroft explained the production of “poster-function” murals and outlined how they differed from advertisements. For example, the billboard murals at Galería de la Raza and the “bus bench murals” in Los Angeles sponsored by the Mechicano Art Center were analyzed as “poster-function” murals that were intended to be temporary installations.⁶ Therefore, the production of transportable banner murals was cost-effective and durable; their ephemeral messages represented the artist’s immediate response to the Chicano Movement’s call to action for social, political, and economic justice.

⁵ Romy Golan, “Introduction,” in *Muralnomad: The Paradox of Wall Painting, Europe 1927-1957* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1-2 and 235-236. Le Corbusier described tapestries as murals of “modern times.” He explained, “we have become “nomads,” living in apartments equipped with common services; we move. We cannot have murals painted on the walls of our apartments. This “woolen wall” can be detached, rolled, carried under one’s arm, travel to be hung elsewhere. This is why I have decided to call it *Muralnomad*.”

⁶ Eva S. Cockcroft, James Cockcroft, and John Pitman Weber, “The Mural Scene: An Overview,” in *Toward a People’s Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement* ed. Eva Cockcroft, James Cockcroft, and John Pitman Weber (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 33.

The earliest banner mural was produced by Carlos Almaraz for the United Farm Workers Union's first Constitutional Convention in Fresno, California in 1973.⁷ This giant banner mural was displayed behind the podium where co-founders of the UFW movement Dolores Huerta and César E. Chávez addressed union members. Almaraz's banner murals are now lost but continue to be remembered through photographs and archival documentation.⁸ Barbara Carrasco also produced banner murals in 1984-85 for the 7th UFW Constitutional Convention held in Bakersfield, California. She painted three separate untitled banner murals, elongated vertical canvases or cloth material, in her signature graphic style. These large-scale banners were used as interchangeable panels creating a backdrop for the panelists and union leaders to address the crowds at the conventions as well as to be used for protest demonstrations.⁹

These Chicana/o banner or billboard murals were an influential part of my investigation of portable or moveable murals of the Chicano art movement. The purpose of revisiting this

⁷ Carlos Almaraz, interviewed by Margarita Nieto, February 6, 13, & 20 and July 31, 1986; and January 29, 1987, at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art Southern California Research Center, Los Angeles, CA. Smithsonian Archives of American Art. 27. This colossal untitled banner mural measured 64 feet by 32 feet using acrylic paint on canvas that was completed with the help of Mark Brian. In a separate article written for *Chismearte* in 1976, Almaraz stated the size of banner mural was 16 feet by 24 feet, and he also mentioned that Mark Brian painted the designs framing the "border" and the UFW symbol. Carlos D. Almaraz, "The Artist as a Revolutionary," *Chismearte* vol. 1, no. 1 (Los Angeles, Fall 1976): 47-55. <https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/845759#?c=&m=&s=&cv=1&xywh=-191%2C1152%2C2947%2C1649>. See Chon A. Noriega's and Pilar Tompkins Rivas's essay "Chicano Art in the City of Dreams: A History in Nine Movements," in *L.A. Xicano*, ed. by Chon A. Noriega, Terezita Romo, and Pilar Tompkins (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2011), 76, figure 6.

⁸ Almaraz, interviewed by Margarita Nieto, February 6, 13, & 20 and July 31, 1986; and January 29, 1987, at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art Southern California Research Center, Los Angeles, CA. Smithsonian Archives of American Art. 27. See also CSU Northridge (CSUN) Tom and Ethel Bradley Center, "First UFW Convention in Fresno," CSUN University Library, <https://farmworkermovement-csun.org/event-27-first-ufw-convention-in-fresno/>. Almaraz's second banner mural is preserved as a concept drawing titled *Por El Pueblo or For the People: We Are Still Fighting* finished in 1975. The original portable mural was painted using acrylic paint on canvas. <https://www.artchive.com/artwork/for-the-people-we-are-still-fighting-carlos-almaraz-1975/>.

⁹ Photographs of Barbara Carrasco's banner murals can be found in the book by American Federation of Labor's and Congress of Industrial Organization's (AFL-CIO) 25th Anniversary Benefit of Boycott Grapes, for your sake... and ours. Published on March 27, 1987. Stanford University Library Special Collections, Barbara Carrasco Papers (M0880), Series V: UFW, box 12, folder 3. The image slide of Carrasco's banner mural is preserved in the Shifra M. Goldman Papers (CEMA 119), slide collection, box 5, series 2 (South West), "California murals."

history was to highlight the practice of creating tactile large-scale moveable paintings that evoked the Chicano Movement's call for social-political justice and self-representation. These texts provided a timeline of artists' experimentation with the transportable fresco, tapestries, and billboard or banner murals that led to my investigation of portable murals produced on canvas, wood, and as digital art. These authors influenced my approach in writing about the impact of the portable mural as a moveable and durable object, but also in explaining how this practice transformed traditional muralism.

Women Artists of the Mexican Mural Movement

My investigation of women artists in the Mexican mural movement was influenced by scholars Shifra M. Goldman, Anna Indych-López, Raquel Tibol, Dina Comisarenco Mirkin, James Oles, and Adriana Zavala.¹⁰ Scholarship on the topic of the Mexican mural movement is extensive and other scholars in Mexico that are not mentioned in this literature review deserve mention. For instance, Mexican scholars like Alicia Azuela de la Cueva, Dafne Cruz Porchini, Nadia Ugalde Gómez, Renato González Mello, Gloria Hernández Jiménez, and others have written on women artists in Mexico; their work guided my field research in Mexico City and led me to the story of María Izqueirido's portable frescos.

The book titled *Entre andamio y muros: ayudantes de Diego Rivera en su obra mural*, edited by Américo Sanchez, Nadia Ugalde Gómez, and Eduardo Espinosa, was an important study on Rivera's assistants, which included women artists. It was Rivera who contracted women artists more often than his contemporaries Orozco or Siqueiros, including women artists from

¹⁰ This study also takes into consideration scholarship by Mari Carmen Ramírez, Alejandro Anreus, and Ramón Favela on the history of the Mexican muralists. See Mari Carmen Ramírez, "The Ideology and Politics of the Mexican Mural Movement: 1920-1925," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1989. See also Favela's *Diego Rivera: The Cubist Years* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1984) and *The Art of Rupert Garcia* (Chronicle Books LLC, 1987).

Central America like Violeta Bonilla from El Salvador and Rina Lazo from Guatemala.¹¹

Because women artists were attempting to enter the art market on their own, many chose to work with other mediums instead of muralism.

Dina Comisarenco Mirkin's publication *Eclipse de siete lunas: mujeres muralistas en México*, provided a comprehensive account that informed my study of the participation of women muralists since the 1920s. This book featured women artists from the U.S. or Europe that participated in the Mexican mural movement including Ione Robinson, Grace and Marion Greenwood, Lucienne Bloch, Ryah Ludins, and Eleanor Coen. There was also mention of Mexican women muralists Aurora Reyes, Rina Lazo, María Izquierdo, Fanny Rabel, Olga Costa, and others. Per Comisarenco Mirkin, the Mexican muralists had a monopoly on the commissioning and production of painted murals on government buildings but also commanded the philosophical ideologies and aesthetics of muralism in Mexico.¹² My research aims to decentralize their monopoly on the genre of Mexican muralism by resurfacing narratives about women muralists.

My investigation of women artists who worked as assistants with Diego Rivera included reading Ione Robinson's memoir *A Wall to Paint On*, published in 1946, an intimate source on her artistic endeavors and moments in her life that reflected the experience of women artists in

¹¹Américo Sánchez, Nadia Ugalde Gómez, and Eduardo Espinosa, *Entre andamios y muros: ayudantes de Diego Rivera en su obra mural* Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Museo Mural Diego Rivera (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2003), under "biografías," 61-81. See 63 and 69.

¹² Dina Comisarenco Mirkin, "Contra el monopolio de 'los tres grandes', 1930-1950," in *Eclipse de siete lunas: mujeres muralistas en México* (Mexico City: Artes de México y del Mundo, 2017) 64. Per Comisarenco Mirkin, "this monopoly, which dates back to the period we are discussing, was reflected in the categorization of themes and styles that were being reproduced uncritically, and it violated the freedom of expression and diversity that had previously characterized the movement. In the 1930s, muralism in government buildings focused almost exclusively on the work of Diego Rivera, who had achieved enormous recognition both in the country (Mexico) and North America."

the U.S. and abroad.¹³ James Oles's dissertation, titled "Walls to Paint On: American Muralists in Mexico, 1933-1936," guided my interest in Robinson as well as Marion and Grace Greenwood. The Greenwood sisters were born in Brooklyn, New York, and were seen as successful women artists in the U.S. They traveled to Mexico to work with Rivera between 1933-1936 but received minimal mentorship and did not complete any murals with him. Instead, both Greenwood sisters would produce murals with other notable American muralists like Pablo O'Higgins and Ryah Ludins.¹⁴ Oles's publications on the Greenwood sisters have become important sources that affirm a historiography of women artists whose murals must be seen as an integral part of the Mexican mural movement. Another important undertaking is to redefine the genre of American and Mexican muralism by focusing on the presence of U.S. born artists who aspired to become apprentices; many mastered the artistic practice without the direct mentorship of Rivera. Oles's research initiated my exploration of Marion and Grace Greenwood's critical transnational exchange between American artists and mural painting in Mexico as well as their participation in American mural history.

Raquel Tibol's book *Ser y ver: mujeres en las artes visuales* mentioned the story of María Izquierdo's portable frescos titled *La Tragedia* and *La Música*, finished in 1946. The story

¹³ Ione Robinson was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1910 and traveled to Mexico in 1929 to become Diego Rivera's apprentice. See the UCLA Library Special Collections, digital holdings, containing two black and white photographs of Ione Robinson. A black and white photograph of Robinson was published in the *L.A. Times* article titled "She earned praise of painters abroad. Girl artist back from Paris study. Talented Los Angeles Miss plans work as Mexican master's apprentice," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1929, 23. <https://digital.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/zz0002pnmm>.

¹⁴ James Oles, "The Mexican Murals of Marion and Grace Greenwood," in *Out of Context: American Artists Abroad*, ed. Laura Felleman, Fattal and Carlos Salus (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 114. Oles explained that the Greenwood sisters "benefited from the fact that other women had worked as assistants on earlier mural projects" but did not actually study or assisted Rivera in completing frescos. Nor did they collaborate and paint with other muralist male assistants like Pablo O'Higgins. They were the "first women of any nationality to create important works of public art in Mexico." O'Higgins was born in Salt Lake City, Utah of Irish American ancestry and was raised in San Diego, California. Ryah Ludins was born in Mariupol, Ukraine, and was raised in New York City, New York.

of María Izquierdo being denied a mural commission because of the intervention of Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros became a central part of my investigation of women artists and their involvement in the mural movement in Mexico. Tibol explained, “it turned out that Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, when consulted, considered the commission excessive for an artist with no experience in muralism. In return, she was offered the opportunity to paint on any other building owned by the Department of the Federal District (DDF), but of lesser importance.”¹⁵ I pursued this history during my field research at the Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas (CENIDIAP) in Mexico City as well as re-examining Dina Comisarenko Mirkin’s and Raquel Tibol’s publications. Tibol’s reference to Izquierdo directed my interests to the artist’s writings on women’s art and her reflection on the monopoly of the Mexican muralists.

Izquierdo’s article titled “María Izquierdo vs. los 3 grandes,” published in 1947, presented an urgent message for artists and critics about the dangers Mexican art was facing at the hands of the “committee of muralism.” This was the institutionalized vetting of artists and artworks for future mural projects sponsored by municipal and federal governments under the consultation of Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros, and other male artists and muralists.¹⁶ I examined primary content in the archival holdings at CENIDIAP as well as located and documented her portable frescoes at the Facultad de Derecho (Law School) auditorium at the National

¹⁵ Raquel Tibol, “María Izquierdo,” in *Ser y ver: mujeres en las artes visuales* (Barcelona and Mexico City: Plaza & Janés, 2002), 103. “Resultó que consultados Diego Rivera y David Alfaro Siqueiros, consideraron excesivo el encargo para una artista con nula experiencia en el muralismo. En compensación se le ofreció que pintara en cualquier otro edificio propiedad del DDF, pero de menor importancia.”

¹⁶ María Izquierdo, “María Izquierdo vs. los 3 grandes,” *El Nacional*, October 2, 1947, 3. The incomplete article is preserved in the archives at CENIDIAP. Per Izquierdo, “Individual cases never matter much, but now they are less important than ever... What is important, essential, urgent, dramatic, is the danger that Mexican painting and consequently our culture are facing. No one wants to put things in their place. We can see that, skillfully, with an admirable and shady strategy, the central issue of the controversy has been diverted: the judging (selective) committee of muralism.”

Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico City. The purpose of unearthing Izquierdo's experience and her writings on Mexican art was to demonstrate her understanding of the Mexican mural movement but also to consider how the portable fresco or mural became a liberating medium to prove her artistic skills in fresco painting. This action also proved that these projects were done by women without the financial support of institutions or governments.

The limited amount of scholarship dedicated to women muralists can also be linked to the understudied subject of gender and power in Mexican society. This topic is best explained in Adriana Zavala's *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition: Women, Gender, and Representation in Mexican Art*, a critical study of "post-revolutionary art" in Mexico that visualized gender, race, and power through Indigenist and nationalist imagery. Zavala explained, "I will consider how Indians and women were exalted symbolically, and their image used to authenticate national life, support social unity, and reinscribe traditional morality," to show how femininity was pictured in 19th-20th-century Mexican art.¹⁷ Her analysis applied a feminist and Mexicana perspective to describe the reimagined Indigenous woman as one of the archetypes of Mexican visual culture. This publication influenced my understanding of how to explain the differences between Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x murals and their portrayal of Indigenous Mesoamerican or Native American peoples in comparison to the Mexican artists. The concept of "Indigenism" from a Mexican understanding was critiqued by Zavala. Mexican artists frequently displayed idealized images of Indigenous women, an expression of Indigenism that conveyed "nationalist authenticity."¹⁸ This differed from but also linked to the Chicano art movement's use of

¹⁷ Adriana Zavala, "Introduction," in *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition: Women, Gender, and Representation in Mexican Art* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-10. Indigenismo in Mexico was a connected to nationalism and patriarchal contexts where women, particularly the Indigenous woman, was understood as the "sign" for "cultural authenticity." Per Zavala, "Thus in the context of revolutionary *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*, gender, like race, were implicated within a signifying system that fixed what appeared to be natural sets of values. Just as indigenous people were resignified as bearers of

Indigenous Mesoamerican iconography. My analysis of Chicana/x and Latina/x artists incorporates Zavala's process of using testimonials, popular literature, and archival evidence to reveal the patriarchal structure of modern Mexican art.

Women Artists in the Chicana/o Mural Movement in California

The Chicano mural movement was traced by Shifra M. Goldman, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, and Alan W. Barnett. According to their research, it began in 1966 to 1968 in the U.S.¹⁹ The Chicano art movement coincided with the height of Chicano political activism with its direct impact on identity, socio-political issues, and community outreach. By 1968-1970, Chicana muralists Judithe Hernández and Judith F. Baca were already painting on walls in Los Angeles. Judithe Hernández's curriculum vitae, circa the 1980s, stated that the completion of her first mural project was in 1968, titled *The World: Past and Future*, painted inside the First Unitarian Church in Los Angeles. Meanwhile, Judith F. Baca's first mural was finished inside Alemany High School in 1969, sponsored by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.²⁰ These stories are seldom retold because of the presumption that the canon of Chicana/o mural history has been established and comprehensively studied. My assessment of the literature encourages future scholarship to

an "Other" culture/race or, as the proletarianized class, women were resignified as bearers of social modernization, and, conversely, as bearers of tradition." p. 10.

¹⁹ This section of my literature review was influenced by publications by Shifra Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "Introduction: Part Two: Outline of a Theoretical Model for the study of Chicano Art, Chronology," in *Arte Chicano: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Art, 1965 – 1981* (Berkeley: Chicano Studies Library Publications Series no. 11, 1985), 16-46. See also Alan W. Barnett, *Community Murals: The People's Art* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1984). Chapter One discusses the "pre-history," that mentioned the idea of a transition from murals to posters as early as 1966. Also, Chapter Two, titled "Invention (1967-1969/70)," explained a chronological history of Chicano murals.

²⁰ See Judithe Hernández's resume, circa 1980s, UC Santa Barbara, Special Collections Library, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, box 35, folder 2. I also examined a copy of Judith F. Baca's resume, circa 1990s, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum curator and artist files that mentioned this early mural project. Baca's mural *Mi Abuelita* (1970) painted in Hollenbeck Park in East Los Angeles is often mentioned as the artist's first mural commission with no prior scholarship mentioning the mural at Alemany High School.

revisit this content because there are stories that need to be resurfaced within the field of Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x art that have yet to be addressed.

The earliest publications on Chicana/o murals in California were done by Chicana/o artists who also contributed their own research to the field of Chicana/o art during their studies at public universities. Chicano artist Rupert García wrote a master's thesis on Chicano themed murals in 1972-1973, published in 1981, as part of his graduate studies at UC Berkeley. García's thesis, titled "La Raza Murals of California, 1963 to 1970: A Period of Social Change and Protest," is an important document on the early chronology of the Chicano mural movement throughout northern and southern California. The thesis included a chronological overview of murals in the Americas, including a discussion of ancient Indigenous peoples of Mexico and their fresco murals.²¹ His study focused on murals painted on walls by Chicano artists and artist collectives with no mention of women artists until after 1970. This research also influenced my investigation on the Mujeres Muralistas, the first all women led artist group, that was mentioned in García's footnotes.

The course reader organized by Chicana artist Patricia Rodríguez, titled *Selected Readings on Chicano Art*, provided a focused documentation of the early period of the Chicano mural movement.²² This course was taught by Rodríguez from fall 1977 to spring 1983 at UC Berkeley, and focused on Chicana/o mural history and Chicana/o art and muralism. In fall of 1979, the course was named "Introduction to Chicano Art" for Chicano Studies 130, during her time as a lecturer at UC Berkeley, but later changed to "Contemporary Chicano Art," by spring

²¹ Rupert García, "Preface" and "Raza Murals and Muralists: A Historical View," in *An Historical Perspective* with photographers José Ramos, Fred Gonzalez, and Roberto Bonilla and edited by Juan Martinez and Eric Solomon (San Francisco: Galería de la Raza, 1974), 1-2 and Illustrations 19-28. Original document examined at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965-2002, box 20, folder 16.

²² Shifra Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, *Arte Chicano*, 6.

1983.²³ The reader included literature on the Mexican muralists in the U.S. with eight readings dedicated to “los tres grandes” or the “Three Great Ones” Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros.

Rodríguez’s course description included questions regarding the status of the Chicana/o art movement that have influenced my analysis of murals produced after this period. Rodríguez’s description inquired, “[A]re Chicano artists abandoning the Chicano Movement? Is there a Chicano Movement to abandon? Has the Chicano artist achieved his goals as defined by the Chicano Movement? What does the Chicano art of the late 1970’s and early 1980’s indicate about the Chicano social and art movements? Is the Chicano artist now more concerned with his/her career? Is this good, bad, or does it matter?”²⁴ These questions are relevant today.

Rodríguez’s questions influenced my inquiry about “great” women muralists because I take into consideration her involvement in co-founding the Mujeres Muralistas and her impact on Chicana muralism in California.

Amalia Mesa-Bain’s dissertation, titled “A Study of Influence of Culture on the Development of Identity Among a Group of Chicana Artists,” published in 1983, explored the Chicano experience, identity and the aesthetic tradition, from the perspective of ten Chicana artists.²⁵ This early study included information from Chicana muralists participating in a male-dominated environment like the Chicano art and mural movement. Mesa-Bain’s investigation

²³ A copy of the course reader for “Chicano Studies 130” is preserved at the Ethnic Studies Library at UC Berkeley. Librarian Lillian Castillo-Speed generously digitized the first few pages during the COVID-19 pandemic closures. In September 2022, during my field research at Stanford University and UC Berkeley, I examined the copy in-person thanks to her help. Another copy was examined in the summer of 2023 at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art in the Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965-2002, box 7, folder 29.

²⁴ Patricia Rodríguez, “Course Description – Chicano Studies 130” Chicano Studies Program, Fall 1977, UC Berkeley, p. 1. Smithsonian Archives of American Art in the Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965-2002, box 7, folder 29. See folder titled “Chicano Studies” circa 1983, included is a copy of the syllabus from Spring 1983.

²⁵ Amalia Mesa-Bains, “A Study of Influence of Culture on the Development of Identity Among a Group of Chicana Artists,” PhD diss., The Wright Institute, Berkeley, June 1983.

concerned the sexual, ethnic, and occupational roles within the Chicano community which extended to the role of Chicanas as artists, muralists, and participants in the Chicano Movement. These Chicana artists revealed the names of a few women, often the only woman, relative to the large number of men in the art movement. Mesa-Bains's content also informed her understanding of a Chicana aesthetic and identity formed separate from the competitive male-dominated art movements. Additionally, she explained the conflicting realities of how the Chicano Movement overlooked or dismissed women who did not conform to the gendered roles imposed by previous generations.

In 1984, art historian Alan W. Barnett published *Community Murals: The People's Art*, providing extensive documentation of public art or "community murals" in the U.S., with chapters dedicated to Chicano murals.²⁶ Barnett's research invested in integrating Chicana/o community murals into American art history to demonstrate how integral Chicana/o and Mexican American artists were to the Chicana/o art movement. Barnett's documentation of murals produced within communities largely populated by African American, Asian American, Chicana/o, Central American, Puerto Rican, and other ethnic communities influenced my research on Chicana/o, Mexican American, and Latina/o/x public art and murals as an extension of the greater community mural movement in the U.S. I re-examine Barnett's chronology of mural production in the U.S. and the interconnected moments between different ethnic artists as I focus on public art created for the people and by the people.

By 1985, Shifra M. Goldman and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto published *Arte Chicano: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Art, 1965 – 1981*, a comprehensive bibliography and account of the Chicano art movement. Their chapter dedicated to the early

²⁶Alan W. Barnett, *Community Murals: The People's Art* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1984), 45.

waves of the art movement identified two chronological stages of Chicano art, the earliest period from 1968 to 1975 and the later phase from 1975 to 1981. This early period included the mass production of public artworks in various mediums such as posters, prints, photography, and murals.²⁷ This publication is a comprehensive study of the first- and second-generation artists who were producing public art like murals, banners, or posters. Their list included women artists and their production of murals painted on walls as well as other mediums but did not disclose murals that were moveable or experimental.

Tomás Ybarra-Frausto's inspirational essay, "Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility," published in 1989 in the catalog for the exhibition *Chicano Aesthetics: Rasquachismo*, introduced the concept of *rasquachismo*, explained as a "rasquache" attitude or taste on the fringes of traditional art. Ybarra-Frausto described this *rasquachismo* sensibility as an intuitive "visceral response to lived reality" from the perspective of the "underdog" to show resilience and survival through resourcefulness.²⁸ In terms of materiality and medium, my analysis views the portable mural as an unconventional form, interpreted as a "rasquache" approach to mural making. I discuss murals that are produced on canvas, wood, or digital art as manifestations of *rasquachismo* through a Chicana/x re-vision of the practice of muralism. The portable mural reflects the desire to create murals without being commissioned to paint them on walls. My

²⁷ Goldman and Ybarra-Frausto, "Introduction: Part Two: Outline of a Theoretical Model for the study of Chicano Art, Chronology, The Chicano Period, 1965 – 1981," in *Arte Chicano: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Art, 1965 – 1981* (Berkeley: Chicano Studies Library Publications Series no. 11, 1985), 32.

²⁸ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility," in *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 85-90. Ybarra-Frausto described the idea of *rasquachismo*: "The stance of *rasquachismo* is alive within Chicano communities, but it is something of an insider private code. To name this sensibility, to draw its contours and suggest its historical continuity, is risking its betrayal. *Rasquachismo* is a visceral response to lived reality, not an intellectual cognition. To encapsulate a sensibility into words is already a short circuit of its dynamism. What follows then is a nonlinear, exploratory, and unsolemn attempt at tracking this irrepressible spirit manifested in the art and life of the Chicano community. *Rasquachismo* is neither an idea nor a style but more of an attitude or a taste." See also *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965 – 1985*, ed. by Griswold del Castillo, Richard, Teresa McKenna, and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano (Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, University of California Los Angeles, 1991), 156.

contribution to the idea of *rasquachismo* is to focus on the inventiveness of Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana muralists who experimented with moveable murals on wood, canvas, but also contemporary mediums like lightboxes, projected as video performances, or digital art.

The 1993 publication of *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, edited by Eva S. Cockcroft and Holly Barnet-Sanchez, on Chicana/o murals and the Chicano Movement in California was foundational to my study of women muralists in California. The chapters written by Shifra M. Goldman, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, and Amalia Mesa-Bains were key in locating local art history on the murals in Watsonville. Also, Mesa-Bains's interviews with Chicana artists Judith F. Baca and Patricia Rodríguez were insightful for my analysis of each artist's creative strategies and personal background. The color photographs of murals taken by Robert Sommer, Tim Drescher, and James Prigoff were important primary sources as many of these murals have been erased or painted over. This book has inspired my research into murals created on the central coast and in northern California.

Shifra M. Goldman's *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States*, published in 1994, introduced an intellectually rich discussion of Chicana/o, Mexican, and Latina/o art that has inspired my writing and research since my undergraduate studies. This book also contains important information on women artists, a topic worthy of further research. Her framework delineating the first and second generations of Chicano artists is another element that needs further investigation. Goldman described the early imagery as "cultural nationalist," imagery that expressed an awakening of a "neo-Indigenist consciousness," as seen in the murals, posters, and other artworks depicting Indigenous and

Native Amerindian iconography.²⁹ In this early period, Goldman included an investigation of women artists that she had documented but only briefly discussed, including Mexican and Latina artists like Carmen León or Josefina M. Quezada. Per Goldman, the most “visible presence of Latin American women’s art is that which covers the walls of many cities in California: the monumental (and not-so-monumental) murals produced primarily by Chicana artists from the late 1960s to the present.”³⁰ Therefore, my re-examination of her book contributes to expanding her analysis of Chicana/x and Latina/x muralists since the beginning of the Chicano Movement, including those who experimented with the portable mural.

The book *Mexican Muralism: A Critical History*, edited by Alejandro Anreus, Robin Adèle Greeley, and Leonard Folgarait, was critical to my investigations on the Mexican muralists because of its hemispheric approach to understanding the ideologies, history, and global response to the Mexican mural movement. My analysis focused on Holly Barnet-Sanchez’s essay titled “Radical mestizaje in Chicana/o Murals,” informing my comparison of Chicano and Mexican murals. She stated that the topic is not “adequately examined,” and must be re-investigated to improve our understanding of both mural movements.³¹ Barnet-Sanchez applies the concept of “radical mestizaje” as a “counter-discourse” that connects Mexican culture to the U.S. Chicana/o experience. From this perspective, the Mexican murals are understood as an influence that affected both the “form” and “content” of Chicana/o murals. She also offered

²⁹ Shifra M. Goldman, “Mexican Muralism: Its Influences in Latin America and the United States,” in *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 115.

³⁰ Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas*, 212 – 213.

³¹ Holly Barnet-Sanchez, “Radical *Mestizaje* in Chicano/a Murals” in *Mexican Muralism: A Critical History* edited by Alejandro Anreus, Robin Adèle Greeley, and Leonard Folgarait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 245. “Mexican murals, therefore, occupy a central position in a critical history of the Chicano/a mural movement that is well-documented but not always adequately examined.”

that “radical mestizaje” shows viewers how these Mexican “tropes” or traditions are “appropriated, transformed, and rejected” by Chicana/o artists and muralists.³² Barnet-Sanchez’s critical approach informed how I retell the story of David Siqueiros’s mural *América Tropical* (1932) and his direct and indirect influence on Judith Baca, Barbara Carrasco, and Josefina Quezada in Los Angeles. I approached this connection with Siqueiros without homogenizing the perspective of each women artist but instead show how they reinvented his techniques and redefined his philosophies on muralism.

Guisela Latorre’s book *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* introduced the concept of Chicana/o “Indigenist” murals, providing a discourse on Indigeneity, identity, and Chicana/o/x self-representation that was necessary to my research.³³ Each chapter of this dissertation discusses the depiction of Native American or Indigenous Mesoamerican iconography and visual culture from a uniquely Chicana/x and Latina/x perspective that builds on Latorre’s writings. Her chapter titled “Gender, Indigenism, and Chicana Muralists” was an essential part of my research on the Chicana/o art movement. In it, she identified the aesthetics and methods of production by women muralists as a new “visual

³² Ibid., 244. Per Barnet-Sanchez, the concept of “radical mestizaje” is about the “production of new meaning, about the creation of a counter-discourse that has the capacity to refuse the erasure inherent in the original Chicano and Mexican formulations of the concept.” This idea was previously mentioned in Chela Sandoval’s chapter titled “Revolutionary Force: Connecting Desire to Reality” in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 160-168. This interpretation differs from the Mexican understanding of mestizaje. In the post-Revolutionary period in Mexico, mestizaje not only explained the genetic mixing of European and Indigenous peoples but also a national identity of a united mestiza/o community. According to Barnet-Sanchez, “Mestizaje, and its corollary, indigenismo — the theory and practice of privileging ancient indigenous civilizations and traditions in the national foundational imaginary — served to position the Indian securely in the past and the mestizo as the new universal man of the future.”

³³ Guisela Latorre, “Introduction: Indigenism and Chicana/o Muralism: The Radicalization of an Aesthetic,” in *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 1-6 and 32-35. The concept of “Chicana/o Indigenist” murals was explained by Latorre as an ideology that was not supported by institutions or government but reflected an alternative viewpoint of Indigenism or Indigenismo that emerged in Mexico. Latorre described this as “Chicana/o Indigenism,” that was a more “introspective, self-affirming, and radical discourse occurring at the margins of the mainstream and one that sought to decenter hegemonic notions of nation and sovereignty.”

vocabulary” that challenged Chicano nationalist imagery. Latorre’s book also explained that Chicana/x and Latina/x muralists continued the practices of the Mexican muralists. At the same time, they also overturned these standards, practicing both “historical continuity and disruption.”³⁴ Therefore, my comparison of the Mexican murals to the portable murals produced by Chicana/x and Latina/x muralists takes into consideration this tension around the historical influence of the Mexican muralists.

My research also contributes to Latorre’s conversation on Chicana Indigenism to show how these women muralists asserted their agency as seen in their visual disruption of Mexican Indigenismo or Chicano Indigenist murals. The use of Indigenous Mesoamerican iconography and cosmology are contextualized within each chapter to show the deep commitment each artist had in representing an image they researched and cared about. Latorre explained these connections between Indigeneity and contemporary Chicana/x imagery as promoting an Indigenous consciousness that is “relevant to the average young Chicana living in the barrio.”³⁵ My analysis provides an in-depth explanation of an artifact or mythos surrounding a specific deity to demonstrate how Chicana/x and Latina/x artists re-imagined and uplifted the cultural ties between ancient and colonial Mesoamerica and newer generations.

Recently, there has been growing interest in Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x art throughout the U.S. and Mexico. Art museums and galleries are recognizing the importance of this genre of art, prompting an expansion of scholarship that often focuses on muralism. My contribution to the fields of art history, Chicana/o, and Central American studies is to elaborate on this research interest with a focus on women muralists, especially those who created unconventional murals

³⁴ Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 32-35. Chapter One is titled “The Dialectics of Continuity and Disruption: Chicana/o and Mexican Indigenist Murals,” which contributed to my understanding of the direct and indirect influences of the Mexican muralists to the Chicana/o mural movement.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 206.

and alternative aesthetics that are often overlooked in current publications. This study provides a point of departure for future research dedicated to women's art and murals of the Chicano art movement.

Methodology

My methodological approach stems from interdisciplinary practices that involve field observations of murals, a re-examination of existing literature, and review of primary sources preserved in archives, exhibition catalogs, films, digital files, and other media. Part of this process included an assessment of extensive slide collections compiled by Shifra M. Goldman and Nancy Van Lauderback Tovar. I also examined various archival sources on Chicana/o art exhibitions like the *Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation (CARA)* Papers at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) as well as the Galería de la Raza Archives (CEMA 4) at UC Santa Barbara's Special Research Collections and California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives (CEMA). The Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Santa Barbara Special Collections Library, Stanford University Library Special Collections, Social and Public Resource Center (SPARC), and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center were integral to my investigation of the Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x art movement in the U.S. Also, the Museo Eduardo Carrillo, a digital museum dedicated to the art of Eduardo Carrillo, includes information on Carmen León, which was essential to my analysis of León's mural. The Carmen León Papers, a public digital archive supported by California Revealed and Museo Eduardo Carrillo, contains newspapers and ephemera that supported my research into local history in northern and central California. These libraries and archives are important repositories that grounded my research and allowed me to interrogate the intersections of social, political, and cultural movements.

My field observations included traveling to Mexico City, Mexico, and documenting the painted murals and portable frescos created by women artists like María Izqueirdo, Rina Lazo, and Aurora Reyes. I also worked with Mexican national archives and museum libraries in the Museo Arte Moderno, Museo Nacional de Arte, Museo Mural Diego Rivera, Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas (CENIDIAP), and other collections to inform my research on the experience of women artists in the Mexican mural movement. In California, I physically located each mural and closely examined them in situ, including murals that were displayed outdoors in places like Guadalupe or Watsonville. This manuscript highlighted these connections between local and regional archival resources on Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x art, expanding the field to include rural communities.

I also conducted up-to-date interviews with artists as well as integrated previously published oral histories into my analysis. My use of the artist's voice as an important primary source derives from Chicana/o and Central American studies' methods. By integrating artists' testimony, I further contextualize the imagery as an extension of the artist's sense of identity and activism. This information is used as part of my objective analysis to understand the artist's process but also to generate a new interpretation of the final image.

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework is rooted in Chicana/x feminism, described as a Chicana re-vision of Mexican and Chicano mural history. I theorize a Chicana/x feminist and futurist lens that amplifies and uplifts the hidden, silenced, and unknown voices of women artists. I also incorporate these Chicana/x art theories to identify each artist's feminist and activist intervention in the form of the portable mural. My Chicana/x re-vision explores a social art historical and Chicana/x feminist theoretical contribution to a gender-centered retelling of the Chicano art

movement in California. The following theories frame my interpretation of Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana feminist imagery, highlighting the potency of each artist's visual message advocating for justice, prosperity, love, cultural healing, renewal, and remembrance.

Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" explained that the field of art history is filled with the "white Western male viewpoint, unconsciously accepted as *the* viewpoint of the art historian. Further, this "may—and does—prove to be inadequate not merely on moral and ethical grounds, or because it is elitist, but on purely intellectual ones."³⁶ The purpose of Nochlin's question was to redirect the attention toward the experience of women artists in European art. Svetlana Alpers explained that Nochlin posed this question with a "good deal of irony and mixed wit with its passion" because its purpose was not to encourage scholars to re-write history, but rather, to challenge the standardized or patriarchal point of view. Alpers continued, "I do not want to argue that a woman's point of view, along with its art, has been left out, but rather to point to what art history has been alert to and what it has not."³⁷ Nochlin and Alpers reminded me to locate the viewpoint of women artists within art history but also outside of the discipline. My research expands these hegemonic feminist art histories that at first only focused on European and American women artists and inserts a Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana perspective.

Shifra Goldman's feminist approach in writing about the social art history of Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x art was an important theoretical guideline that was rooted in interdisciplinary research and activism.³⁸ Goldman explained the two "facets" of her life as an art historian and as

³⁶ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Women, Art, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 146.

³⁷ Svetlana Alpers, "Art History and Its Exclusions: The Example of Dutch Art, in *Is Art History? Selected Writings* (Long Island City: Hunters Point Press, 2024), 116.

³⁸ Shifra M. Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas*, 18-20.

an activist; she endeavored to connect the “theoretical” and the “empirical” as an essential part of her analysis of modern and contemporary Mexican and Chicano art. She considered herself a “social art historian” who prioritized sociological, historical, cultural, feminist, and political viewpoints that dismantled the objective and “ideological position” taken by traditional art historians.³⁹ Goldman’s stance as a social art historian influenced my theoretical framework and the ways I combine feminism and art history using a Chicana/x feminist and futurist lens. This approach prompted a redefinition of the paradigm of Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x art history that highlighted women artists who produced portable murals, reorienting the scholarship to appreciate their alternative aesthetic.

Amalia Mesa-Bains’s theory of *domesticana* aesthetics informs my Chicana/x feminist intervention in locating a Chicana/x and Latina/x feminist point of view that revived and reimagined local and global histories. In 1999, Mesa-Bains’s essay “Domesticana: The Sensibility of a Chicana Rasquache,” detailed another aspect of Ybarra-Frausto’s *rasquachismo*, its counterpart — a Chicana sensibility. Her theory of a “*domesticana* aesthetic” asserted a Chicana/x feminist response to the Chicano aesthetic that centered patriarchal and nationalist narratives, in the process excluding the participation of women in history. Mesa-Bains described this Chicana aesthetic as a technique of “subversion” seen in Chicana/x and Latina/x art. One of the ways this Chicana aesthetic performs subversion is through its re-conceptualization of historical visual narratives. According to Mesa-Bains, the *domesticana* aesthetic was an act of

³⁹ Ibid., 18 and 35-36. Per Goldman, “While in the past the art historian was seen as an objective (or neutral) player — a transparent presence through which the “truth” might be filtered and recorded — the intellectual revisions of the last three decades make this ideological position no longer pertinent or relevant.” She continued to explain, “my approach has been to construct the type of art history and art criticism in which a meaningful and defined synthesis between art, history, sociology, anthropology/ethnography, philosophy psychology, and semiotics can take place: no one aspect backgrounding the others, but rather explaining them; none ‘reflecting’ the others, but functioning interactively.”

“defiance” that challenged the “restrictive gender identity within Chicano culture.”⁴⁰ My Chicana/x re-vision contributes to a *domesticana* aesthetic by explaining the feminist intervention or viewpoint. This Chicana sensibility prompted my visual analysis to identify a new sense of cultural identity; one formed from a women’s consciousness and aesthetics.

Emma Pérez’s decolonial imaginary and “re-vision” of history in her book *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* introduced another Chicana/x feminist perspective that dismantled patriarchal history. Pérez explained the decolonial imaginary as a theoretical tool that reveals the “interstitial moments or gaps” in history where Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Indigenous women’s voices are silenced, hidden, and omitted.⁴¹ She continued to explain that these gaps in history interrupt the “linear model of time,” which allows for “third space feminist agency” to articulate the alternative histories that focus on women of color.⁴² This approach is critical to my Chicana/x re-vision. Inspired by Pérez’s “third space feminist

⁴⁰ Amalia Mesa-Bains, “Domesticana”: The Sensibility of Chicana Rasquache,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 160-161. Mesa-Bains explained “Chicana rasquache (domesticana), like its “male counter-part, has grown not only out of both resistance to majority culture and affirmation of cultural values, but from women’s restrictions with the culture. A defiance of an imposed Anglo-American cultural identity, and the defiance of restrictive gender identity within Chicano culture, has inspired a female rasquachismo. Domesticana comes as a spirit of Chicana emancipation grounded in advanced education, and to some degree, Anglo-American expectations in a more open society. With new experiences of opportunity, Chicanas were able to challenge existing community restrictions regarding the role of women. Techniques of subversion through play with traditional imagery and cultural material are characteristic of domesticana. Within this body of work, we can begin to apply critical viewpoints of feminist theory.”

⁴¹ Emma Pérez, “Introduction,” in *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xvi-xvii.

⁴² Pérez, 142, footnote 7. Pérez explained “third space” as an intervention and a political stance. She references cultural critics and scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Norma Alarcón, Donna J. Haraway, and Chela Sandoval as contributors to the theoretical discourse surrounding third space or third wave feminism, building on intersectional feminist theory in the 1980s and late 1990s. These feminist theories intersect race, class, gender, and other factors that shape the identity and experience of women of color. See also Chela Sandoval’s “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I” in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 40-42.3. Per Sandoval, “U.S. third world feminism provided access to a different way of conceptualizing not just feminist consciousness but oppositional activity in general: it comprised a formulation capable of aligning U.S. movements for social justice not only with each other, but with global movements toward decolonization.” This movement enacted a coalition of U.S. feminists of color that challenged hegemonic feminist theory from the late 1960s and the 1970s.

(re)vision,” I insert Chicana/x and Latina/x muralists into the canon of Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x art history by uncovering their untold stories within literature and the archives. Pérez’s decolonial imaginary involves a “maneuvering of time,” where the re-telling of her-story signifies a “liberatory consciousness,” an approach in conversation with Chela Sandoval’s Chicana/x third world feminist theory.⁴³

Chela Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* introduced the theoretical concept of “oppositional or differential consciousness” that involved the practice of “movidas” or “revolutionary” maneuvers that decolonize history by inserting women into the genealogy.⁴⁴ She also theorized the notion of “re-cognizing” or revisioning the past, present, and future as times when women are (and were and will be) respected, loved, and integral to the development of a postmodern history. This is described by Sandoval as the “hermeneutics” of love. She applies her Chicana/x feminist framework, one situated in love and cultural healing, to repair the wounds of the colonial and modern past. Sandoval’s theoretical “apparatus” combines an oppositional consciousness and hermeneutics of love to create “social transformation.” Sandoval further described this “differential consciousness” as a form of “re-cognizing” functioning within and in contrast to the dominant ideologies written in hegemonic histories.⁴⁵ This apparatus or theoretical tool allows a shift in the dominant ideological narratives that marginalized the experience of women of color, moving toward emancipative language and semiotics to instill power and love toward women.

⁴³ Ibid., 126-127.

⁴⁴ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 140-140.1.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 62.3.

Sandoval also recast Donna Haraway's concept of "cyborg feminism," explained in Haraway's book, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, published in 1991, as an integral part of this Chicana/x futurist and oppositional consciousness.⁴⁶ Haraway contributed to the discussion of women of color feminism by creating liberatory futures that aligned U.S. hegemonic feminism (Euro-American) and U.S. third world feminism (women of color and third space feminists) as a decolonial act toward collaboration and equality. Sandoval described the importance of Haraway's "oppositional cyborg feminism" as taking part in "affinity through difference," signaling hope and positive transformation despite the potential of a dystopian future. Per Haraway, the "cyborg world," a neo-colonial and postmodern future consisting of European American "white masculinist" society driven by the "orgy of war," will be resisted by "indigenous" worldviews.⁴⁷ Both Sandoval and Haraway interpret a "mestizaje" or "radical mestizaje" as the technology or skill needed to "ensure survival" and imagine new futures. My Chicana/x re-vision identifies this "cyborg feminist" perspective in conversation with Catherine S. Ramírez's concept of "Chicanafuturism" as emancipative maneuvers that liberates women's art from obscurity in future scholarship.

Catherine S. Ramírez's article, "Deus ex Machina: Tradition, Technology, and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martinez," introduced "Chicanafuturist" art in her analysis of Marion C. Martinez's sculptures and Alma López's digital art. Ramírez described "Chicanafuturism" as part of "Chicano cultural production that attends to cultural transformations resulting from new and everyday technologies (including their detritus); that excavates, creates, and alters narratives of identity, technology, and that redefines humanism and

⁴⁶ Ibid., 166.7-168.9.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 170.1. See also, 206.7, footnotes 22-32.

the human.”⁴⁸ During an interview with Professor Catherine S. Ramírez in 2019, we discussed “Chicanafuturism” as a theoretical tool to recontextualize humanism. This new understanding of humanism, which included the cyborg or the transhuman, signals the integration of the artificial intelligence and robotics, merging with the biological and organic.⁴⁹ My Chicana/x feminist and futurist lens elaborates on Ramírez’s “Chicanafuturist” theory and views each artist’s resourcefulness, whether using wood, lightboxes, and canvas or repurposing historical iconography as re-visions of Chicano muralism. I define “Chicanafuturist” murals as technologies transporting innovative and creative ideas from women of color and Indigenous peoples as an important element in creating new histories and futurities.

This study contributes to Chicana/x feminist theories like differential consciousness and decolonial imaginary by applying these modes of seeing or interpreting iconographies to deconstruct the patriarchal point of view within Chicano mural history. I offer an alternative aesthetic manifested by Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana artists that expands our understanding of the social, political, and cultural activism of the Chicano Movement. The purpose of my Chicana/x feminist and futurist lens is to embolden her-story, separate from traditional linear history, and allow Chicana/x and Latina/x artists to reimagine a more balanced and prosperous future. My Chicana/x re-visioning creates canonical shifts by amplifying the presence of women muralists in history and articulates their aesthetics as relevant and disruptive.

Chapter Outline

⁴⁸ Catherine S. Ramírez, “Deus ex Machina: Tradition, Technology, and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martinez” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 29:2 (Fall 2004): 77-78.

⁴⁹ Interview with Dr. Catherine S. Ramírez at UC Santa Cruz in the Latin American and Latino/a Studies Department (LALS), on Wednesday, May 29, 2019. This meeting was in conjunction with the field research at the McHenry Library and Special Collections archive from May 29 to June 3, 2019.

My dissertation's structure is organized as a conceptual progression starting with a Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana revisioning of Chicano histories in Southern California. Chapter One focuses on Josefina Quezada's *History of Maize* (1978), Barbara Carrasco's *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* (1981), and Judith F. Baca's *Angel of Guadalupe: Dreams of the Future* (1990), representing Indigenous, ethnic, and Chicana/o/x peoples as key participants in the founding history of Los Angeles and Guadalupe. These artists also had a direct or indirect connection with the Mexican muralist David A. Siqueiros and his experience in Los Angeles after the censorship of *América Tropical* (1932). My analysis interprets these portable murals as examples of Chicana/x and Mexicana re-imagining of ancient Mesoamerican histories about maize as well as local narratives on the founding of American city or town.

Chapter Two discusses the cultural and healing futurity of portable murals created by Juana Alicia, Carmen León, and Patricia Rodríguez, representing themes of renewal and remembrance in the local histories of Watsonville, San José, Santa Clara, and San Francisco. Patricia Rodríguez's *Goddess Tlazolteotl* (1982), produced for the exhibition *In Process, In Progress* at the Galería de la Raza, reimagined the Aztec or Nahua deity Tlazolteotl Ixcuina from a Chicana perspective. Juana Alicia's mural on wood panels, *Regeneración* (1991), celebrated the Chicana/o/x and Mexican American people of San José and Santa Clara. It also portrayed the Native American Ohlone peoples and their legacy in the region. Lastly, Carmen León's *La Cultura Cura* (2020) pictured the cities of San Francisco and Watsonville by conjuring the idea of "la cultura cura" (cultural healing) for those impacted by the deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic. This mural was produced in memoriam of the essential workers like the farmworkers and medical professionals who sacrificed their health, time, and future for the sake of those who were recovering from the virus.

Chapter Three expands on my “Chicanafuturist” re-visioning of Alma López’s murals *María de Los Angeles* and *Las Four* (1997) and Sandra de la Loza’s *Mural Remix* exhibition from 2011 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). De la Loza’s experimental futurist murals include the performance and video installation of *Action Portraits* (2011) as well as *Mural Remix*, *Artist Unknown*, *Untitled 1970s* demonstrating both digital and portable murals. Both López and de la Loza used image manipulation software, digital collage, Duratrans (film) and a lightbox, serigraph and vinyl print, and other unconventional mediums to create their murals. These artists also resurfaced archival and historical iconography that purposefully re-told stories of women from local neighborhoods in East Los Angeles. Through a “Chicanafuturist” reimagining these artists re-invented content from the past to visualize a future where women are empowered, the community is growing, and the social-political promise of the previous generation is never forgotten.

My conclusion is titled “Muralism without Borders” to recognize the portable murals produced by women artists that exist beyond the boundaries or standards of Chicano and Mexican muralism. Each chapter is engaged in a Chicana/x and Latina/x re-vision of history — whether in portrayals of empowered women of color or through Indigenous Mesoamerican and Native American cultures and peoples. These artists produced murals that were integral to the continuation of the Chicano art movement’s cultural renaissance, echoing the message of cultural healing, self-representation, and self-determination. My hope is that this study will function as a springboard for new scholarship on women muralists in the Mexican and Chicano mural movement.

Chapter One

Murals without Walls: Portable Murals as Re-Visions of Southern California History

Within the mural movement collectives and brigades which sought to develop collaborative models and structures provided important leadership. This leadership was marked by the active presence of women muralists. As women they brought gender perspective to the issues of identity and community; as artists they affirmed a public expression that incorporated both historic and personal narrative.⁵⁰

Amalia Mesa-Bains, 1993

The foregrounding of indigenous peoples and mestizos who were peasants and members of the working class in Mexican murals resonated for artists seeking to help construct the identity, ethos, and ideologies of *chicanismo*. Mexican murals, therefore, occupy a central position in a critical history of the Chicana/o mural movement that is well documented but not always adequately examined. The nature of that centrality is still being analyzed and debated by artists and scholars.

There are no comparable studies available, however, to assess the legacy of Mexican murals for the more far-reaching international community murals movement, of which Chicana/o murals are definitely a part. This inclusive community-based framework actually places Chicana/o murals at some categorical remove from Mexican murals and provides a sufficiently different frame of reference to make it clear that Chicana/o and Mexican murals are as comparable as apples to oranges.⁵¹

Holly Barnet-Sanchez, 2012

Chapter One discusses Judith F. Baca's *The Future of Guadalupe* also titled *Angel of Guadalupe: Dreams of the Future* (1990), Barbara Carrasco's *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* (1981), and Josefina M. Quezada's *History of Maize* (1978) as examples of Chicana and Mexicana re-visions of history as demonstrated by their portrayals of women, Indigenous,

⁵⁰ Amalia Mesa-Bains, "Quest for Identity: Profile of Two Chicana Muralists Based on Interviews with Judith F. Baca and Patricia Rodríguez," in *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* (Venice: Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) and Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993) 70.

⁵¹ Holly Barnet-Sanchez, "Radical Mestizaje in Chicana/o Murals," in *Mexican Muralism: A Critical History*, ed. Alejandro Anreus, Robin Adèle Greeley, and Leonard Folgarait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 245.

and Native American peoples (Figs. 12, 6, 4, and 5). Chicana artists Judith F. Baca and Barbara Carrasco as well as Mexican artist Josefina M. Quezada redefined Chicano and Mexican muralism by creating portable murals that reimagined Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x history in Southern California.⁵² My analysis focuses on the portrayal of the Chicana/o, Mexican American, Mexican, and Latina/o experience from the city of Los Angeles to the rural town of Guadalupe, California, as part of an American history rooted in uplifting community, taking pride in ancestral knowledge, and instilling a trans-temporal memory of the ancient Indigenous past reminding viewers of their worth today.

The selected quotes written by Amalia Mesa-Bains and Holly Barnet-Sanchez describe the participation of women artists from the beginning of the Chicano art movement and explain that women muralists continue to be active participants in community-based public art. This analysis contributes to Barnet-Sanchez's message to continually re-examine the transnational and bicultural connections between Mexican muralists and Chicana/o/x or Latina/o/x artists in the U.S. This chapter enriches the legacy of Mexican and Chicano muralism with the inclusion of Josefina M. Quezada as a cultural bridge that influenced the trajectory of mural production in Southern California. My analysis identifies the historical and personal narratives drawn from a different frame of reference, one that amplifies the Chicana and Mexicana visual strategies employed by Quezada, Carrasco, and Baca. The purpose is to expand our understanding of the Mexican school of muralism and how Chicana and Mexicana artists redefined the genre through their own direct or indirect connections with "los tres grandes," or the "Three Great Ones," Diego Rivera, David Alfaró Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco.

⁵² Other Southern California Chicana/x and Latina/x artists not mentioned in this study that deserve further research include Judith A. Hernández, Yreina D. Cervántez, Glenna Boltuch Avila, Martha Ramirez Oropeza, Lucila Villaseñor Grijalva, Norma Montoya, Isabel Castro, Sonya Fe, Susan Saenz, and others. See Chon. A. Noriega, Terezita Romo, and Pilar Tompkins Rivas, *L.A. Xicano* (Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2011), 43.

In addition, my analysis recognizes each artist's reinvention of the portable mural and the visual strategies influenced by David A. Siqueiros but also their acknowledgment of Siqueiros's legacy in Los Angeles. This transcultural and binational understanding of muralism exemplifies Deborah Cullen's notion of the "contact zone" resulting from the direct mentorship with Mexican muralists like Siqueiros or Rivera in the 1930s and 40s. These transnational cultural philosophies and points of contact with muralists from Mexico in Los Angeles contributed to the development of the Chicano mural movement which included women artists like Quezada and others that must be inserted into the greater history. Deborah Cullen explained the idea of "contact zones" as constituting "individuals hailing from diverse homelands" that are "free to dialogue, experiment, and collaborate" in cultural production. Cullen noted the importance of the "foundational models" including artist workshops organized and taught by the Mexican muralists in the U.S., specifically David A. Siqueiros and Works Project Administration (WPA) artists collaborating to produce public art. He established the "Siqueiros Experimental Workshop" which had a "short lifespan" because Siqueiros departed New York City in 1937-1938 to support the Army of the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War as Lieutenant Colonel until 1939.⁵³

Before Siqueiros's death in 1974, he and his wife Angélica Arenal Bastar constructed a home and studio in Cuernavaca in 1965 to begin the workshop on muralism and public art. This project was intended to bring together various artists, writers, authors, workers, and soldiers to the space, creating a "multidisciplinary perspective." He named it "La Tallera" in "homage to the women who created life," seen as the "first workshop for muralism in the world."⁵⁴ By 1977, La

⁵³ Deborah Cullen, "Contact Zones: Places, Spaces, and Other Test Cases," *American Art* vol. 26, no. 2 (Summer 2012), 14-15.

⁵⁴ See the Sala de Arte Público de Siqueiros website, "History of La Tallera," with quotes from David Siqueiros. <http://saps-latallera.org/tallera/historia>. See Andrea Lepage, "Reconstructing the Curriculum at El Taller Siqueiros,

Tallera reopened under the direction of Siqueiros's artist assistant and mentee Luis Arenal Bastar and Angélica, who organized a summer workshop on muralism which later invited Chicana/o artists Judith F. Baca and Emmanuel Martinez (Manuel Martinez) to attend.⁵⁵ That same year, Baca attended La Tallera and learned foundational practices devised by Siqueiros and taught by Luis Arenal. An original concept drawing, later titled *Uprising of the Mujeres*, was rejected by fellow artists participating in the workshop, which delayed its production. After Baca returned to Los Angeles in 1979, she purposely titled the portable mural *Uprising of the Mujeres* as a response to the censorship and misogyny she experienced.⁵⁶ This analysis proposes to view Baca's murals for the Guadalupe Murals Project as another example of her experimentation with Siqueiros's visual techniques, which created a unique sense of spatial dynamism in the process.

My analysis does not compare Chicana/o to Mexican murals; instead, I explain these contact zones from the viewpoint of women artists who redefined and experimented with the techniques and philosophies introduced by Rivera, Siqueiros, and the Mexican school of muralism. For instance, Josefina Quezada had a direct connection to Siqueiros during her studies in Mexico and in 1949 she completed a "mural technique studio" at the Instituto de Arte de San

c. 1977: Intensive Course in Mural Painting in Cuernavaca," in *Baca: Art, Collaboration, & Mural Making*, edited by Mario Ontiveros, forward by Judith F. Baca (Los Angeles: Angel City Press, 2017), 46-47. Endnotes, pp. 225 no. 4, referencing the brochure or application "Taller Siqueiros" to participate in an "Intensive Course in Mural Painting in Cuernavaca, 1977, Sala de Arte Público de Siqueiros, 3.4.299. Lepage noted that Angélica Arenal Bastar de Siqueiros wrote in the application for "El Taller Siqueiros," "The Siqueiros Workshop, we think, is the initiator and heir of the greatest tradition of the revolutionary plastic art of this country and has as its objective the promotion, study, and practice of the principles and concepts of Siqueiros, [its] founder."

⁵⁵ Lepage, *Baca: Art, Collaboration, & Mural Making*, 46-47.

⁵⁶ This study takes into consideration Judith F. Baca's portable mural *Uprising of the Mujeres* (1979) as an important contribution to examine in a separate article. The analysis by Anna Indych-López in the book *Judith F. Baca, A Ver: Revisioning Art History*, vol. 11 (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2018) is the best source for Baca's portable murals. See page 107. See also Wendy Rose and Claudia Zapata, "Judy Baca on Her Mural *Uprising of the Mujeres*," October 6, 2022. Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) and The Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Voices from the Smithsonian Museums. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/smithsonian-american-art-museum/2022/10/06/judy-baca-on-her-mural-uprising-of-the-mujeres/>.

Miguel de Allende under the instruction of Siqueiros.⁵⁷ Also, Quezada's murals are interpreted as Mexican and Chicana/o because of her experience of working with community artists in East Los Angeles like Goetz Art Studios as well as securing local mural projects between 1975 and 1978. It is important to acknowledge Quezada's artistic practice in Mexico because her training there was not only personally beneficial but it also benefited the Chicana/o artist community. Chicano photographer and friend Oscar Castillo noted that although he could not travel to Mexico and see the murals or artworks first-hand, Quezada's stories became an avenue to "expand" his understanding of "Mexican art and Mexican culture." Castillo explained, "she would get inspiration from us as to what images to paint. She absolutely embraced everybody's opinion, and she got inspiration from us. And we got, well, a lot of inspiration from her."⁵⁸ These communal relationships are examples of Mexican and Chicana/o muralism creating a synergy that formed naturally to empower artists on both sides of the border.

Murals without walls explains the portable mural as a mobile message that speaks to audiences beyond national boundaries and geopolitical borders. Although some of these murals remain in situ, permanently affixed to a surface or wall now, their visual narrative suggested mobility and the transportability of each artist's interpretation of local histories as well as the people's dreams of the future. These murals represented a cultural blueprint situating Indigenous Mesoamerican societies as the generational and cultural knowledge that survived colonialism to benefit the post-modern families of today. These women artists portrayed a reimagining of cultural and historical generational connections between Indigenous and ethnic peoples in Guadalupe and

⁵⁷ Josefina M. Quezada. Curriculum Vitae. 1992. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. *Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation (CARA) Papers*, collection 10, box 6. See folder titled "CARA Correspondence, Josefina M. Quezada, 1992."

⁵⁸ Tessie Borden, "Josefina Quezada: A Lifetime of Fighting for Public Art," *The Autry Blog*, June 16, 2012. <https://archive.ph/20150404110933/http://blog.theautry.org/2012/06/josefina-quezada-a-lifetime-of-fighting-for-public-art/>.

Los Angeles, California. It began with Quezada's *History of Maize* (1978) illustrating the importance of ancestral Indigenous and Native American peoples and the creation of maize (Figs. 4 and 5). Additionally, her the depiction of a modern-contemporary Mexican American, Chicana/o/x, or Latina/o/x family showed continuity with the past but also a Mexicana re-vision of the future generation, as embodied by the young girl in the foreground (Fig. 5).

In Carrasco's *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* (1981) (Fig. 6) a new timeline of Los Angeles's founding reveals the injustices perpetrated on and the achievements accomplished by Mexican American, Native American, Black, and other ethnic people. The conceptual figure named "La Reina" or "Queen of the Angels" is interpreted as the keeper of these hidden and controversial histories of Los Angeles (L.A.) within her hair. Carrasco's Chicana re-vision is embodied by the "Queen of the Angels" or "La Reina" as a symbol of hope for future generations of Angelinos/as/xs. In South Santa Barbara County, Baca's *Angel of Guadalupe: Dreams of the Future* (1990) (Fig. 12) is one of four panels that is accessible to the public, displayed outdoors in the hallways of Guadalupe's City Hall. The rural landscape of Guadalupe carries the memory of Native American and other ethnic peoples who have labored and cultivated food over generations. Baca's final panel envisioned the dreams and ambitions of the people of Guadalupe, including farmworkers — all deserving of healthcare, education, and a sustainable resting place.

Josefina M. Quezada's *Historia del maíz* or *History of Maize* (1978)

Josefina M. Quezada (1918-1925) was born in Mexico City and grew up in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.⁵⁹ Between 1947 and 1952, she was professor of art at the Academy of San

⁵⁹ Samuel Mesinas, "Josefina Quezada recibe hoy homenaje," *El Universal*, June 7, 2005, 1. <https://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/cultura/42650.html>. The date of 1925 is published on the Wikipedia page:

Carlos and taught courses in painting; during those same years, she trained with Siqueiros at the Instituto de Arte de San Miguel de Allende and assisted Mexican photographer Dolores (Lola) Álvarez Bravo. Quezada also studied at the Centro Latino Americano de Conservación de Obras Artísticas (CEDOCLA), from 1963-1966, focusing on the restoration and conservation of paintings.⁶⁰ By 1963, Quezada was a professional artist exhibiting her paintings in highly regarded venues such as the Sala de Arte José Guadalupe Posada in Centro Hidalgo, sponsored by the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS) (Mexican Institute of Social Security). In a pamphlet published by the Mexican Social Security Quezada's welcoming smile was featured on the front (Figure 1). Her career as an artist, educator, painter, and muralist in Mexico was promising, with mural commissions from 1962-67 at various locations in Mexico City. Then in 1971 she arrived in Los Angeles with artist Jaime Mejia to examine the status of David A. Siqueiros's mural *América Tropical* (1932).

In the documentary film *América Tropical* by Barry Nye, produced and directed by Jesús Salvador Treviño, both Quezada and Mejia are shown in several scenes together assessing Siqueiros's mural.⁶¹ The 1971 film included a discussion with art historian Shifra Goldman stating that it was Goldman who contacted Siqueiros and from that correspondence he sent

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josefina_Quzada. However, after examining the Kickstarter fundraiser for a "Memorial Tribute and Exhibition" organized by Luis C. Garza and the "Friends of Josefina Quezada," the site stated 1918 as her birthdate in the short video displayed on the webpage: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/220105914/josefina-quezada-memorial-tribute-and-exhibition/?ref=kicktraq>. The date of 1919 was published in a statement by the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles (MCLA) on August 20, 2012. According to Isabel Rojas-Williams of the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles, "Doña Jose, as she was so lovingly called, was born in Jalisco, Mexico, in 1919." Facebook MCLA: <https://www.facebook.com/muralconservancy/photos/a.514468551913245/514731488553618/?type=3>.

⁶⁰ Quezada, Curriculum Vitae, 1992. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC), *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation (CARA)* Papers, Part I, collection 10, box 6, folder titled "CARA Correspondence, Josefina M. Quezada, 1992."

⁶¹ Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 40. See also the documentary film by Barry Nye and produced by Jesus Treviño, *América Tropical*, Los Angeles: KCET, 1972.

Quezada and Mejia together to evaluate the mural's condition. The cinematography focused on Quezada and Mejia entering from outside of the building, opening the gate doorway and walking upstairs, and passing through a large window to the exterior roof area where the mural is located. Both Quezada and Mejia are shown examining the mural, as Mejia points to several sections and then directs Quezada to another section. Quezada is also included in an extended scene where she is sketching a pre-Columbian Mesoamerican object or figure seen in the mural and writing notes. In addition, there is a close-up of Quezada as she chips away small pieces of tar with a razor, with a mention of her name "Josefina Quesada" and her role as "art restorer."⁶² This signaled the moment that El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, a department of the City of Los Angeles that protects the historic district, began to restore the original mural. In 1988, El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument and The Getty Conservation Institute began the restoration plan without the involvement of Mejia or Quezada, however, Goldman and Luis C. Garza contributed to the project as consultants.⁶³

Quezada's interest in Chicana/o art began in the early 1970s, when she collaborated with Chicana/o artists at Goez Art Studios in East Los Angeles, including fellow artist Esperanza Martinez, with whom she produced several public murals together and with whom she exhibited her artworks locally. Karen Mary Davalos explained that both artists were "critically acclaimed," but the patriarchal environment at Goez and other Chicana/o art centers limited the roles of women artists despite their participation since their beginnings.⁶⁴ Quezada would also offer

⁶² Barry Nye and Jesus Treviño, *América Tropical*, Los Angeles: KCET, 1972.

⁶³ The Getty Conservation Institute, "Conservation of *América Tropical*," 1988-2012. <https://www.getty.edu/projects/conservation-america-tropical/>.

⁶⁴ Karen Mary Davalos, "Looking at the Archive," in *Chicana/o Remix: Art and Errata since the Sixties* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 71.

painting or drawing classes in collaboration with East Los Angeles College's (ELAC) Community Services Office at Plaza de la Raza in the late 1970s.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Quezada was recognized in Los Angeles by many Chicana/o artists whom she befriended including Barbara Carrasco, Luis C. Garza, Ofelia Esparza, Oscar Castillo, and others who continue to honor her memory.

Photographer and friend of Quezada, Chicano photographer Luis C. Garza, noted the importance of her “stand-alone” presence in Los Angeles that distinguished her actions from other Mexican women muralists. He explained that it was Quezada who not only crossed the border, but she was “involved within the Chicano Movement as an artist, and that is a distinction and worthy of identifying, and that is where Josefina is stand-alone.”⁶⁶ Her involvement in the Chicano art and mural movement included mentorship and overseeing the completion of several murals in schools and public buildings. For example, the mural titled *Tree of Knowledge* or *Read*, finished in 1978, was painted on the exterior wall of the Anthony Quinn Library in the East Los Angeles neighborhood of City Terrace.⁶⁷ This was a collaborative project where the principal designer Teresa Chacon and other women artists from the Chicana Action Service Center completed painting the mural under Quezada's supervision. Other commissions with the Chicana Action Service Center included murals for City Terrace Elementary School and Hammel Elementary School. In a color photograph taken in 1978, Quezada stands in the foreground holding the conceptual drawing or maquette for the mural titled *Mensaje de amor y*

⁶⁵ East Los Angeles College (ELAC) Community Services Office, “Plaza Center has non-credit classes,” *Highland Park News-Herald & Journal*, November 9, 1977, A7.

⁶⁶ Interview of Luis C. Garza, conducted by Gabriela Rodriguez-Gomez, May 20, 2024, in Los Angeles, CA. The audio and transcript are not published.

⁶⁷ See the Los Angeles County Arts Commission's digital public archive. <https://publicartarchive.org/art/Tree-of-Knowledge-aka-Read-/40a2cb40>.

paz (A Message of Love and Peace) at Hammel Elementary, while other Chicana artists in the background are shown painting the cement wall (Figure 2).⁶⁸ This photograph is testament to her dedication to teaching Chicana artists to paint murals and her active participation in the Chicana/o art movement. She continued to paint murals in Anaheim and Los Angeles throughout the late 1970s with her final commission completed at Chula Vista High School in San Diego in 1982.⁶⁹

In 1978, the community-based non-profit group CHARO (Community Development Corporation) commissioned Quezada to paint the mural *Historia del maíz (History of Maize)*, and after its completion the mural was displayed inside the organization's headquarters in Los Angeles. Quezada and her artist assistant Cruz M. Macías painted two large canvas panels measuring 8 feet by 16 feet (32 feet in width if placed side-by-side) interconnected visually by two large hands extending from the top-right and top-left corners. In a color photograph taken in the 1980s or the 1990s, the image shows the mural in its original location inside CHARO's headquarter lobby: the photograph captured an anonymous woman walking in front of one of the two panels, showing its proximity to visitors (Figure 3). The two panels were displayed near each other but not as adjoined canvases; thus, viewers encountered each panel as separate pieces. The panels are visually connected stylistically with the inclusion of maize symbols and large

⁶⁸ Quezada, Curriculum Vitae, 1992. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC), *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation (CARA)* Papers, Part I, collection 10, box 6, folder titled "CARA Correspondence, Josefina M. Quezada, 1992." The mural at Hammel Elementary School measured 576 square feet and was painted using acrylic on cement.

⁶⁹ Quezada produced murals in San Diego, including collaborative mural projects with local artist and muralist Michael Schnorr. See article written by Terry Davidson, "Spartans of Legend CV High Mural," *Chula Vista Star-News*, November 7, 1982. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/118229452/?match=1>. According to Quezada's C.V. from 1992 this was her final mural commission. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation (CARA) Papers, Part I, collection 10, box 6. See folder titled "CARA Correspondence, Josefina M. Quezada, 1992."

hands extending from one canvas to the other to show a continuation of Indigenous knowledge, ingenuity, and culture.

The composition of the visual narrative between the two panels linked two historical timelines where ancient Indigenous Mesoamerican empires are juxtaposed with the modern-contemporary period. This visual strategy echoed Diego Rivera's mural in Mexico City titled *History of Medicine in Mexico: The Peoples' Demand for Better Health*, finished in 1953, where the composition is split in two halves illustrating the development of community organized health and wellness programs from the ancient past to the modern present. The left section of the mural displayed the modern national social security program and hospital in Mexico City; meanwhile, the right section displayed an ancient Indigenous Mesoamerican society participating in a similar but underdeveloped method of socialized medicine. Rivera placed the Nahua goddess of Tlazolteotl-Ixcuina giving birth to the god of corn, Cinteotl, in the center of the composition. This placement of the goddess balanced the two halves, a strategy I explained as Rivera's reimagining of the ancient past. His mural illustrated a re-vision of history that inserted the demand for socialized medicine in Mexico spanning several generations.⁷⁰

Chicano artist José Antonio Burciaga also produced a mural dedicated to the history of maize celebrating its Indigenous origins alongside the development of Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicana/o culture and tradition. Burciaga's mural *The Mythology and History of Maíz*, featuring *The Mythology of Maíz*, *The Last Supper of Chicano Heroes*, and *The Cycle of Life*, completed at Stanford University in 1987, was painted on the surface of three walls inside

⁷⁰ Gabriela Rodriguez-Gomez, "Re-Conceptualizing Social Medicine in Diego Rivera's *History of Medicine in Mexico: The People's Demand for Better Health* Mural, Mexico City, 1953," master's thesis published in 2012. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7038q9mk>.

Stern Dining Hall.⁷¹ The visual narrative from the left to the right wall expands upon the organic and communal history of maize, including how ancient Indigenous knowledge engineered the plant, which was then shared with the Spanish settlers. Roberto Cintli Rodríguez, referencing mainly Chicano male artists like Burciaga, who incorporated iconography drawn from historical sources, explained this “root imagery” as the return to an Indigenous origin or a “common denominator.”⁷² Rodríguez referred to details in Burciaga’s mural as part of the maize imagery engrained in Indigenous origins but also noted that this “return” to an Indigenous “common denominator” was not strictly Aztec or Mexica. Instead, the idea was described by Rodríguez as a return to a “maíz axis mundi,” a concept to help us re-examine and understand the history of the Americas, colonialism, and the modern social-political movements like the Chicano Movement. Rodríguez explained, “this shift moves Mexicans and Chicanas/os from being viewed as “people of the sun,” or as almost exclusively descendants of Aztecs and Mexica, to being “gente de maíz” or people of corn.”⁷³ From this perspective, Chicana/o artists who resurfaced the theme of maize evoked a conscious Indigenous Mesoamerican origin founded on positive qualities like creation and regeneration.

The theme of maize in Quezada’s mural corresponds with Rodríguez’s concept of a “maíz axis mundi” in which the history of Indigenous Mesoamerican peoples is viewed as a prosperous society centered on maize cultivation, preservation, and consumption. Specifically, the panel dedicated to the depiction of Aztec, Mexica, Nahuatl, Maya, Tlaxcala, Huastec, Otomi,

⁷¹ In 2022 and 2024 I conducted field research at Stanford University, special collections, while writing on the Chicana/o murals at Stern Dining Hall and Casa Zapata. José Antonio Burciaga was the artist-in-residence at Casa Zapata from 1985-1994, where he interviewed students on the portrayal of twelve heroes. <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/latina-o-x-at-stanford/catalog/sw541zx6705>.

⁷² Roberto Cintli Rodríguez, “Primary Process and Principio: A Return to the Root,” in *Our Sacred Maíz is Our Mother: Indigeneity and Belonging in the Americas* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 137.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 139.

Totonac, and other regional cultures of Mexico emphasize the process of growing, harvesting, and storing maize. The solar rays of the Aztec Sun Stone hovering above the Templo Mayor in the capital of Tenochtitlan next to the Pyramid of the Niches in El Tajín in Veracruz shines brightly above a pan-Indigenous empire (Figure 4). There are different social hierarchies illustrated in this Mesoamerican society, including noble women and men, shamans, farmers, workers, artisans, and children benefitting collectively from the production of corn. In the center of the composition, the nude bodies of two women and a semi-nude male figure are drawn in the process of pollinating the plant. The nude female figure in the foreground is interpreted in this analysis as the Nahua goddess Chicomecoatl, illustrated wearing blue feathers and turquoise jewelry. Her idealized body and pose are reminiscent of European paintings substituted with features like light brown skin, black hair, and brown eye color, conveying her ethnicity as Indigenous, Mexican American, and Chicana.

In European art, the “white female body” signified a “trope of aesthetic beauty,” according to Linda Nead. She adds that “the female nude operates through the aesthetic as, precisely, a container to enframe and control the threat of unbridled female sexuality.” Amelia Jones explained that the female nude was also not only “disempowered” as the “object of heterosexual male desire but also retains her status as ‘art’ rather than ‘pornography’ by maintaining an attachment to signifiers of purity (whiteness) that are racially determined.”⁷⁴ Beauty, chastity, purity, and the white female body were painted for the European male gaze and its desires. Quezada’s traditional fine arts training and understanding of European paintings as an art student and professor in Mexico influenced the portrayal of a nude child and Indigenous

⁷⁴ Amelia Jones, “Every Man Knows Where and How Beauty Gives Him Pleasure: Beauty Discourse and the Logic of Aesthetics,” in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Donald Preziosi (Oxford University Press, 2009), 378. See footnote 13, pp. 544: “Nead states, categorically, ‘one of the principal goals of the female nude has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body,’ *The Female Nude*, 6.”

woman within the composition. In this instance, the nude figures redirect the gaze to focus on the Indigenous nude female figure as the personification of the Nahua goddess Chicomecoatl. The nude infant placed behind the ceramic or clay sculpture of the maize deity Cinteotl, referencing the Totonac or Huastec fertility sculptures, embodied the birth of the next generation, continuing the cycles of procreation and growth of the community.

The representation of the Nahua deity Chicomecoatl extending her left hand forward with small seeds in her palm suggests the germination and reproduction of corn; meanwhile, her right hand holds a miniature corncob conveying the nude female figure's mythological quality. The stone sculpture of a female figure holding a bundle of corn wrapped on her back illustrated next to an anonymous Indigenous woman making corn tortillas is another reference to a ritual performed for the goddess Chicomecoatl, that of bringing food offerings.⁷⁵ Thus, the placement of the stone sculpture of Chicomecoatl next to the elderly man who is cross-pollinating corn draws attention to the potency of the nude female figure as a sacred presence. This emphasis on fecundity is suggestive of the reproductive quality of corn as a sacred and staple food that nourished and provided sustenance to the people of ancient Mesoamerican empires.

In the background, the buildings that resemble the Templo Mayor at Tenochtitlan in Mexico City or the Pyramid of the Niches from El Tajín in Veracruz are reimagined as restored, intact sites, no longer seen as ruins. This environment included social and political hierarchies of these empires presented to viewers with the inclusion of two characters entering the scene from the left side. One character is pictured as a ruler displayed sitting atop a palanquin wearing an elaborate green, red, blue, and yellow feathered headdress with a turquoise necklace and a

⁷⁵ See Bernardino de Sahagún and the multiple Indigenous scribes who co-authored *The Florentine Codex*, book 2, page 28r, 16th century. Note the ceremony or ritual called “calionohuac,” bringing offerings to the goddess of food Chicomecoatl. <https://florentinecodex.getty.edu/book/2/folio/28r>.

serpent shaped staff. Meanwhile, another male nobleman covered by a golden parasol faces toward the direction of the procession. Noble women are also present in the narrative, such as the Indigenous woman dressed in a white robe with red fabric and turquoise jewelry, pouring seeds from a basket into a large black ceramic vase placed in the center behind the elderly man.

The scene of storing corn inside the “cuexcomatl” or “petlascalco” granary shows the Nahua people preparing an emergency supply in case of drought or other natural disasters.⁷⁶ These granaries also contained other seeds like amaranth and beans, but more importantly these storage houses are still used today in regional rural areas in Mexico like Puebla or Morelos. The inclusion of social-cultural events such as the “danza de los voladores,” or dance of the pole flyers, and architectural structures in the background, show references to colonial and pre-Columbian codices such as *The Florentine Codex* or the Lienzo de Tlaxcala. Next to the granary the emergence of a large graphic, two-dimensional, floating corn cob dominating the periphery of the top-right side is held by a colossal hand. This symbol stylistically references the central Mexican and Veracruz region and carved stone sculptures such as the Aztec, Mexica, Nahua, Huastec, Otomi, or Totonac stone “tepetlacalli,” meaning stone box, decorated with mazorcas de maíz or corncobs.⁷⁷ These historical references to colonial codices or artifacts express Quezada’s familiarity with the Mexican mural tradition of inserting iconography that highlights Indigenous

⁷⁶ The granary or “cuexcomate” in Nahuátl is typically seen in the region of Puebla, Tlaxcala, and the region of Morelos and Estado de Mexico. See also the word “petlascalco” in Nahuátl for storage of dried maize in the urban city. The “danza de los voladores” originally was practiced by Indigenous Huastec, Nahua, and Otomi people, mostly men, and then spread to other groups throughout Mesoamerica. Interview with Helen Burgos-Ellis, UCLA fall 2024. Burgos-Ellis noted the use of visual references to *The Florentine Codex* such as the curse of One Rabbit in book 7, where Aztec, Mexica, and Nahua Indigenous people would store grains of maize in anticipation of drought which can lead to famine. See de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex*, page 28r, book 2. <https://florentinecodex.getty.edu/book/7/folio/16r>. See also illustrations by Mexican artist and engraver Alberto Beltrán and the front cover for the book titled *Bibliografía del maíz en México*, written by Enrique Florescano and Alejandra Moreno Toscano (Xalapa, Mexico: Universidad Veracruzana, 1966). <https://libreria.uv.mx/gpd-bibliografya-del-mayuz-en-myxico-9780005020203.html>.

⁷⁷ Jorge Enciso, “Natural forms-flora,” in *Design Motifs of Ancient Mexico* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1947), 50.

ingenuity. In the process, she represents Indigenous people as an ever-present original culture that is seen and understood as the axis mundi or the center of creation.

The other panel demonstrated a chronological shift to the colonial and modern period by the portrayal of an Indigenous man blowing a conch shell standing underneath an enlarged hand separating the golden strands of the barba de maíz (jilote) or corn silk (Figure 5). This character is reminiscent of the Nahua poet, architect, and writer Nezahualcōyotl, who was also a “tlatoani” or an Aztec ruler, illustrated with a white cape decorated with a spiral symbol signifying the split conch shell of the deity Quetzalcoatl. His stance atop the stone box or “tepetlacalli,” while blowing air into a conch shell, conjured a sonic and imaginative movement through time. The inclusion of the tlatoani Nezahualcōyotl as an active figure also summoned the power of creativity, ancestral wisdom, and knowledge as an everlasting legacy of the past. The speech scroll, shown as a three swirled symbol painted with light blue and turquoise colors, symbolized the knowledge or word of the ancestors as it was carried by the wind along with the sounds of the conch shell across the globe.

The portrait of King Charles V, depicted with blue eyes, blonde hair and beard, wearing a golden crown with the Christian cross, is drawn next to a British or American man representing the colonial period. These three male figures budding from the bottom left corner implied the intrusion of European colonists who gained power and wealth after the colonization of the Americas. For instance, the three-dimensional box of corn flakes painted in gold and drawn to resemble a gold bar suggested a connection between the abundance of food, advancements in technology, and the wealth generated by the mass production of corn.⁷⁸ The golden hairs, jilote

⁷⁸ Josefina Quezada mentioned the representation of gold in several instances within the second panel in the 2006 television segment titled “Josefina Quezada: pintora y muralista, conversaciones en Los Angeles (L.A.)” with Alejandro Pelayo Rangel. I thank Chicano artist Oscar Castillo for the DVD of the television program that featured this interview with Quezada. Also, during an interview with Helen Burgos-Ellis, UCLA fall 2024, we discussed the mural and Burgos-Ellis first noticed the shape of the corn flakes box as a gold bar. It was because of this

or corn silk, extending from the fingers of the enlarged hand and the corncob within the yellow husk signified the cornucopia generated by colonial and modern development. The emphasis on technology and industrial machinery is demonstrated by the illustration of several products derived from corn, such as the extraction of oil and use of corn for whiskey, starch, wine, margarine, jarabe or syrup, and more. The Chicana/o or Mexican American family with two children, including a boy wearing a red shirt and a girl in a yellow-gold and turquoise-colored dress-shirt, resemble the modern families of the U.S. golden age films of the 1940s and 1950s. This detail is suggested by their dapper outfits as well as their interest in consumer products that emerged during the Green Revolution or the Third Agricultural Revolution in the U.S. when mono-agricultural farming produced high yielding crops like corn to create new foods.

Quezada's re-vision of the "American dream" is embodied by the Mexican American or Chicano heterosexual couple and their son looking upward in the direction of the multiple consumer products. The depiction of a large industrial corn oil extractor and cylinder metal granary next to products like corn oil, whiskey, and vinegar show the process of producing multi-colored concentrated oils or solvents. Also, the placement of the girl wearing a golden dress and turquoise-colored dress-shirt as well as her direct confrontational gaze are important details that signaled prosperity and participation. The Mexican American or Chicano family also links the ancient Nahua goddess Chicomecoatl and her child Cinteotl to the modern experience founded on the knowledge and cultural production of ancient cultures. The Chicana girl eating the corncob also symbolized a continuation of ancient Indigenous bioengineering and technological advancements to the modern era, while simultaneously linking that history to audiences today. The positioning of the gold-colored corn flakes box tilted toward the girl

conversation that I understood the context and realized the importance of this detail to show the visualization of wealth, prosperity, and the production of modern foods. I thank Burgos-Ellis for this valuable insight.

dressed in gold represented the next generation's consumption of foods derived from corn, but also the advantages of their participation as consumers in the U.S. Quezada's re-vision of history emboldened audiences in East Los Angeles through self-representation, a form of seeing themselves in the Mexican American and Chicano family depicted in the mural, indeed, as innovators and contributors to the American experience.

Barbara Carrasco's *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* (1981)

Barbara Carrasco was born in 1955 in El Paso, Texas, and was raised in California in the community of Mar Vista Gardens near Culver City, California. From 1976 to 1978, Carrasco studied at West Los Angeles College and completed the Bachelor of Art program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). During her studies at UCLA, she participated in several arts organizations and contributed her art to publications like *La Gente* newspaper. Her first mural was finished in 1976 in the Culver City Veteran Memorial Building and in 1978-1979 she completed mural projects with L.A. City Mural Project as well as the "Zoot Suit" mural in the Aquarius Theater in Hollywood, assisting Carlos Almaraz and John Valadez.⁷⁹ She also contributed a large banner mural to the UFW Fourth Constitutional Convention in Salinas, California in 1979, one year after graduating from UCLA. By 1980-81, she began working as a graphic artist for the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) and graphic designer for the city of Los Angeles's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), developing topographical maps and what Carrasco described as "map presentations for the CRA." Her co-workers and

⁷⁹ Barbara Carrasco, Curriculum Vitae, circa 1980, UC Santa Barbara Special Collections, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, Series 5, box 28, folder 1. See interview with Karen Mary Davalos, August 30, September 11 and 21, and October 10, 2007, Los Angeles, California. CSRC Oral Histories Series, no. 3 (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2013), 42-43.

collaborators were Chicana/o artists Judithe Hernández, Carlos Almaraz, Dolores Guerrero-Cruz, John Valadez, and Frank Romero as the manager of the “graphics department” for the CRA.⁸⁰

In the fall of 1980 John C. López, owner of the McDonald’s in downtown Los Angeles, and Ari Sikora from CRA, commissioned Carrasco to produce a large mural to be displayed across the street from Grand Central Market. López supported the original concept drawing and even took the initiative to get the mural approved by McDonald’s corporate headquarters in Chicago. Carrasco’s portable mural, *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective*, was approved and sponsored by the CRA in February of 1981, and funds were distributed to Carrasco to start painting in a studio space provided at Career Architects on South Broadway.⁸¹ The mural’s commission coincided with celebrations of the bicentennial of the city of Los Angeles, its history, and the people who founded it. Carrasco’s *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* expressed a re-vision drawn from a Mexican and Chicana perspective that insisted on portraying the voices and experiences of Native American, Indigenous, mestiza/o, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicana/o, Latina/o, African American, Asian American, and other ethnic peoples.

Prior to the completion of the mural, CRA officials Gary Williamson and Don Cosgrove organized a meeting with Carrasco to discuss the design. During this meeting, Carrasco recalled seeing the blueprint for the mural on a wall with circled red ink on specific areas that were problematic according to Cosgrove and Williamson. These red circles focused on fourteen scenes that were deemed controversial, which prompted Williamson and Cosgrove to suggest

⁸⁰ Carrasco, interview with Karen Mary Davalos, August 30, September 11 and 21, and October 10, 2007, Los Angeles, California. CSRC Oral Histories Series, no. 3 (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2013), 50.

⁸¹ Harry Gamboa Jr., “Aztlán: mural ausente,” *La Comunidad in La Opinión*, no. 133, February 6, 1983. Translated by Juan José García. 8. Copy of the newspaper article found in the Shifra Goldman archives. UC Santa Barbara Special Collections, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, series 5, box 28, folder 10.

that these scenes be altered or removed.⁸² According to Carrasco, the images were described as “too small and cluttered” or “negative,” and later explained that she felt that this would “compromise” her “integrity” and so she refused to change her original concept.⁸³ As a result, the mural was not displayed in downtown Los Angeles and was placed in storage for many years. My analysis considers the significance of Carrasco’s mural as another resurfacing, like the apparition of Siqueiros’s mural, because after years of being concealed from the public the mural was eventually recognized.

Carrasco’s *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* is comprised of forty wood and Masonite panels measuring a total of 16 feet by 80 feet, creating a colossal horizontal mural consisting of fifty-one scenes and seventy-one portraits (Figure 6).⁸⁴ Each panel contains scenes that were researched by Carrasco and a team of consultants, comprised of three people: historian Rudolfo Acuña, Bill Mason, and curator Jean Bruce Pool. Carrasco also contracted three artist assistants, Glenna Boltuch-Avila, Rod Sakai, and Yreina D. Cervántez, to help finish painting the mural. Chicana artist Laura Aguilar’s black and white photograph published in May 1983 for *La Gente* newspaper captured Carrasco’s command of the paintbrush as she painted one of the controversial scenes within her mural, the whitewashing of Siqueiros’s mural *América Tropical*

⁸² Beatriz Echaveste and Gloria Estolano, “Los Angeles Rejects History: Barbara Carrasco Mural,” *Community Murals* no 3., vol. 9 (Summer 1984), pp. 13-14. The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board approved the mural on February 4, 1981. Five months later, Gary Williamson replaced R.A. Secora, who “objected to fourteen images on the mural.”

⁸³ Barbara Carrasco, “Up Against the Wall: A Muralists Perspective,” from the Notebooks of Barbara Carrasco, 1981-1989, not published. Stanford University, Special Collections, Barbara Carrasco Papers, box 13, folder 27.

⁸⁴ Erin M. Curtis, “History Censored,” in *¡Murales Rebeldes! L.A. Chicana/Chicano Murals Under Siege*, edited by Guisela Latorre, Erin M. Curtis, and Jessica Hough (Los Angeles: Angel City Press, 2017), 42. Curtis states “forty-three wood and Masonite panels.” However, the diagram of the mural published on September 2, 1990, for the L.A. Festival, stated forty panels alongside the dimensions of each panel. Goldman’s notes, interview with Carrasco, April 1982, UC Santa Barbara Special Collections, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, series 5, box 28, folder 4 and 10. Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 56. Latorre mentioned “forty wood and Masonite panels.”

(Figure 7). Carrasco sits cross-legged while small water containers and white acrylic paint are placed directly atop the panel. Her hand is holding the paintbrush with purpose to place the first few brushstrokes onto the surface. There is a sense of confidence in her painting technique and skill, but also a calmness to her demeanor. Aguilar's photograph alludes to Carrasco's intent to paint and visualize all scenes as they are, as close to her original sketch as possible, including reproducing the image of the crucified Indigenous figure in Siqueiros's mural.

In the 1984 documentary *White Wash: From Siqueiros to Carrasco*, director Tony Garcia filmed the mural's precarious condition while in storage in East Los Angeles. The first half of the film was focused on Carrasco's explaining the purpose of each scene within the mural, including those that were censored, expressing disappointment because of the controversy surrounding it. There is an entire segment dedicated to interviews with John Bright, writer, and Burt Corona, labor activist and cinematographer, on their experience with Siqueiros during his visit to Los Angeles in 1932 as a political refugee. The first half of the documentary explained the history of Siqueiros's three murals, *Street Meeting* at the Chouinard Art Institute, which was destroyed, *América Tropical* at El Pueblo de Los Angeles in Olvera Street, now accessible at the America Tropical Interpretive Center, and *Portrait of Mexico Today* at the residence of Hollywood director Dudley Murphy in Pacific Palisades, permanently re-located in front of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. An interview with screenwriter John Bright discussed Siqueiros's portable mural produced for the John Reed Club that was consequently destroyed and not photographed.⁸⁵ The documentary ended with Carrasco's mural stored away for an unknown

⁸⁵ Tony Garcia, director, and Sandra Van Beek, writer, *White Wash: From Siqueiros to Carrasco*, 1984. UC Santa Barbara, Special Collections Library, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, box 269, folder 30 (item V3726). After examining the digitized version of the video recording, I took note of the interview with John Bright when he discussed Siqueiros's portable mural that was destroyed by the Los Angeles Police Department's red squad. The mural was destroyed because the L.A. police raided the John Reed Club headquarters and slashed the canvas depicted the killing of the Scottsboro Boys. Original documents and concept drawing on *América Tropical* can be found at the Getty Research Institute in the David Alfaro Siqueiros Papers, 1920 -1991, Series II Los Angeles.

period, creating a parallel experience between two monumental murals and muralists that were intentionally hidden by L.A. city officials.

The vignette showing the whitewashing of David Siqueiros's *América Tropical* was painted on the right section of Carrasco's mural to commemorate Siqueiros's visit to Los Angeles and allude to its later discovery by the community (Figure 8). Thankfully, local community members and scholars like Shifra M. Goldman, Jesús Treviño, and other Chicana/o artists knew of its existence. Guisela Latorre explained,

Carrasco soon saw the irony in her decision to include contested histories in the mural, such as the depiction of Japanese internment camps or a scene of the actual whitewashing of Siqueiros's mural. The whole fiasco made her, and her supporters realize that attitudes toward racialized minorities in Los Angeles had not changed in fifty years.⁸⁶

It was outside pressure from CRA officials that resulted in censorship of specific scenes that Carrasco was adamantly not willing to repaint or delete. This conviction to not compromise her original idea prompted the local media to respond by describing the artist as a stubborn and fiery Latina, imposing a stereotype upon her.

In the 1983 article written by Victor Valle, the *L.A. Times* described Carrasco as someone with a “stormy temper and iron will,” explaining that she earned this reputation during her “battle” with CRA and her “controversial” mural.⁸⁷ Valle noted that the mural was “rescued” by Carrasco from a downtown warehouse — the space featured in the documentary *White Wash: From Siqueiros to Carrasco* where Carrasco is interviewed — and that there were several instances where Carrasco was asked if this experience “led her to draw a parallel with a similar

⁸⁶ Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 57.

⁸⁷ Victor Valle, “Chicano Art: An Emerging Generation,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1983, 6.

situation involving David A. Siqueiros “Tropical America” in 1932.”⁸⁸ In an interview with Jeffrey J. Rangel in 1999, Carrasco expressed that this description of her as an angry person was the kind of reputation she did not know about until the *L.A. Times* article was published and that she did not think she had “that kind of reputation.”⁸⁹ Carrasco explained that the whole experience kept her “thinking about why” she was “fighting it so much.” She continued to state that if she “gave in to what they’re asking” to do, which is to “eliminate” certain scenes or panels from the overall mural, it would go against “this Catholic in me” that “couldn’t let go of the truth.” Per Carrasco, the mural was “truthful,” and she “couldn’t substitute it with images that were not truthful” and that the CRA was asking her to do “something that I thought was wrong.”⁹⁰ This notion of truthfulness is conjured by the large woman figure on the left side of the mural named the “Queen of Angels” whose hair contains Carrasco’s re-vision or truth conveyed her compassion for her family, community, and city.

The figure of “Our Lady Queen of the Angels” or “La Reina,” whose hair contains fifty-one historical illustrations interweaved as vignettes, also holds a bald eagle feather decorated with red, yellow, black, blue, white, and grey beads, signaling a Native American and Gabriolino Tongva or Kizh connection (Figure 9).⁹¹ The “Our Lady Queen of Angels,” was the “symbolic queen” of the original name of the city of Los Angeles, El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles de

⁸⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁹ Jeffrey J. Rangel, “Oral History Interview with Barbara Carrasco, April 13-26, 1999, Los Angeles, CA,” Smithsonian Archives of American Art. The digital preservation of the interview received Federal support from the Latino Initiative Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁹¹ The term Tongva is challenged by Tribal Archaeologist E. Gary Stickel, stating the correct term for the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians is the Kizh Nation. To learn more about the Kizh Gabrieleños, “the original people of the Los Angeles basin,” see the website <https://gabrielenoindians.org/about-us/>. Under “Documents” you can download “Kizh NOT Tongva,” representing Stickel’s argument.

Porciúncula, illustrated in a deep contemplative gesture with her hand placed under her chin.⁹² Latorre described the figures as “an indigenous-looking Chicana holding a feather in her hand while the long tresses of her dark hair begin to reveal scenes from the city’s past.”⁹³ This character contains features that emphasize her ethnicity as Indigenous or Native American as well as Chicana. This Chicana look was inspired by Carrasco’s sister Frances, whose features, like her dark brown eyes and hair as well as the pondering gesture, were reproduced. In the cover for *XhismeArte*, a special women’s issue published in January 1981, Carrasco illustrated an image of a Chicana woman applying makeup with one false eyelash on, thick black eyeliner, and bold red lips. These qualities are present on the face of the “Queen of Angels,” echoing the aesthetics of Carrasco’s sister who was also the model for the portrait on the front cover.⁹⁴ She also wears a pendant with the image of the Virgin Mary, specifically the Miraculous Medal or the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, on her bra strap demonstrating Carrasco’s Catholic intuitiveness. These details are meaningful because the representations of the “Queen of Angels” and the portrayal of la Virgen de Guadalupe next to each other signify the artist’s understanding of truth and compassion.

⁹² The title of “Our Lady Queen of the Angels” is stated on the diagram as “1” for the woman figure on the left section, published in 1990 and republished in 2017. UC Santa Barbara, Special Collections Library, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, box 28, folder 4. The updated diagram was published for the exhibition *¡Murales Rebeldes! L.A. Chicana/Chicano Murals Under Siege*, Union Station, Los Angeles, September 29 – October 22, 2017, presented by the California Historical Society and LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes, as part of the Getty’s Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA initiative.

⁹³ Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 56.

⁹⁴ Carrasco, interview with Karen Mary Davalos, August 30, September 11 and 21, and October 10, 2007, Los Angeles, California. CSRC Oral Histories Series, no. 3 (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2013), 42. See also Hammer Museum digital archive, Carrasco, *XhismeArte*, 1981. <https://hammer.ucla.edu/radical-women/art/art/xhismearte>.

Harry Gamboa Jr. described this character as “La Reina pensativa,” in *La Comunidad* newspaper, interpreting her expression as pensive or thoughtful.⁹⁵ The semi-closed eyes of “Our Lady Queen of the Angels” evoke a sense of contemplation or prayer that mirrored la Virgen de Guadalupe’s pose. Carrasco did not reproduce the original image of la Virgen de Guadalupe; instead, her version echoed the pondering or contemplative stare while holding the declaration of El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Ángeles de Porciúncula from 1781. This marked the colonial period when Spanish friars and colonial settlers enslaved Indigenous and Native American peoples to build the missions and establish the town. This reimagined version of la Virgen de Guadalupe placed her gaze beyond the scene directly below her to other vignettes that show war, death, and colonization. Her unwavering stare and solemn smirk reflected disapproval of the violent actions made by humanity. Gary Williamson, CRA architect, mentioned that “La Reina” had a skin color that was “too dark,” stating, “I have never seen such black eyes.” He also remarked on the Virgin Mary figure, asserting, “she had a look of repression on her face,” to persuade Carrasco to modify the look of the two goddess figures.⁹⁶ Carrasco did not intend to change the likeness of la Virgen de Guadalupe nor the “Queen of Angels” because of their closeness to Frances Carrasco’s facial features. Other characters in the mural also reference Carrasco’s sister, including the Indigenous woman fishing on the bottom vignette near the left section and the portrait of her sister in the right section within the group portrait.⁹⁷ Thus,

⁹⁵ Harry Gamboa Jr., “Aztlán: mural ausente,” *La Comunidad* in *La Opinión*, no. 133, February 6, 1983. Translated by Juan José García. 8-9. English title, “The Missing Mural of Aztlán: Barbara Carrasco.” UC Santa Barbara Special Collections, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, series 5, box 28, folder 10.

⁹⁶ Beatriz Echaveste and Gloria Estolano, “Los Angeles Rejects History: Barbara Carrasco Mural,” *Community Murals* no 3., vol. 9 (Summer 1984), 14.

⁹⁷ Carrasco, email correspondence with the author, November 21-22, 2024. Los Angeles, CA. This content is not published.

Carrasco's commitment to portraying a truthful re-vision of history takes inspiration from the portraits of family members, friends, fellow artists, and local heroes of the Chicano Movement.

Embedded in the hair of the "Queen of Angels" are several events, historic landmarks, and various portraits of other notable Mexican American, Black, Japanese, Chicana/o, and Latina/o figures. Carrasco's photorealist approach echoed the social realism of the Mexican muralists where close reproductions of photographs, portraits, architectural sites, and memorabilia provide evidence to support her truthful re-vision. The composition of the hair also condenses the chronology of the illustrated history where each vignette is composed of interconnected memories made relevant in the present moment. For instance, the portraits of César E. Chávez, Dolores Huerta, Yreina D. Cervántez, Sylvia Morales, Teena Marie, Diana Mares, Glenna Boltuch-Avila, Jane Fonda, Margaret Magellan, Mrs. Hall, Mrs. Lopez, Minna Agins, Martha Heredia, and Anna Nieto Gomez represented the many artists, community leaders, educators, politicians, and organizers rooted in L.A.'s history (Figure 10).

Carrasco also used historical photographs to replicate the portrait of figures like Bridget "Biddy" Mason, using a studio portrait preserved in the UCLA Miriam Matthews Photograph Collection from 1860-1870.⁹⁸ Mason's silhouette in the center of the mural is surrounded by scenes that depict the "last battle" between the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans in the Mexican-American War.⁹⁹ In addition, Carrasco referenced the famous photograph by Clem Albers from 1942 of a young Japanese girl named Yukiko Okinaga Hayakawa Llewellyn who was evacuated, relocated, and incarcerated at Manzanar War Relocation Center with her mother

⁹⁸ The studio portrait of Bridget "Biddy" Mason can be found online at UCLA's Digital Library Collection, <https://digital.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/z1ht469v>.

⁹⁹ Legend for *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* by Barbara Carrasco, The Getty Foundation, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA Latin American & Latino Art in LA, 2017. See numbers 21, 17, and 20.

during World War II.¹⁰⁰ The most disturbing and melancholic historical “truths,” such as the Japanese internment camps or the depiction of “calle de los negros,” the site of the lynching of twenty Chinese residents of Los Angeles in 1890, are situated next to joyful moments like the first automobile, signifying a collective memory of positive and negative experiences. The organic framework of the “Queen of Angels” hair interweaved these ethnic communities together to remind viewers of the hidden and unjust histories that established the city’s past, but with a vision of hope for the future.

Carrasco’s *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective* was displayed in two traveling exhibitions, but only in sections and not in its entirety. In 1987-88, the exhibition *L.A. Hot and Cool: The Eighties* at the MIT List Visual Art Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, featured one-third of the mural. The panels portraying controversial scenes, including the whitewashing of Siqueiros’s mural, the Japanese internment camp, and the group portrait, were installed inside the gallery.¹⁰¹ In October 1988, Carrasco was invited to show half of the mural at the exhibition *Agit/Pop* at the Otis/Parsons Art Gallery curated by Robbie Conal in Los Angeles. These exhibitions of selected panels introduced audiences to the mural but missed the opportunity to understand its complete story. The mural would reappear only for a short period of time, and the opportunity to show the mural to its intended audience, the Mexican American, Chicana/o/x, and Latina/o/x community, was delayed once again.

On September 2, 1990, the entire mural was displayed to the public at the inauguration of the Los Angeles Festival at Union Station. Greg Braxton, staff writer for the *L.A. Times*, stated

¹⁰⁰ Clem Albers’s photograph titled “A young evacuee of Japanese ancestry waits with the family baggage before leaving by bus for an assembly center in the spring of 1942,” was produced in April 1942, and is accessible online in the National Archives and Records Digital Catalog, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/539959>.

¹⁰¹ See the MIT List Visual Art Center’s digital archive and photographs of the gallery space, image 2 of 7, archival slide. <https://listart.mit.edu/exhibitions/la-hot-cool-eighties>.

“more than five hundred turned out Sunday at Union Station” for the unveiling of Barbara Carrasco’s mural.¹⁰² The L.A. Festival inauguration pamphlet stated that the mural was an “essential component” of the “visual arts program, which is a testament to our city’s rich cultural diversity.”¹⁰³ Afterward, the panels were placed in storage and would not resurface until 2017 for the exhibition *¡Murales Rebeldes! L.A. Chicana/o Murals Under Siege* at La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, part of the Pacific Standard Time L.A. / L.A. exhibitions sponsored by The Getty.

In the 1990 L.A. Festival and the 2017 Getty exhibition at La Plaza de Cultura y Artes the mural was showcased in its entirety inside the historic ticketing hall at L.A. Union Station. Its splendor was revived after the panels re-emerged and were placed within the grand historic train station. Afterward, the panels were hidden and placed in storage without a permanent location and no access to viewers. The mural was acquired by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles and on November 17, 2024, the museum opened the Commons Wing and Welcome Center which permanently houses the mural. During the opening of the Commons building, Barbara Carrasco and Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union, were present and discussed their experiences saving the mural. Huerta explained the mural was in “hiding” for ten years and that they had to “kidnap the mural” because it was at risk of erasure. Huerta also described the mural’s existence as a “story of survival” because “they wanted to destroy it” and she was convinced that it would have been whitewashed or destroyed by the

¹⁰² Greg Braxton, “3rd day of fest a high note, crowds grow and mood is upbeat,” *Los Angeles Times*, Tuesday, September 4, 1990, B7.

¹⁰³ Unknown author. Pamphlet titled “Barbara Carrasco: L.A. History — A Mexican Perspective,” Los Angeles Festival, September 2, 1990. Per Goldman, “Installation 9/2/90 – Union Station L.A. Festival.” UC Santa Barbara, Special Collections Library, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, box 28, folder 4. This installation was sponsored by the California Community Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Paramount Pictures, East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU), and the Catellus Development Corporation.

CRA.¹⁰⁴ Carrasco's Chicana re-vision of L.A. history persisted despite the constant threat of erasure, and in this determination the message of revival, truth, and empowerment continues the legacy of the people, of every Angelino/a/x past and present.

Judith F. Baca's *Angel of Guadalupe: Dreams of the Future* (1990)

Judith F. Baca's monumental murals in Los Angeles have been written about extensively and are the topic of many publications. Scholars like Anna Indych-López and Guisela Latorre, whose research sparked my interest in the history of muralism in the Americas, also offer comprehensive content on Baca's artistic career. My analysis focuses on Baca's portable murals produced after the 1970s-80s and highlights the Guadalupe Murals Project as an important contribution to the Chicana/o mural movement because of Baca's commitment to community-based public art. Scholars prior to this study often overlooked Baca's murals dedicated to local history in rural towns like Guadalupe. This analysis interprets Baca's portable murals in Guadalupe as mobile messages of hope and prosperity celebrating the land, Native American peoples, and multi-ethnic groups that have inhabited the region for generations. In 2021 and 2024, I conducted field research with the intention to document the landscape while traveling from Los Angeles to Guadalupe. Driving through the agricultural fields reminded me of my hometown of Watsonville, with large stretches of land going on for miles reaching the ocean on the outskirts of town. The Guadalupe murals consist of four large panels that are currently displayed outdoors in the archway corridors of Guadalupe City Hall, accessible to the public

¹⁰⁴ Barbara Carrasco and Dolores Huerta, interview by Dr. William Estrada at the NHM Commons Theater, Natural History Museum Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, November 17, 2024. The audio is not published.

year-round.¹⁰⁵ There are tourist attractions, such as local wineries, La Simpatia Café, small museums, and other historical and contemporary murals.

The Santa Barbara Arts Commission contracted photographer Rod Rolle in 1988 to document the City of Guadalupe, located on the border between Santa Barbara County and San Luis Obispo County, twenty-minutes outside the city of Santa Maria. In 1988-1989, Judith F. Baca was hired to create moveable murals that reflected the history of Guadalupe. This commission was named the Guadalupe Murals Project with Baca and Rolle as the participating lead artists, including artist assistant Joe Rodriguez and local high school students Alex Pereya and Gabriel Estabillo. These artists, along with other temporary international artists referenced as Greg and Yoko, collaborated to paint four portable murals, each measuring 8 feet by 7 feet, using acrylic paint on plywood.¹⁰⁶ The first two panels are representative of the ancient and modern past with Indigenous inhabitants, Spanish settlers, and the establishment of the town of Guadalupe, with the help of a diverse ethnic population contributing to the region. Rolle's photograph shows Baca and artist assistants Greg and Yoko in front of the panels *The Founders of Guadalupe* and *Ethnic Contributions* (Figure 11).¹⁰⁷ The photograph captured a charming

¹⁰⁵ The murals are still intact with some minor cracks and stains on the surface. The panels do need cleaning and restoration. The City of Guadalupe promotes the murals on their Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/explore/locations/1030200266/guadalupe-city-hall/>.

¹⁰⁶ The Guadalupe Mural Project team included local high school students Alex Pereya and Gabriel Estabillo, who were recruited by the Upward Bound program in California public schools. See *Outrageous Women* hosted by Jaqueline Taylor, with guests Judy Baca, Joe Rodriguez, Alex Pereya, and Gabriel Estabillo. March 27, 1989. KCSB UC Santa Barbara. 56 min. 37 sec. UC Santa Barbara, Special Collections, Sojourner Kincaid Rolle Papers. https://archive.org/details/cusb_000158. Also, the names of Greg and Yoko were mentioned by Judith F. Baca, email correspondence with Pilar Castillo and author, Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), March 2025. This content is not published.

¹⁰⁷ Judith F. Baca, email correspondence with Pilar Castillo and author, Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), March 2025. This content is not published. Baca could not remember their last names but also mentioned that Greg was from Russia and Yoko from Japan, and both were "great assistants." See also Rod Rolle's photo gallery "Spirit of Community," <https://rodrolle.photoshelter.com/gallery/Spirit-of-Community/G0000ve9fGufjEhI/C0000QOjp2wEQtT8>.

moment when the artists turn to face the photographer, who is part of the team, smiling and playfully posing for the camera.

Baca would conduct several visits to Guadalupe and eventually stayed in the Druid Temple on Main Street as her headquarters. After six weeks, she organized a town meeting and used the building as a meeting place for the public to contribute to the project by bringing photographs or other ephemera documenting the history of the town. According to Suzanne Lacy, Baca was called their “muralist” and during her visits she reviewed the “social and physical territory of the town,” and engaged in conversation with local farmworkers, the mayor, the church, the postmistress, and young people. Community members would bring their personal photographs of family members showing their ancestry and deep-rooted connection to the town. Over time, the wall was filled with historic photographs displaying a visual timeline of the town’s chronology. A “collective of images” emerged during the conceptual phase of the Guadalupe murals project, which included the experiences of “local teenagers” who were hired by Baca to help clean up the Druid Temple, as well as organize the archival materials gathered to create the timeline.¹⁰⁸

During the town meeting, different factions of Guadalupe’s community members presented five-minute speeches and talked about the challenges they had faced, including their concerns about their social economic status, the environment, and water conservation, and the marginalization they experienced every day. They also discussed a list of what Lacy described as the “common hopes for the future,” for the people of the small town.¹⁰⁹ Thus, family albums and

¹⁰⁸ Suzanne Lacy, “Interlinked Narratives (If There Was No Mural, This Would Still Be Art),” featured in the information booklet titled “World Wall: A Vision of the Future Without Fear, A Traveling Mural Installation” (Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) circa 1990-1991), 11-12. A copy was examined by the author in June 2023 in the Archives of American Art, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965 – 2004, box 2, folder titled “Baca, Judith” and “World Wall” circa 1991.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

oral histories were the inspiration for the imagery of each panel. The ghosts of Native American, Chinese, Portuguese, Filipino, Caucasian or Anglo, and Mexican immigrants to the town of Guadalupe are memorialized, starting with the first panel dedicated to the founders. The second and third panels commemorate the “ethnic contributions” of Asian, Mexican, and other groups who traveled to the area to work the land as farmworkers or ranchers.¹¹⁰

The final panel in the series, titled *The Future of Guadalupe* or *Angel of Guadalupe: Dreams of the Future*, illustrated the dreams and memories of the people (Figure 12). Baca’s reimagining of the angelic memorial sculpture became a symbol of the dreams and goals that the community was determined to achieve. The portrayal of three angel memorials referred to the sculptures found at the Guadalupe Cemetery, conveying the nostalgia and familiarity of these local installations. One of the three seraphim sculptures extend from the ground towering over the smaller memorials and tombstones, dominating the center of the composition. This sculptural figure’s facial expression contains no welcoming smile; instead, the angel greets audiences with a solemn gaze. The angel’s light brown eyes convey a long patient stare addressing the audience with a gesture of offering water from a floral symbol pinned to her sash. The burial site below the angelic sculptural figure created a sense of depth, demonstrating Baca’s interpretation of Siqueiros’s polyangular perspective and dynamic realism. Indyck-López explained the use of these techniques in developing *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* (1976-1984) as a strategy to engage the viewer and to communicate “historical ruptures and disjunctures.” Baca’s use of Siqueiros’s technique of polyangular perspective was described by Indyck-López as “play,” an example of the artist experimenting with “spatial representation” that “bolsters the ebb and flow

¹¹⁰ The four panels are titled: *The Founders of Guadalupe*, *The Farmworkers of Guadalupe*, *Ethnic Contributions*, and *The Future of Guadalupe* or *Angel of Guadalupe: Dreams of the Future* finished in 1990. See also Judith F. Baca’s website, <https://www.judybaca.com/guadalupefounders/>.

of histories and identities as contingent and provisional.”¹¹¹ Baca’s visual dynamism is represented by the depiction of the angelic sculpture drawn with multiple wings to convey movement.

Baca’s dynamism is also represented in the rotating water circling the angel sculpture and the woman farmworker, creating a spiral environment comprised of water and land continually in motion like a spinning disk. These stylistic features created a tilted horizon-line where the gravesite and the expanded wings of the angel also correspond with the motion of the rotating fields and houses. Meanwhile, the dark colored mountains are static in the background, and the foreground is arranged on an elliptical plane with the furthest line of sight painted as a bright blue colored beam illuminating the horizon. These techniques elaborate upon Siqueiros’s idea of spatial dynamism and polyangular perspective to visualize movement and drama. Baca’s portable mural depicted cinematic compositions and dramatic characters, echoing techniques introduced by the Mexican school of muralism that Siqueiros, as well as Rivera and Orozco, developed in their own unique way by incorporating a dynamic image and narrative.

Siqueiros also developed what Baca described as the “punto system” or a “musical ratio” to balance and create a compelling narrative and composition. Baca explained in an interview with Amalia Mesa-Bains the “post ‘77” shift in her work:

Well, in 1977, I learned about the Siqueiros’ concept of the musical ratio — of harmonious musical ratio of composition — and his division of space — which is on a ratio basically of three to five. And how you can make an underlying structure for a mural in which any directional line that falls through a form will hit a point that is in a mathematical ratio one to another, and that if you at these points as they fall on a rectangle, say, a golden rectangle.” Mesa-Bains responded with “the golden,” then Baca responded, “he doesn’t use golden section ratio. It’s a skew,” both agreed that Siqueiros’s approach was “different” and his own. Baca continued, “it’s more asymmetric, more dynamic. And these points which fall on the edges of your rectangle have a relationship one to each other, that comes into

¹¹¹ Anna Indych-López, “Looking Back,” in *Judith F. Baca, A Ver: Revisioning Art History*, vol. 11 (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2018), 116-117.

a ratio, which can be likened to musical time. And you can change them — as I have done on The Great Wall.¹¹²

This sense of depth and perspective is exemplified by the angelic sculpture extending to the center connecting to the woman farmworker, both static figures amongst the spiral landscape. Baca's re-vision of history evoked an emotional connection to the movement of time symbolized by the wings of the angelic sculpture in flight and the circular motion below it. This surreal quality of the image contributed to the perception of an imaginary or magical environment where the dreams of the people are suspended within the translucent wings; meanwhile, the farmworker and the dilapidated houses exist within a never-ending cycle of toil and poverty. Critics and artists prior to this study have written about Baca's murals as illusions or fantasies conjuring a "magical realist" interpretation.

Bill Beeson's 1995 article titled "Murals: The art of painting a pretty wall," in the newspaper *San Luis Obispo County Telegram-Tribune*, described Baca's final panel as "magic realism," where an "angel floats aloft, blessing all below." In addition, Beeson discussed that the "colorful blend of folklore, fantasy, and fact" resembled the "magic realism" of "Like Water for Chocolate." Beeson explained that the Santa Barbara Art Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts contracted Baca to "vividly trace the region's history, its agrarian culture as well as its days as a setting for grandiose Hollywood epics amid the nearby dunes."¹¹³ The town of Guadalupe is also known for its local sand dunes which have been used as a filming location for several Hollywood movies, including the famous silent film *The Ten Commandments* (1923) directed by Cecil B. DeMille. This local history is illustrated in the

¹¹² Judith F. Baca, Interviewed by Amalia Mesa-Bains, August 5-6, 1986, Venice, California. Smithsonian Archives of American Art, 28-29. Baca's attendance at La Tallera was for six-months in 1977.

¹¹³ Bill Beeson, "Murals: The art of painting a pretty wall," *San Luis Obispo County Telegram-Tribune*, March 16, 1995, 14.

background of the panel *Ethnic Contributions* and contributes to the idea of “magical realism.” Beeson’s comparison to the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* written by Laura Esquivel, also made into a popular film in Mexico and the U.S. during the early 1990s, further romanticized Baca’s imagery to fit Hollywood nostalgia.

Suzanne Lacy also contributed to this interpretation by stating that the image conveyed an “improbable but engaging dream.”¹¹⁴ Lacy’s response interprets Baca’s imagery as non-political and conceptual but still evoking a “socio-aesthetic” intention by representing the people’s hopes for the future. Beeson and Lacy did not understand Baca’s intentions to portray imagery that countered the preconceived stereotypes surrounding the people and the town. The town was perceived to be what Lacy described as a “crime-ridden environment” that needed another source of revenue outside of the agricultural business. Lacy mentioned that a historical archive consisting of “six thousand slides” alongside the murals could become a “pilgrimage site” or an “homage to the labor or people who feed us all.”¹¹⁵ The importance of preserving local history is proven by these actions, but having access to this information and content was the priority. By 1989, community members took action to preserve the collection of photographs, newspaper clippings, maps, and other ephemera on the history of the town and established the Rancho de Guadalupe Historical Society located downtown in the Veterans’ Memorial building. During this time, the murals were displayed for a short period at the Leroy Park Community Center then moved to the Channing Peake Gallery of the Santa Barbara Arts Commission located in Santa Barbara.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Lacy, 13.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁶ Unknown author, “Guadalupe murals on display; funds sought,” *Santa Maria Times* April 9, 1990, 1. “Park visitors will be able to enjoy not only the additional facilities, but also a mural depicting both the history of Guadalupe and its hopes for the future. The mural will be displayed from now until July in the Channing Peake

In an interview with Jacqueline Taylor for the show *Outrageous Women*, Baca included a pre-recorded segment that explained the model of the structure called a “colonnade.” Baca explained,

This is a kind of a rough plan for how these murals will be setup. As you arrive at the park, you will see these color panels and through them you will see the actually painted murals. You will come in through the colonnade, which is about ten-feet wide, there is an alternate space of a framed landscape and then completed mural, framed landscape and then completed mural... So that when you arrive at the center, you have come through all of the history and the future plans for Guadalupe. There are some plans for some work, additional work with an architect to make this work. But essentially, it is innovative in that the murals are not placed on architecture, they create their own architecture.¹¹⁷

This segment provided an opportunity to realize Baca’s intention to place the murals outdoors within the space of the colonnade. Baca’s concept of the murals displayed within the colonnade was to engage with each panel as “their own architecture,” framed within the landscape. The murals were intended to be seen in public spaces while audiences also admired the natural environment framed by the colonnade. Unfortunately, the colonnade was not built due to low funds, and the murals have been situated at Guadalupe City Hall since September 1991. By 2010, the murals were restored and permanently installed outside on the walls of the archways of City Hall.¹¹⁸

Gallery of the Santa Barbara Arts Commission as part of a show called Art in the Public Interest: Santa Barbara County’s Public Art Collection.”

¹¹⁷ Judith F. Baca’s segment (9 minutes into the video) in the program *Outrageous Women* hosted by Jaqueline Taylor, with guests Judy Baca, Joe Rodriguez, Alex Pereya, and Gabriel Estabillo. March 27, 1989. KCSB UC Santa Barbara. 56 min. 37 sec. UC Santa Barbara, Special Collections, Sojourner Kincaid Rolle Papers. https://archive.org/details/cusb_000158.

¹¹⁸ Unknown author, announcement titled “What we ’ear,” written by an unknown writer for the *Santa Maria Times* September 3, 1991, 2. “Guadalupe City Hall will be the temporary home of murals of the city’s past. Due to the renovation project of the community center at LeRoy Park, the murals had to find a new home, at least for awhile. The walls of City Hall are where the murals will hang for approximately a year. The murals will hang on outside walls, including the one outside the council chambers, for all to enjoy.” The current placement of the four panels shows the two panels *The Founders of Guadalupe* and *Ethnic Contributions* on the left-hand side of City Hall. Meanwhile, the final panels *The Farmworkers of Guadalupe* and *The Future of Guadalupe* are located on the opposite end.

Baca's final panel, titled *The Future of Guadalupe or Angel of Guadalupe: Dreams of the Future*, manifested the people's vision for the future, conveyed as accessible healthcare, housing, protection of the natural resources, and honoring the farmworkers and the Indigenous and Native peoples who originally cultivated the land. Moreover, the portrayal of a woman farmworker carrying her child while picking the fields created an homage to the ancestral and current generations who labored on the land. Baca's cyclical dynamism represented by the rotating water decanted from the angel's sash and floral symbol conjured the memory of the people and their demands for a better life as an eternal outpouring of hope. Baca's Guadalupe murals echo the call of the Chicana/o art movement, to create artworks for the local neighborhood while portraying the community itself as part of the imagery, context, and place.

Chapter Two

“La Cultura Cura”: Cultural Healing as Renewal and Remembrance of Local History in Watsonville, San José, Santa Clara, and San Francisco

Women began to be active in muralism by 1970, when Baca (later recognized nationally for the Great Wall of Los Angeles project) began to work on walls with teams of young gang members from East Los Angeles. By 1974, women became active as muralists in the San Francisco Bay area with the organization of the Mujeres Muralistas, a team including three Chicanas and a Venezuelan woman. The great surge of women artists, however, corresponded with the “privatization” of Chicano art in the later seventies — which itself corresponded to a diminution of the intense activism of earlier years.¹¹⁹

Shifra M. Goldman, 1988.

Chapter Two discusses Patricia Rodríguez’s *Goddess Tlazolteotl* (1982), Juana Alicia’s *Regeneración* (1991), and Carmen León’s *La Cultura Cura* (2020) as re-visions of history representing the themes of renewal and remembrance from the rural town of Watsonville to the cities of San José, Santa Clara, and San Francisco (Figs. 3, 7, and 14).¹²⁰ This analysis identifies these portable murals as part of the Chicana/o art movement’s call for affirmation and self-representation but now articulated without patriarchal and political imagery. In honor of Patricia Rodríguez, this chapter recognizes these women artists as educators, activists, and muralists that positively impacted the local Chicano art movement throughout the region of northern and central California. These women artists also taught courses or workshops at regional universities

¹¹⁹ Shifra M. Goldman, “Portraying Ourselves: Contemporary Chicana Artists” in *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 202.

¹²⁰ Other women artists such as artists Irene Pérez, Ester Hernández, Graciela Carrillo, Xochitl Nevel-Guerrero, Consuelo Méndez, Susan Kelk Cervantes, Miranda Bergman, Yolanda M. López, Smokie Arce, the artists mentioned in this chapter, and others, merit further research. In addition, Chicano artists from the San Francisco Bay Area and central coast such as Eduardo Carrillo, Guillermo “Yermo” Aranda, Juan R. Fuentes, and Jesús “Chuy” Campusano are notable artists in the San Francisco region that must be written about.

like UC Santa Cruz, Stanford, and UC Berkeley as well as at community cultural centers in rural locations as part of their outreach. This connection with schools, universities, and community centers provided each artist the opportunity to produce public art in underrepresented neighborhoods that uplifted these communities.

Chicana/o murals during the late 1960s-1970s were filled with imagery that valorized Mexican and Chicano historical figures and conformed to a Chicano nationalist brotherhood of heroes and revolutionaries with minimal representation of women as heroines or activists. Amalia Mesa-Bains explained the “political expectations” as an aesthetic imposed by some Chicano artists onto women artists.¹²¹ By the 1980s-1990s, Goldman mentioned the “privatization” of Chicana/o art and the changes in these patriarchal and nationalist aesthetics led by women artists and muralists. For instance, the Mujeres Muralistas produced murals in San Francisco that visualized the Chicana/o art and mural movement’s call for social and political justice through dreams and homegrown landscapes. Patricia Rodríguez, co-founder of Mujeres Muralistas, explained that the response from some Chicano artists was “well, it’s cute but it doesn’t say very much,” to which she replied, “not everything has to be political.” She described that the purpose of her artwork was to express emotion and not to be so “dogmatic.”¹²² Rodríguez as well as Juana Alicia and Carmen León drew inspiration from their dreams, local history, and goddess or mother figures that conjured cultural healing or the idea that “la cultura cura” to revive the energy of public art as a communal experience for everyone, at all stages in life.

¹²¹ Amalia Mesa-Bains, “Quest for Identity: Profile of Two Chicana Muralists Based on Interviews with Judith F. Baca and Patricia Rodríguez,” in *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* (Venice: Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) and Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 74.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 74-75. Rodríguez stated, “well, not everything has to be political. There’s other things that one can say, especially as an artist, I mean it’s in an artist’s creed to express how they feel... I never believed that you had to be so dogmatic, in fact, I resented it. But I went along with it because I was very much involved with the group.”

My analysis recovers but also affirms these local histories as an integral part of each artist's Chicana/x and Latina/x re-vision of the past and envision a regenerative future after the COVID-19 pandemic. These murals displayed the enlarged image of the ancient Indigenous Nahua goddess Tlazolteotl Ixcuina, a female figure that resembles the Virgin Mary or Our Lady of Guadalupe, and an anonymous Ohlone woman as embodiments of death, remembrance, and renewal. Each artist envisioned their own decolonial imaginary evoking the phrase "la cultura cura," meaning culture and art promotes healing and repair. On Day of the Dead, November 2, 2021 — after the COVID-19 pandemic closures were lifted — I returned to my hometown of Watsonville to view the exhibition *Mi Casa es Tu Casa: History, Loss, Healing* at the Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery. Carmen León's mural *La Cultura Cura* (Fig. 14) appeared like an apparition after a devastating year. Ever since that moment the image has resonated with me as a reminder to return to cultural healing as a remedy to repair the wounds of the past.

In Rodríguez's *Goddess Tlazolteotl* (Fig. 3) her surrealist reimagining of the Aztec deity known as the eater of humanity's filth brought attention to the civil unrest in El Salvador but also signaled sacrifice and renewal. Her Chicana/x re-vision recontextualized Tlazolteotl Ixcuina's regenerative power to show an offering of flesh and blood in exchange for the continuation of life. Juana Alicia's *Regeneración* (Fig. 7) pictured an Ohlone woman sowing the earth to evoke the continuity of Native American presence but also to mourn the generational loss of Ohlone peoples in San José and Santa Clara. This is shown as a process of death and regeneration with the portrayal of skeletal remains underneath the foundation of both cities. These scenes honor the ancestors through song, poetry, and the next generation. Through cultural healing, Ohlone as well as Mexican American and Chicana/o/x people of the region sustain their ancestral ties to the land through creativity and memory.

Patricia Rodríguez's *Goddess Tlazolteotl* (1982)

Patricia Rodríguez is the co-founder of Mujeres Muralistas alongside Irene Pérez, Consuelo Méndez, and Graciela Carrillo. They are known to be the first all women muralist group in the San Francisco Bay Area to paint murals in the city beginning in 1973-1974.¹²³ Rodríguez and Carrillo began painting murals on the facades of garages, fences, and the local businesses of the Mission District but were initially unrecognized. Per María Ochoa, the name of Mujeres Muralistas emerged from the experience of painting a mural; a spectator walked by and asked who they were, and their reply was “somos mujeres muralistas,” meaning we are women muralists.¹²⁴ The impact of viewing young women painting murals outdoors in public generated attention but also proved to Rodríguez the power of their presence as artists and muralists. The group was also described by Victoria Quintero as representing “different cultures,” all of them representing “La Raza cultures.”¹²⁵ Quintero’s article in the local newspaper *El Tecolote* introduced the Mujeres Muralistas as a combination of Venezolanas and Chicanas collaborating and designing murals with a “common feeling” expressing life with vibrant colors and beautiful landscapes.

¹²³ Patricia Rodríguez and Graciela Carrillo began painting on garage doors and fences as early as 1972 in Balmy Alley. However, these mural projects were not completed under the group name. For example, Rodríguez and Carrillo completed an untitled mural in 1972 featuring a botanical landscape on the exterior of a garage and side of the house/building. <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/MM2021.345/>. Per Rodríguez, Mujeres Muralistas was formed in 1973. <https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/796023#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-628%2C0%2C4555%2C2549>.

¹²⁴ María Ochoa, “Movements: Departures, Delays, Arrivals,” in *Creative Collectives: Chicana Painters Working in Community* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 23.

¹²⁵ Victoria Quintero, “A Mural is a Painting on a Wall done by Human Hands,” *El Tecolote* (San Francisco, CA), vol. 5, no. 1, September 13, 1974, 6. Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965 – 2004, box 20.

Irene Pérez, co-founder of the Mujeres Muralistas, expressed that their murals differed from the Mexican muralists not only because of their non-political imagery but also due to the absence of painting “blood and guts.” Pérez explained,

A lot of people have told us that our work is pretty and colorful, but that it is not political enough. They ask us why we don’t represent the starvation and death going on in Latin America or even the oppression of women... our interest as artists is to put art close to where it needs to be. Close to the children, close to the old people who often wander the streets alone.¹²⁶

Thus, the Mujeres Muralistas were creating public art that spoke to the children and elders of the Mission District without overt political-social themes or patriarchal Mexican historical figures. Instead, the community engaged with imagery that celebrated the multicultural experience of their diversity. Their motivation was the people, the streets, and alleyways of San Francisco. The group illustrated colorful narratives filled with bountiful environments and cultural references from various Latin American countries where the next generation could visualize themselves living in a world without violence.¹²⁷

In 1975, Rodríguez and Graciela Carillo studied fine arts and received their master’s degrees at Sacramento State University. By then, the collective was no longer acquiring commissions to produce murals and the group soon dissolved. Shortly afterward, Rodríguez was invited to teach at UC Berkeley in the Chicano Studies Department and taught one of the first courses on Chicano art history.¹²⁸ In 1982, Rodríguez participated in the exhibition *In Process*,

¹²⁶ Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 187.

¹²⁷ Cary Cordova, “Hombres y Mujeres Muralistas on a Mission: Painting Latino Identities in 1970s San Francisco,” in *Latino Studies* no. 4 (2006): 366. Their most notable mural, *Latino America*, finished in 1974, was commissioned and funded by the Mission Model Cities Program. Chicana artists Ester Hernández, Ruth “Tuti” Rodríguez, Xochitl Nevel-Guerrero, and Miriam Olivas also participated in painting the mural as artist assistants. Cordova described this mural as a “bicultural vision” expressing how “Latinos in the United States are reinventing America as a nation, as well as articulating a larger kinship to the Américas.”

¹²⁸ Rodríguez, “Mujeres Muralistas” in *Ten Years That Shook the City: San Francisco 1968-1978*, ed. Chris Carlsson (San Francisco: City Lights Foundation Books, 2011), 89-90. Rodríguez explained, “the Mission District

In Progress at the Galería de la Raza in San Francisco's Mission District. Tim Drescher described the exhibition as capturing a unique "non-alienated artistic experience" where the artists and the community were integral to the process of creating public art.¹²⁹ Curator René Yañez explained this exhibition as a rare opportunity where artists were able to talk to each other "while they worked," but also "watch other's techniques and ask about the properties of unfamiliar paints, new problems with perspective, general concepts of their work"; additionally, "people dropped in on a daily basis" engaging in conversation with the artists. It was also about the chance to "be there" to perhaps influence the finished result of the artists' painting which was described by Yañez as part of the "process." He concluded, "what remains is for the finished works to be seen and responded to, and as the expressions that are displayed before you represent a variety of viewpoints, so an even wider variety of responses is to be expected."¹³⁰

Ella M. Diaz explained that Yañez was inspired by the Mexican muralists and the idea of bringing the "pueblo or populist principles of art making into the design of *In Progress*," which

community was changing rapidly and inner-city monies that funded our murals were beginning to dry up so there were fewer mural projects. Requests for murals from the Mujeres Muralistas group were disappearing too. We all began to do other things, and this pulled us further apart because we no longer agree on politics or painting strategies." See also Rodríguez, "Course Description – Chicano Studies 130," Chicano Studies Program, Fall 1977, UC Berkeley, p. 1. Smithsonian Archives of American Art in the Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965-2002, box 7, folder 29. According to Rodríguez, "In 1975, I was invited to teach an art course at the University of California, Berkeley's Chicano Studies Program. I created a Chicano Cultura Center, developed a Chicano art history course, conducted research, and put together an art reader for the course." Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965-2002, box 24, folder 34.

¹²⁹ Tim Drescher, *Progress in Process* (San Francisco: La Raza Graphics Center, 1982), 7. Catalog for the exhibition "In Progress, In Process," curated by René Yañez. Photo credits: Tim Drescher, Yolanda M. López, and Fred Gonzalez. Design and Layout: Herbert Sigüenza, Cecilia Brunazzi, Emmanuel Montoya. Archives of American Art, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965 – 2004, box 11. Patricia Rodríguez's course titled "Introduction to Chicano Art" for Chicano Studies 130, UC Berkeley, fall of 1979. This course reader was examined twice in two separate archives; one original copy is located at the Ethnic Studies Library at UC Berkeley and the other at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto Research Material on Chicano Art, 1965-2004, box 7.

¹³⁰ René Yañez, "In Progress 1982," announcement and letter sent to Tomás Ybarra-Frausto prior to the exhibition opening along with a copy of the catalog. Archives of American Art, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965 – 2004. Box 11.

was the practice of producing moveable murals “in front of an audience.”¹³¹ The panels were intended to be viewed as individual murals but also part of a collective mural exhibition. Artists experimented with Politec or Liquitex acrylic paint and used large wood panels measuring 4 feet by 6 feet as their medium.¹³² This exhibition revitalized the approach of mural making by elevating these materials with the intention of bringing the viewer into the process. Rodríguez’s process was documented in two color photographs taken during the early and final stages of painting the mural.

The first photograph presented that artist in front of the unfinished mural while painting the first layers of the composition with the image of the Nahua deity Tlazolteotl Ixcuina emerging from the background (Figure 1). This image also shows the artist’s exaggerated brushstrokes of cool and warm colors layered with blue tones and small red tassels or arrows radiating toward the central figure. The goddess’s stomach and the moon are illustrated first, demonstrating her prioritization in painting the collage of smaller images in the center. The second color photograph captured Rodríguez’s amiable smile and gaze toward the camera as she paused painting (Figure 2). This photograph showed more of her progress as she holds a palette filled with yellow, orange, and red colors that accentuate the goddess and moon.

Rodríguez’s mural *Goddess Tlazolteotl* is a Chicana re-vision of Tlazolteotl-Ixcuina conveyed as a reimagined character wearing flayed human skin with an exoskeletal armor, a staff

¹³¹ Ella M. Diaz, “Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts: Recovering a Conceptual Mission Mural,” *Proyecto Mission Murals*, September 2022. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, <https://www.sfmoma.org/essay/greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts-recovering-a-conceptual-mission-mural/>. Diaz explained, “Rivera’s murals were certainly well known to Yañez, as well as members of MALA-F and the In Progress artists.” Rene Yañez was a founding member of a “vanguard Chicano art collective” called the Mexican American Liberation Art Front (MALA-F).

¹³² Liquitex was the first company to produce water-based polymer paints in 1955 developed by Henry Levison, based out of the U.S. <https://www.liquitex.com/pages/our-story-since-1955>. The Politec brand emerged later in 1956 produced by José L. Gutiérrez in Mexico and was part of the experimental workshop led by David A. Siqueiros in New York City during the 1930s. <https://books.rsc.org/books/edited-volume/819/chapter-abstract/432533/Painting-with-Acrylics-Jose-Gutierrez-Gunther>.

or broom with flaming ends, and an exposed heart (Figure 3). Drescher noted that the image contained “surrealist aspects” that were seen as “stylistic conventions” influenced by the artist’s dreams. This representation of the Nahua goddess was described by the artist as “a mythical image we all have in our subconscious.”¹³³ Rodríguez’s reimagining of the Indigenous Mesoamerican deity also demonstrated her deep understanding of the mythos and knowledge of this deity’s symbolism. Diaz explained that the artist “merged her knowledge of Surrealism with political events and crimes against humanity happening in El Salvador,” resulting in a visual commentary connecting the injustices of the colonial past to the modern present.¹³⁴ The torso consists of an exoskeleton frame surrounding the stomach which is designed as a collage of images from the Spanish colonial period to the modern era showing the civil war in El Salvador (Figure 4). This consumption of humanity’s wrongdoings conjured the theme of renewal and procreation because the mythos and history about this Nahua goddess refer to her power to heal by eating filth. Drescher explained that the image was “appropriate” because “this is the goddess who cleanses by eating all evil and sin.”¹³⁵ Rodríguez’s portrayal of specific characteristics and symbols connected to the original content from colonial and pre-Columbian sources suggest the artist had a deeper understanding of Indigenous Mesoamerican history.

The goddess Tlazolteotl Ixcuina is depicted in several primary sources including the sixteenth-century Aztec manuscript *The Codex Borbonicus*, particularly page thirteen signaling the thirteenth trecena of the 260-day divinatory calendar. In Bernardino de Sahagún’s *The Florentine Codex* the goddess is shown standing with a broom in hand and the 19th-century

¹³³ Drescher, “The Pieces,” in *Progress in Process* (San Francisco: La Raza Graphics Center, 1982), 18-19. Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965 – 2004, box 11.

¹³⁴ Ella M. Diaz, *Proyecto Mission Murals*, 2022.

¹³⁵ Drescher, *Progress in Process*, 18-19. Photo credits: Tim Drescher, Yolanda M. López, and Fred Gonzalez. Design and Layout: Herbert Sigüenza, Cecilia Brunazzi, Emmanuel Montoya.

sculpture in the Dumbarton Oaks Pre-Columbian Collection titled “Birthing Figure” depicts her giving birth.¹³⁶ The Aztecs viewed Tlazolteotl Ixcuina as a deity of midwives, fertility, purification, filth, renewal, and the mother of the deity of maize Cinteotl. She is also considered the “goddess of filth” and “goddess of lust,” because of her connection to sexuality, promiscuity, and pollination.¹³⁷ She has also been linked to another Mesoamerican goddess named Toci or “Great Mother.” After colonization and forced evangelization of Indigenous peoples Toci as Tlazolteotl was connected to St. Anne, a phenomenon explained by Charlene Villaseñor Black as constituting the “grandmother archetype” in Mexican culture.¹³⁸ The name Ixcuina or Ixcuinan, the Huastec term for “deity of cotton,” was symbolized by the “spools of cotton” referring to unspun cotton displayed on her headdress. This symbol is a key characteristic of Tlazolteotl Ixcuina’s connection to midwifery and procreation. Rodríguez’s image does not include the unspun cotton spools but the symbol of a grass broom for sweeping referencing Tlazolteotl

¹³⁶ The Birthing Figure is identified as an “Aztec style” sculpture at Dumbarton Oaks Museum, produced in the 19th century: <http://museum.doaks.org/objects-1/info/23088>. The sculpture has characteristics that “critics assert” provides evidence that the work may potentially be a forgery. Dumbarton Oaks Archives, June 2017, noted that “skeptics point out” that the sculpture “appeals too strongly to contemporary tastes, suggesting that it was crafted as late as the nineteenth century in the Aztec style. Moreover, the carving technique used to fashion the sculpture appears through microscopic analysis to be decidedly post-Columbian rather than pre-Columbian.” <https://www.doaks.org/newsletter/news-archives/2016/the-birthing-figure-in-the-robert-woods-bliss-collection-of-pre-columbian-art>.

¹³⁷ Cecelia F. Klein, “Teocuitlatl, “Divine Excrement,” The Significance of “Holy Shit” in Ancient Mexico,” *Art Journal* vol. 52, no. 3, Scatological Art (Fall 1993), 21-22. Tlazolteotl could also read as “Divine Filth,” as well as “Divine Excrement,” and was also called “Tlaeluaní” as noted by Sahagún because she “heard all confessions and she removed corruption.” Klein explained that the “excrement embodied the cause of an individual’s bad health and potential demise but also constituted the means to prevent or cure them.” See also Helen Burgos-Ellis’s chapter titled “Pollen: The Sexual Life of Plants in Mesoamerica,” in *Natural Things in Early Modern Worlds*, edited by Mackenzie Cooley, Anna Toledano, and Duygu Yildirim (New York: Routledge 2023), 39-41. According to Burgos-Ellis, Tlazolteotl was linked to “sexuality and wind,” which corresponds with the Nahuatl understanding of pollination and human reproduction as well as “filth” because Tlazolteotl was given to “sexual promiscuity,” and she ruled over “lust and debauchery” and “birthing.”

¹³⁸ Charlene Villaseñor Black, “St. Anne, Art, and Conversion,” in *Transforming Saints: From Spain to New Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2022), 48-55.

Ixcuina's "cleansing role," redrawn as a flaming broom and staff.¹³⁹ Franciscan friar Diego Durán described penitent individuals who would "perform confession and bloodletting in front of the image of Tlazolteotl."¹⁴⁰ This association to the act of confession and bloodletting or self-sacrifice refers to the goddess's power to cure or ingest the filth or tlazolli in Nahuatl, meaning vices and diseases.

Rodríguez did not paint a direct copy of the goddess pictured in these sources; however, she did paint the loose wavering hands with wrinkled flayed skin hanging from the goddess's wrist which closely imitates the image in *The Codex Borbonicus* (Figure 5).¹⁴¹ Rodríguez's Chicana re-vision of the deity conjured a new understanding of the goddess as an offering. The portrayal of the flayed skin and her armored skull, torso, and thighs as protected body parts signaled self-sacrifice and reciprocity. The illustration of a half human deity with an exposed heart, stomach, and arteries twirling around her neck reaching her left hand signified her exchange of blood for reparative power. Rodríguez intentionally followed her unconscious instincts and redefined how to approach surrealism as well as the use of ancient objects or icons with accuracy. Her version included symbols that referenced the deity's connection to purification, promiscuity, and rehabilitation.

This reference to Tlazolteotl Ixcuina's procreative role is symbolized by the depiction of small anchors or arrows aimed toward the goddess's upper body resembling the corn tassels from the male plant. These symbols were painted a red-burgundy color and inserted into the

¹³⁹ Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (Thames & Hudson, 1993), 168. Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex*, book one, folio xvr, Tlazolteotl, <https://florentinecodex.getty.edu/book/1/folio/xvr/images/0>.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁴¹ See *The Codex Borbonicus*, circa 16th century, page 13. <https://archive.org/details/codex-borbonicus/page/n11/mode/2up>.

background emerging from the dark blue tones. The combination of the corn tassels next to her body evoked promiscuity because of the goddess's noticeably impregnated stomach. This understanding of the mythos is important because it allowed Rodríguez to manifest a re-vision of the original context with an added emotional component. Drescher noted that the artist's portrayal of the goddess conjured "strong feelings of suffering, endurance, and beauty together."¹⁴² This emphasis on the "strong feelings" correlated with the surrealist approach of using dreams, the unconscious thought, and her profound understanding of Indigenous Mesoamerican mythology and history.

For Surrealist artists, the suspension of reality or dreams was the optimal guide to produce their art and was an integral part of their process. European surrealist painters such as Salvador Dalí, André Breton, and Max Ernst were also inspired by dreams, paranoia, and memory. Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* explained the concept of a "surreality" where the two states of "dream and reality" are "seemingly so contradictory ... they join into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, it is in quest of this surreality that I am going."¹⁴³ The combination of reality and the dream-state is an integral component to surrealist art which explores the unconscious and conscious mind while awake and asleep. There is also an emphasis on one's imagination and the limitless capacity of our thoughts that can also result in madness or death. Diego Rivera's fresco *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda central* (*Dream of a Sunday Afternoon at Alameda Park*), finished in 1947-48, demonstrated this surrealist approach by evoking the dream-state depicted as his personal memories alongside various historical figures from colonial and modern-

¹⁴² Drescher, "The Pieces," in *Progress in Process* catalog of the exhibition *In Progress, In Process* (San Francisco: La Raza Graphics Center, 1982), 18-19. Archives of American Art, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto research material, 1965 – 2004. box 11.

¹⁴³ André Breton, *Manifeste du surréalisme* (*Manifesto of Surrealism*) (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1924). <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/andre-breton-manifesto-of-surrealism>

day Mexico. In the center, Rivera re-imagined José Guadalupe Posada's skeletal figure *La Calavera Garbancera*, later renamed *La Calavera Catrina*, to present a female skeleton wearing a French inspired lace and Ostrich feathered hat as well as a multi-colored boa in the shape of a plumed serpent.¹⁴⁴ This character signaled the presence of death and life in the historical timeline, an ominous figure with a bloody sharp toothed grin evoking a dream and a nightmare simultaneously. Rivera's mural involved all of Mexico's people, including the poor and marginalized Indigenous and mestizo populace. Rodríguez's approach to Surrealism was to use her dreams to reveal the unconscious cultural and generational memory conjured in each sueño or dream as an integral component to her re-vision of history.

This duality of life and death or nightmare and dream is expressed in Rodríguez's mural through the juxtaposition of the personified goddess superimposed over a golden crescent moon beaming its light over the city below. Rodríguez painted the sky over the city as a cloudy dark blue, creating a melancholic urban landscape where the buildings are also painted a blue-auburn color to convey a foggy skyline. I interpret the city as a representation of San Francisco, with one building pictured with a triangular roof like the TransAmerica Pyramid skyscraper. The image of the goddess hovering in the night sky suggests that the people of the city are asleep, in the state of dreaming. The dream-state and reality are presented as existing together; meanwhile, the

¹⁴⁴ Diego Rivera and Jean Charlot were the primary artists who resurfaced and re-popularized José Guadalupe Posada's art. Per Carla Stellweg, "His work was forgotten, oddly, until Jean Charlot while painting murals with Diego Rivera in Mexico City, after the Revolution, re-discovered Posada in 1921, and coined his contribution: "the printmaker to the Mexican people. Of the many memorable homages to Posada, the one most acclaimed is the Calavera Catrina Rivera painted holding hands with the artist and Frida Kahlo." See Carla Stellweg, "The Calavera: In Popular and Political Mexican Print Traditions," in *Día de Los Muertos: An Exhibition Based on the Mexican and Central American Annual Tradition Celebrating and Honoring the Dead* (San Francisco: Galeria de la Raza and New York Alternative Museum, 1988), 22. The renaming of this female dapper skeleton is often credited to Rivera; but this title of "Calavera Catrina" was reprinted in a monograph about Posada with an introduction written by Rivera published in 1930. See *Posada Monografía de 406 grabados de Jose Guadalupe Posada con introduccion por Diego Rivera* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2002). To view *La Calavera Garbancera* see the UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library collection of José Guadalupe Posada's broadsides or broadsheets, <https://exhibits.lib.berkeley.edu/spotlight/art-of-posada/catalog/28-1374>.

flames of the goddess's broom signal the sweeping or cleansing of nightmares with the moonlight as she passes over the city.

Rodríguez's use of collage to show the horrific imagery in the goddess's stomach was also reminiscent of surrealist artist practices. The combination of photographs of gas-masked men next to a painting of a crucified figure created a photo montage. This technique was used by surrealist artists and the Dada art movement to convey the unconscious mind through an assemblage of images creating a whole new form while provoking an emotional response. Rodríguez incorporated an assemblage of photographic images outlined in bold black lines with magenta, red, white, and green tones to convey the internal organs of the stomach filled with scenes of war and colonization. These scenes were tightly organized within a small section of the deity's body to show how her power of purification and curing diseases can relieve the future of the generational filth.

Rodríguez's interpretation of Tlazolteotl Ixcuina involved a syncretic approach that combined historical knowledge with a modern contextualization of current global events. Díaz explained this as a "fusion of different cultural knowledge" to create a "powerful commentary on the sins of modern wars and their resonance in the colonial conquest of Indigenous peoples of the Americas."¹⁴⁵ The mural represented the violence brought by colonialism as a reoccurring reality that must be confronted in the present-day. The current location of Rodríguez's portable mural is unknown, presumably lost. In 1982, it was displayed as part of a collective project with sixteen other panels to create this mural in the exhibition *In Process, In Progress* for a short period of time. Rodríguez continued to produce murals and other artworks like boxes, masks, paintings,

¹⁴⁵ Díaz, *Proyecto Mission Murals*, 2022.

and prints, including the *Women's Contribution Mural* on the façade of the San Francisco Women's Building, dating from 1983.¹⁴⁶

In the 1990s, she created votive boxes and masks of well-known Chicana/o artists that were experimental sculptural pieces. These masks evoked her admiration for her Mexican heritage while celebrating Chicana identity. Her box sculptures became another medium that propelled her recognition as a professional artist in the latter half of her career. Rodríguez passed away in June 2025 but her legacy as a Chicana muralist, educator, artist, and friend will be remembered and written about for generations to come.

Juana Alicia's *Regeneración* (1991)

Juana Alicia was born in Newark, New Jersey of Mexican and Russian Jewish heritage and grew up in Detroit, Michigan. In her teenage years she moved to California to work in the agricultural fields of Salinas and Watsonville. In 1972, Juana Alicia met César E. Chávez during a rally in Michigan where she showed him her poster art and he then invited her to work for *El Malcriado* newspaper in Salinas. After this meeting with Chávez, she moved to Salinas, California, worked the fields while contributing her art to the United Farm Workers Union (UFW), producing posters and fliers for the cause. She worked with strawberry growers and companies such as InterHarvest and Fresh Pict, starting at the age of sixteen. She has described her experience joining the cause of the United Farm Workers as a “rite-of-passage” into

¹⁴⁶ The *Women's Contributions Mural* was completed in 1983 and was painted over in 1993-94. The mural *Maestrapeace* painted by Juana Alicia, Miranda Bergman, Edythe Boone, Susan Kelk Cervantes, Meera Desai, Yvonne Littleton, and Irene Pérez is now on the façade of the San Francisco Women's Building. <https://www.womensbuilding.org/our-building/the-mural#history-of-mural>.

adulthood and one of the most profound “educational experiences” in her life.¹⁴⁷ This period in her life is represented in her earliest mural *Las Lechugueras* (1983). She described the mural as an “autobiographical piece” because of the depiction of a pregnant woman farmworker.¹⁴⁸ This mural was later removed; however, she repainted the same wall with another mural titled *La Llorona’s Sacred Waters* in 2004.

Juana Alicia also produced thirteen murals with “migrant students” as artist assistants in Watsonville, including a large-scale mural at Watsonville High School that was destroyed by the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989.¹⁴⁹ In the summer of 1983, she participated in the Pajaro Valley Migrant Summer School Arts Program and was commissioned by the Watsonville High School Social Studies Department to paint the mural titled *A View of United States History in the Twentieth Century* (1983).¹⁵⁰ Her design was in collaboration with Watsonville High School

¹⁴⁷ Interview of Juana Alicia, conducted by Mary Lou Nevarez-Haugh, Dublin, California, 1993, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California Santa Barbara, box 23, folder 2.

¹⁴⁸ Interview of Juana Alicia, conducted by Paul Karlstrom in Berkeley, California, May 8, 2000, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, session 1, tape 1, side A, pp. 7. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-juana-alicia-13573>. Per Juana Alicia, “I worked up until September of 1976 in the fields, and then I stopped because I was seven months pregnant with my son and I had pesticide poisoning.”

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, session 1, tape 1, side A, pp. 10.

¹⁵⁰ Juana Alicia, “Pajaro Valley Summer School Arts Program,” *Community Murals Magazine* (Winter 1984), 13. The photograph of the mural was taken by Tim Drescher for *Community Murals Magazine*. This is the only photograph I have examined of the mural *A View of United States History in the Twentieth Century* (1983) and more investigation must be done to explain this mural in detail. Per Juana Alicia, the mural measured “60 feet by 7 feet” and the “interior Politec mural” or Politec acrylic paint was used on the interior wall of Watsonville High School’s main building that was later demolished due to damage by the Loma Prieta earthquake. The mural had a “multicultural and historical” theme with “sensitivity toward and interest in representing moments of pride in the histories of a variety of groups: Women, Japanese, Afro-Americans, Mexicanos/Chicanos, and Anglos.” <https://www.sfmoma.org/research-materials/community-murals-winter-1984/>. After her pregnancy with her first child Juana Alicia explained she had “pesticide poisoning” then stopped working in the fields and transitioned to working as a “bilingual classroom teaching assistant” and participated in the Migrant Teacher Corps. This program assisted farmworkers to become educators and teachers. She was recruited by “Ralph Guzman at UC Santa Cruz,” which connected the artist to Watsonville and Salinas to work in public schools with students from migrant families. See interview conducted by Allison Connor with Juana Alicia, Berkeley, California, May 29, 2013, Appendix A, 125-126. See also Allison Connor’s master’s thesis titled “Juana Alicia: A Case Study of the Artist as Critical Muralist,” published in 2016, San José State University.

student Fermín Sanchez, and she was assisted by junior high, high school, and migrant students who participated in the program to complete the mural. In addition to painting murals with local high school students, Juana Alicia taught courses on muralism at regional colleges and universities such as Stanford University, Skyline College, and World College. For example, the mural *Mujeres de Fuego* (1987), painted on the exterior wall of the Casa Zapata building at Stanford University, was the final project for her course SWOPSI 135: Mural Art, Enfoque Femenil (Womanist Focus).¹⁵¹ These courses often involved students completing a mural project as painters, while others would assist as researchers. By 1990, Juana Alicia was a notable muralist and educator in the northern and central California region. The commission to paint a portable mural for a cultural center in downtown San José was a project that showcased her knowledge of local history, honored Native American heritage, but also denounced the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s exploration and colonialism in the Americas.

Gabrielle Mitchell wrote an article titled “Mural inspires cultural memories of SJ’s indigenous peoples,” printed in the *San José City Times* that explained the artist’s response to the “500th anniversary of Columbus’ discovery of America.”¹⁵² The mural *Regeneración* (*Regeneration*) was completed in 1991, one year ahead of the United States’ celebration of the 1992 quincentennial. Juana Alicia intentionally painted the mural “on the streets of San José, perched above the masses three times a week,” to be accessible to the community. This article also published an image of the artist standing on the scaffolding (Figure 6). Her posture

¹⁵¹ José Burciaga Papers, box 43, folder 16 titled “Casa Zapata murals.” Stanford University Cecil E. Green Library, Special Collections. The Stanford Workshops on Political and Social Issues (SWOPSI) course records are also preserved at Stanford Library ranging from 1972-1982, which does not include Juana Alicia’s course conducted in fall 1987. The course was sponsored by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto who was Professor of Spanish and Portuguese and José Antonio Burciaga, artist-in-residence at Casa Zapata.

¹⁵² Gabrielle Mitchell, “Mural inspires cultural memories of SJ’s indigenous peoples,” *San José City Times* (San Jose, CA), January 1992, 22.

expressed confidence as she assertively placed one foot on the scaffolding beam. The mural was a commission from the Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA), a cultural center serving the Mexican American, Mexican, Central American, Chicana/o/x, and Latina/o/x community. It was also funded by a matching grant of \$10,000 from the Art in Community Places Program in San José and the Hugh Stuart Center Charitable Trust Fund.¹⁵³ The portable mural *Regeneración* measured 12 feet by 24 feet and was comprised of three wood panels painted using acrylic paint (Figure 7).

Juana Alicia explained that the mural was a “celebration of the strength and ties between Native Americans and Latinos,” because she found the celebration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of America to be “irritating,” stating that it was like “celebrating the Holocaust.”¹⁵⁴ This portable mural expressed the artist’s re-vision of an alternative historical milestone that redirected the attention from celebrating the quincentennial of Columbus to honoring Ohlone and Chicana/o history. After its completion the mural was displayed outside briefly, where it was documented by the artist, and then immediately placed in storage. Activist lawyer and art collector Karen Rudolph of Los Altos attempted to find a permanent location for the work but was unsuccessful.¹⁵⁵ As a result, all three panels are now missing.¹⁵⁶ Juana Alicia’s

¹⁵³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹⁵⁵ Juana Alicia and Matt Schwarzman with Jan Rindfleish, *Youth Art / Changing Lives* (Los Altos Hills: Euphrat Museum of Art, 1995): 29. A copy of the publication was provided by Juana Alicia. See also Foothill-De Anza Community College Historical Archives online: <https://distarch.fhda.edu/s/primary/page/exhibition-1995-1996>.

¹⁵⁶ It is important to note that all of Juana Alicia’s moveable murals are either lost or destroyed. For example, the portable mural *All Life is Inter-Related* (2001) produced for the Destiny Arts Center in Oakland is missing. See UC Santa Barbara Special Collections, Guide to the Juana Alicia Collected Works Digitized Art Collection, CEMA 106, Artwork, Annotated List of Collected Works, *All Life is Inter-Related* (2001). Surviving images of the murals, *All Life is Inter-Related* and *Regeneración* are preserved in the artist’s personal archive. The collection guide description mentioned the purchase of *Regeneración* by the Hispanic National University in San José but the whereabouts of the mural is unknown.

color photograph documented the display of the panels outdoors near the side of a building, extending outward toward the street (Figure 8). The large-scale wood panels were elevated vertically creating a long rectangular shaped mural filled with serene cool tones and warm bursts of magenta, red, yellow, and orange colors. The theme of regeneration and cultural healing is portrayed in the mural as a cycle of creative ideas that interconnected different peoples and cultures over time.

In the center of the composition, Juana Alicia pictured an anonymous Ohlone woman with her child on a Native American cradleboard on her back shown sowing seeds above a burial ground. The loss of Native lives and their displacement from their homeplace is a memory that is remembered as part of the cycle of regeneration and renewal. The three-rod-coil basket drawn as an aureole of light features the ancestral knowledge of basket weaving passed down by Indigenous women over generations. This detail marked the passage of time and the radiating power of cultural healing emanating from the four cardinal directions illuminated by the colors of yellow, magenta, green, and blue. The growth of cities also involved the migration and displacement of Mexican and Latina/o people as well as the neglect of Ohlone gravesites. These ancestral ties are remembered and illustrated as the skeleton buried within the earth as a reminder to viewers of the sacrifices and losses of the original peoples who inhabited the land.

The words “280 Freeway” are written below the feet of the Ohlone woman to commemorate Lorna Dee Cervantes’s poetry. The title of Cervantes’s poem references Interstate 280 as well as the urbanization of the region of San José and Santa Clara but also the last stanzas, illustrated at the bottom, describe the corpses and seeds of the ancestors (Figure 9).¹⁵⁷ These

¹⁵⁷ Mitchell, 22. See also Lorna Dee Cervantes’s “280 Freeway,” published online. <https://poets.org/poem/freeway-280>.

Ohlone gravesites are depicted next to the words of Lorna Dee Cervantes's poem to show a coexistence with the land and its inhabitants over generations. Juana Alicia also depicted speech scroll symbols that resurface Indigenous Mesoamerican logographs, conveying the sounds of the poet's voice. The female figure standing to the right of the Ohlone woman is a portrayal of Lorna Dee Cervantes with a speech scroll painted as a green colored swirl exiting her mouth. This symbol represented the sound of her voice but also conjured a creative energy stemming from poetry and spoken word. Chicano artist Steve Cervantes, a musician, is shown on the opposite end playing a flute with a golden scroll emitting from the instrument.

Juana Alicia explained that these symbols were inspired by the "Teotihuacán sound glyph for water" but could also be understood as a "cartoon bubble" where "different shapes have different meaning."¹⁵⁸ These scroll symbols emerging from Cervantes's flute and Lorna Dee Cervantes's mouth also reference the speech scrolls seen in codices and other ancient Indigenous Mesoamerican art. Karl Taube described the murals at Teotihuacán and the display of different speech scrolls that indicated sound. For instance, the murals in Portico 2 at Tepantitla are explained by Taube to convey "logographic" signs that demonstrate their emblematic writing style signifying "sound, utterance, and other more complex meanings."¹⁵⁹ Therefore, Juana Alicia conveyed these "logographic" symbols to express an emotional and creative connection between the land and its original peoples. Guisela Latorre explained this Chicana Indigenist aesthetic as part of the "Chicana/o Indigenist" murals that redefined Chicano muralism. Per Latorre, women artists portrayed a "diversified Indigenist aesthetic" that included Native

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹⁵⁹ Karl Taube, *The Writing System of Ancient Teotihuacan* (Barnardville, NC, and Washington D.C.: The Center for Ancient American Studies, January 2000), 30-32.

American and Indigenous Mesoamerican cultures.¹⁶⁰ Juana Alicia conveyed a visual synergy between Native American basket traditions and the Indigenous Mesoamerican glyphs as a form of celebrating and honoring these cultures.

The local history of San José and Santa Clara are resurfaced on the right section of the mural with the portrayal of figures like Tiburcio Vasquez, an outlaw or bandido born in Monterey, California, when it was part of the Mexican territory, as well as the portraits of César and Helen Chávez. The legacy of Californio and Chicana/o people are presented in the faint silhouettes embedded within the urban landscape linking the highway and the Santa Clara Mission Cemetery, which is also the location of Tiburcio Vasquez's gravesite.¹⁶¹ The vertical streams of water containing portraits of people references the foundation located in the oldest plaza in downtown San José, formerly known as Plaza del Pueblo, Market Plaza, renamed in 1993 as The Plaza de César Chávez. The spray of water also reflected the Interstate 280 and the Mexican, Mexican American, Chicana/o, and Latina/o community of East San José known as Sal Si Puedes in the 1950s. The portraits of César and Helen Chávez emerge from the water in the region designated as the Sal Si Puedes neighborhood, showing César E. Chávez's life when he and Helen began to raise their family from 1951 to 1953.¹⁶²

The cities of San José and Santa Clara are obscured by the water stream but faintly show recognizable landmarks like the Santa Clara Mission to anchor the memory to the location. Juana

¹⁶⁰ Guisela Latorre *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 26.

¹⁶¹ Tiburcio Vasquez was a Californio born on April 11, 1835, in Monterey, Alta California, Mexico and died by hanging in San José in 1875. He was known as an outlaw or bandido and was also considered a "Mexican Robin Hood," described by John Boessenecker in *Bandido: The Life and Times of Tiburcio Vasquez* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010).

¹⁶² César E. Chávez's and Helen Fabela Chávez's home in East San José is still standing, and is now a private residence, near the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. <https://www.sanjose.org/attraction/chavez-family-home>.

Alicia explained, “[W]e’ve been thinking about the history and future (of ourselves) as Latinos. We have to remember (the history of the land) so that we don’t destroy any more of it.”¹⁶³ The plant that composes the basket carries the threads of life and Indigenous, Native knowledge extending this energy in all directions touching the land, trees, mountains, and the farmland on the outskirts of the cities. These details evoke remembrance, to maintain the memory of Indigenous and Mexican American, Chicana/o/x, and Latina/o/x ancestors but also to prompt viewers to appreciate local history.

Mitchell described the mural as comprising two halves visualizing “destruction and persistence,” to be understood as a “history lesson of what was left out of textbooks.”¹⁶⁴ The theme of regeneration or renewal is conveyed as a cycle signified by the basket as well as the anonymous Ohlone woman dressed in a multicolored dress in the center. Her feet stepping on top of the soil next to the remains of the deceased conveyed the wounds of the past; meanwhile, her child embodied hope for the future. The hummingbird and dove drawn next to her baby show a sense of optimism for the future generation to exist in a balanced world. This symbolized what Gerald Vizenor called “survivance,” where Native American and Indigenous Mesoamerican peoples are seen as existing and thriving today.¹⁶⁵ There is a sense of continuance in Indigenous and Native legacies that Juana Alicia continues to honor in her art and murals. Her work also represented the importance of preserving our environment and culture as an integral part of the Chicana/o art movement’s message for social-political justice. The local history was transformed

¹⁶³ Mitchell, 22.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹⁶⁵ Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1. Per Vizenor, “Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name.”

into an evolving saga depicting creative energy from local Native and Chicana/o peoples coalescing with the seeding of the earth while cultivating new positive ideas for the future.

Carmen León's *La Cultura Cura* (2020)

Carmen León is a Latina artist born in San Francisco of Mexican and Peruvian heritage who grew up in San José. After graduating from high school, León began her artistic training in Paris, France, where she studied at L'École des Beaux Arts until 1961.¹⁶⁶ By 1973, León returned to the U.S. and enrolled at UC Santa Cruz (UCSC) where she studied art under the mentorship of professor Eduardo Carrillo. Carrillo taught courses in ceramics, drawing, painting (fresco, mural, oil, and watercolor), and art history beginning with his appointment at UCSC in 1972.¹⁶⁷ León participated in painting murals with Carrillo but also produced murals in the region which resulted in her taking an active role as a painter, muralist, and educator in the Santa Cruz and San Francisco areas. In 1975, she graduated from UC Santa Cruz (UCSC) with a fine arts degree and fifth-year certificate in painting.

From November 23, 1975 to July 1976, León was also part of the art collective and center Academia del Arte Chicano de Aztlán (ADACDA), an art studio and gallery space that was located in Watsonville, California. The arts center promoted the mural projects organized by the artist group Tortuga Patrol, which included León, Ralph D'Oliveira, Ray Romo, and other local Chicana/o artists.¹⁶⁸ Shifra Goldman mentioned the Tortuga Patrol and another local collective

¹⁶⁶ Linda Pope, "Spotlight: Carmen León's Latina Visions," *Santa Cruz Sentinel* (Santa Cruz, CA) December 1991, 15.

¹⁶⁷ Susan Leask, "Testament of the Spirit," in *Testament of the Spirit: Paintings by Eduardo Carrillo* (Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum, 2017), 19.

¹⁶⁸ León participated in the 1976 exhibition "ADACDA Chicana Art Show" with Chicana artists Angelita Morales and Peggy Rosa. https://archive.org/details/cascrmec_000340. See also Susan Renison and Betsy Anderson, Interview with Carmen León and archival material collected by Renison and Anderson, Carmen León Papers,

Tecolote Corps in Watsonville and Gilroy, producing public murals for the Gilroy Recreation Center and the Gilroy Unified School District.¹⁶⁹ León explained that the goal of the ADACDA was to redefine the past, noting that historically “Mexicans making the transition from Mexico to the United States have suppressed their language and culture. The Academia del Arte is committed to reversing that process.”¹⁷⁰ She also painted murals on the walls of the local public elementary schools in Watsonville like Radcliff Elementary, Starlight Elementary, Alianza Middle School, and others starting in 1976. After 1985, she focused her time as an art educator and co-founded the Galería Tonantzin in San Juan Bautista, California, which became a local gallery for women artists.¹⁷¹

In 1991, Carmen León was interviewed by Linda Pope for the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* which featured a black and white photograph for the spotlight artist section. The photograph of León in her studio in Aptos presented her poise and joyful demeanor (Figure 10). Pope described León as a generous person who volunteered to help people in hospice care; she worked as a teacher and mentor to local students as a “Spectra Artist in the Santa Cruz County schools.”¹⁷² As a Spectra Artist-in-Residence from 1985-2012 and Spectra Mentor Artist from 1998-2000, León conducted workshops on mural making and programs for elementary and junior high school students on

California Revealed. León’s murals in Watsonville public schools include Rolling Hills Middle School, La Alianza Elementary, E.A. Hall Middle School, Starlight Elementary, and others.
https://archive.org/details/cascrmec_000061.

¹⁶⁹ Goldman, “How, Why, Where, and When It All Happened: Chicano Murals of California,” in *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* (Venice: Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) and Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 43.

¹⁷⁰ Elise Levinson, “Chicano Art in Watsonville,” *Matrix* (April 1976), 3. Carmen León Papers, <https://californiarevealed.org/do/812f073d-2bf9-4418-af61-fe65c026d9cd>.

¹⁷¹ León, interviewed by Betsy Anderson, Museo Eduardo Carrillo, Califas Legacy Project. <https://museoeduardocarrillo.org/califas-legacy/>.

¹⁷² Pope, 15.

traditional fine arts like watercolor painting. León explained that her art was an “instinct that extends my vision and helps me to see what is really important in life.”¹⁷³ Her dedication to mentoring the younger generation as well as her extensive community service connected her with UCSC student Alex Espinoza. They produced a mural in 1977 that inspired my research on the murals of Watsonville.

León collaborated with Alex Espinoza and Vicky Petrovich to paint the mural *La Historia Vive*, known as the “Mona Lisa Café mural” in Watsonville. The design and concept of the mural was Alex Espinoza’s expression of his cultural heritage which included an homage to Siqueiros’s *América Tropical* in Los Angeles.¹⁷⁴ The original designer and organizer of the mural project, Alex Espinoza, was originally from East Los Angeles and was completing his undergraduate studies while he organized the mural project with the ACACDA and León. León explained that the mural was an “attempt to tie in our past with our future, to tie in with where we are now,” but also highlight Alex Espinoza’s connection with East Los Angeles while he attended UCSC.¹⁷⁵ Sadly, Espinoza died of a tragic cerebral hemorrhage on March 31, 1977, on the day of the mural’s dedication.¹⁷⁶ The original flier of the mural’s dedication shows the image

¹⁷³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁷⁴ Carmen León, “Affirmation of cultural heritage and community when dedicating murals in Watsonville,” Interview with Museo Eduardo Carrillo in 2020. https://archive.org/details/cascrmec_000023. León mentioned the project was spearheaded by Alex Louise Espinoza, who invited the women artists to complete the mural. See also my collaboration with Marisol Medina-Cadena to produce the “timeline” for the Watsonville Mural Archive, <https://watsonvillemurals.wixsite.com/archive/timeline>, produced as a final project for the graduate seminar at SPARC and UCLA CCAS with Professor Judith F. Baca in 2016. See also Medina-Cadena’s interview with Carmen León on the mural *La Historia Vive* (1977 later restored in 1998), <https://watsonvillemurals.wixsite.com/archive/la-historia-vive>.

¹⁷⁵ Mike Wallace, “Murals in tradition of Mexican folk art,” *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian* (Watsonville, CA) May 7, 1977, 9. <https://californiarevealed.org/do/0be51104-27db-4233-ba34-ca1072e1fdde>

¹⁷⁶ Wallace, “Murals in tradition of Mexican folk art,” *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian*, May 7, 1977, 9. See also Carmen León Papers, Museo Eduardo Carrillo. Per Wallace, “Alex Espinoza was stricken with a cerebral hemorrhage while in a classroom at UCSC’s Oaks College. He died en route to the hospital, at the age of 28.”

of a dual-faced human figure, part skeleton and part man, conveying the duality of death and life as a form of honoring the memory of Espinoza (Figure 11). This event included local entertainment like Los Mejicas, Sol y Tierra, Los Mariachis, Flor del Pueblo, and Teatro Quetzal as part of the celebration that was sponsored by a grant awarded to Espinoza by the California Arts Council.¹⁷⁷ In May 1977, the *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian* also published a color photograph of *La Historia Vive* on the façade of the Mona Lisa Café (Figure 12).

In 1998, during the mural's re-dedication and restoration, organized by local Chicano artist Guillermo "Yermo" Aranda, León added Espinoza's last name to the section below the reproduction of the crucified figure from Siqueiros's *América Tropical*.¹⁷⁸ The right section of the mural displays two Chicano male figures below the crucified Indigenous figure carrying a flag with words stating "barrios c/s unite," painted green, red, and white colors to reference the Mexican flag. Inscribed in the cross of the crucified Indigenous figure is a memorial: "dedicated to our homeboy Alex Louis Espinoza c/s." It has become a site of pilgrimage for me and when I travel to visit family, I tend to stop by the former Mona Lisa Café and document the mural. The café is no longer in business and the building is in desperate need of repair and in danger of being demolished. Although *La Historia Vive* is documented online in the Carmen León papers and other digital archives the motive for this study is to preserve the local art history and insert this mural and others like it into the Chicana/o art movement in Watsonville.

Carmen León's portable mural *La Cultura Cura* was the inspiration for the theme of this chapter. I viewed it when attending the 2021 Day of the Dead exhibition titled *Mi Casa es Tu Casa: History, Loss, Healing* at the Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery. The Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery

¹⁷⁷ Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Eduardo Carrillo papers, circa 1953-1999, bulk 1975-1997, series 4, box 2. Guest speakers included Eduardo Carrillo, Luis Valdez, and others.

¹⁷⁸ Josh Nagel, "Two lives cut short: mural's rededication ceremony brings a terrible irony to light," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 31, 1998, A-2. <https://californiarevealed.org/do/d464dc7a-ae5-4c7f-a04c-e3d1aebb1fdb>.

began these “Mi Casa es Tu Casa” themed exhibitions celebrating Day of the Dead traditions in 1993, including León as curator and participant in these shows.¹⁷⁹ The mural is comprised of one large panel measuring 4 feet by 8 feet painted using acrylic on wood. It was displayed above a community altar with the names of deceased community members. The altar was made by León and local altar-makers Shirley Flores-Munoz and Jovita Molina (Figure 13). The “ofrenda” or offering and the mural welcomed and introduced visitors to the local community of artists and arts advocates who passed away in 2020 during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The mural also reminded viewers of the five-hundred-year anniversary of the Spanish colonization of Mexico by displaying the loss of life during the epidemics that plagued the Indigenous Aztec and Mexica people in 1520-21.

León’s *La Cultura Cura* (2020) portrayed a Chicana or Latina woman as the central figure connecting two time periods, the colonial past and the modern-contemporary present (Figure 14). According to León, the central figure represented “La Cultura Cura,” embodying the power of healing and song. Below her chest are the plants and herbs such as “opal, maguey, epazote, nopal, and the staples corn, chiles, etc.” used for remedies stemming from ancient Indigenous knowledge and peoples.¹⁸⁰ This figure conveys a human and deity composite that commands the use of herbs and foods that nourish the body and mind. By naming the woman figure “La Cultura Cura,” León is evoking spiritual and religious iconography reimagined to embody the power of healing. She is dressed in a red and blue cloak covering the top portion of her head, resembling the Virgin Mary. Although León noted that this character is not a

¹⁷⁹ Carmen León Papers, Museo Eduardo Carrillo. León curated the 2008 exhibition titled *Mi Casa es Tu Casa: Honoring Ancestors*, celebrating the fifteen-year anniversary of the themed exhibitions in Watsonville’s Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery. <https://californiarevealed.org/do/5a005c41-65d4-4993-8a21-327c20d58833>.

¹⁸⁰ Carmen León correspondence with the author via email, dated November 5, 2021. This correspondence is not published.

representation of a Virgin Mary or La Virgen de Guadalupe, her facial expression — with her eyes facing downward and closed mouth — resembles the gesture of the holy mother. The portrayal of a Chicana or Latina woman with brown hair and light-brown colored skin reflected a calm composure conjuring a nurturing emotion of love and charity. This figure represented “La Cultura Cura,” which León described as an embodiment of “life, creation, language, song, and the four directions.”¹⁸¹

The scenes depicting two Spanish settlers or “conquistadors” standing next to two Indigenous people are reminiscent of the characters found in *The Florentine Codex*, specifically the Aztec woman healer tending to several smallpox victims.¹⁸² These figures are mourning the death of their community members who passed away because of the spread of smallpox, signaled by the three Christian crosses placed next to them. These scenes resurfaced the devastating memory of the epidemics and the loss of Indigenous peoples due to the spread of smallpox and other diseases. León’s mural reintroduced the memory of the Spanish colonial period in Central Mexico, when diseases spread and Indigenous peoples were forced to convert to Christianity, evoking a melancholic period in history that is remembered after the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

To demonstrate the current events of 2020, León depicted three hospital beds with a medical practitioner treating two patients who are ill (or near death) next to farmworkers tending the land. Below the cityscape of San Francisco, underneath a tree and amongst the fields, three figures are hunched over, tending to the farmland found in neighboring towns near the coast. León explained the inclusion of the farmworkers as designed to show the “essential workers” of

¹⁸¹ León email correspondence dated November 5, 2021.

¹⁸² See Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex*, book 12, folio 53v. <https://florentinecodex.getty.edu/book/12/folio/53v/images/0>.

Watsonville who have “experienced much loss with Covid.”¹⁸³ These essential workers also included medical professionals who continued their labor undeterred despite the risk of illness or death. The city of San Francisco is shown in the distance represented by the Golden Gate Bridge together with the Transamerica Pyramid skyscraper in downtown and the “Painted Ladies” — Victorian and Edwardian houses (Figure 15). The colonial scene on the left compared to the contemporary event on the right demonstrate León’s intent to remember the tragic past but also identify the positive or healing elements signaled by the land and its people. The central female character named “La Cultura Cura” shows a contemplative gesture; additionally, the four-petaled flower and “dripping flower” symbols convey her sorrow. Her open arms reflect a bridging of time, remembering the epidemics and death from the colonial period to today.

León’s use of the flower glyph evoked a cultural connection to the Indigenous Mesoamerican past by reproducing a symbol reminiscent of the murals at Teotihuacán. The *xochitl* or flower with four petals references the iconography seen in the murals of Teotihuacán, including the surrounding areas of Azcapotzalco and Mexico City. The murals at Teotihuacán that feature the four-petaled flower glyph are in the Tepantitla room complex within the archeological site. Karl Taube referenced art historian Esther Pasztory’s identification of the symbol of the four-petaled flower as “toponym signs with flowering plants,” a place name to indicate the specific location as well as glyphic imagery that links the region to the natural landscape.¹⁸⁴ In León’s mural, the four-petaled flower illustrated with green petals and a golden ovule is an embodiment of the herbal and flower remedies preserved by ancestral Indigenous Mesoamerican and Native American knowledge (Figure 16). Below her open palms León

¹⁸³ León email correspondence dated November 5, 2021.

¹⁸⁴ Taube, *The Writing System of Ancient Teotihuacan*, 7-8. See figure 4a, b, d, and e.

reimagined the “dripping flower” glyphs from Teotihuacán to show grief, mourning the loss of life due to epidemics from the past and present. The flowering plants with an open eye dripping with water conjure the shedding of tears but also indicate the flowing water that nourishes the roots. Taube described these twisted roots, appearing with the “Techinantitla trees,” as conveying a “locative function,” with the roots marking a “fixed place.”¹⁸⁵ In León’s mural the inclusion of a flowering tree with an eye in the bulb and twisted roots becomes an imagined glyph designed by the artist to signify the locations of Mexico, Watsonville, and San Francisco.

In the background, the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán and the volcano Popocatepetl are illustrated on the same historical timeline as the city skyline and the Golden Gate Bridge. The regenerative power of flowers, herbs, and natural remedies from the central figure’s shroud also revealed a pathway toward healing. This path is drawn as a green and gold design stretching across the composition, creating a geometric frame surrounding both historical events resembling the glyphs of the plumed serpent seen at the Temple of the Feathered Serpent in Teotihuacán. León re-vision of history evoked the power of generational memory and cultural healing insisting that *la cultura cura, con tiempo*, in time. Her mural embodied the essence of an *ofrenda* or an offering of respect for those who died because of disease and illness, both in the colonial period and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This portable mural commemorates essential workers, farmworkers, and various anonymous Indigenous Mesoamericans who were mourned and never forgotten.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 9. See figure 6a. “Flowering plants with large twisted roots, Techinantitla (From Berrin 1988: pls 1a-f).”

Chapter Three

“Chicanafuturist” Murals: Unearthing the Past to Embolden the Future in East Los

Angeles

Yet, like *Our Lady*, her Chicanafuturist art demonstrates the value, price, and necessity of change. It turns to the past by taking its inspiration from traditional forms and practices. At the same time, it distorts such forms and practices by locating them in the technologies of the present. And it dares to imagine new ways of being for the future, at which it takes a good, hard look by confronting the growing problem of e-waste.¹⁸⁶

Catherine S. Ramírez, 2004

Another aspect of digital murals that seems to counter prevailing notions about community muralism is that they are not made *in situ*, that is, they are not created in the space where they will reside, thus complicating the connection with space and place that other murals have. If digital murals have a connection to a particular space, it's a fluid and porous one; it is the shifting place of wherever these murals may be installed or it is the ambiguous domain of digital sites or cyberspace.¹⁸⁷

Guisela Latorre, 2008

Chapter Three explores Catherine S. Ramírez's concept of “Chicanafuturism” and “Chicanafuturist” art by examining Alma López's portable and digital murals *Maria de Los Angeles* and *Las Four* (1997) and Sandra de la Loza's *Mural Remix* (2011) exhibition, which included the performance and video of *Action Portraits* as well as the piece titled *Mural Remix, Artist Unknown, Untitled 1970s*, an installation using Duratrans and a lightbox (Figs. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7). These artworks expand our perception and understanding of murals through their experimentation with digital art, videography, and other mediums rendering these murals non-

¹⁸⁶ Catherine S. Ramírez, “Deus ex Machina: Tradition, Technology, and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martinez” in *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* vol. 29, no. 2 (Fall 2004), 82.

¹⁸⁷ Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 221-222.

traditional. Guisela Latorre described such murals as “not made *in situ*” or painted in a specific location or structure. Also, these artists redefined the concept of community-based muralism, which insists on painting murals outdoors within the neighborhood at schools, public parks, or local buildings. As theorized by Latorre, the digital mural or archival image of the mural is an ambiguous object because such images exist in a “fluid” and “porous” reality.

These portable murals are no longer physically static on the surface of an architectural space, and because they exist online these artworks are permanently accessible virtually without walls and borders. Therefore, these unconventional twenty-first century murals are seen as “Chicanafuturist” murals that have re-defined Chicana/o muralism because of their permanence online and their reproduction through other mediums like performance or print. The “Chicanafuturist” mural is a digital mural that transports the community experience of Chicana/o/x, Mexican American, and Indigenous peoples from local to global audiences. Catherine S. Ramírez introduced the concept of “Chicanafuturism” as a new understanding of humanism but also as a form of cultural production that concentrates on transformation without abandoning the past.

Ramírez’s interpretation of López’s *Our Lady* (1999) as “Chicanafuturist art” was introduced in the article titled “Deus ex Machina: Tradition, Technology, and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martinez,” which focused on the sculptural works by Marion C. Martinez with some mention of Alma López’s digital art. Per Ramírez, López’s “Chicanafuturist” art represented a re-vision of the past, present, and future that took inspiration from history but also simultaneously distorted or warped a new timeline to envision the future — a future in line with the first-generation’s call for self-determination and self-representation.¹⁸⁸ López’s *Las Four* and

¹⁸⁸ Ramírez, 77-78.

Maria de Los Angeles (1997) and de la Loza's *Mural Remix* (2011) evoked Ramírez's concept of "Chicanafuturism" by excavating the past, meanwhile using modern technology as the primary tools to create murals. This includes reproducing Indigenous Mesoamerican cosmology like the Aztec narratives surrounding the goddesses Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui or iconography such as the Nahua drum called the huehuetl of Malinalco. These references convey a cultural and historical continuation of an Indigenous identity that emboldened the next generation to transform their future with honor and pride in their Indigenous and mestiza/o ancestry.

López's and de la Loza's unconventional murals also critiqued the first generation's Chicano nationalist and patriarchal themes seen in most murals in East Los Angeles. Sandra de la Loza's *Mural Remix* exhibition revived Chicano themed murals from the 1970s to preserve local history but also to reinvent new engagements with the now-lost originals that have been removed or painted over. This included de la Loza's experimentation with materials like Duratrans (translucent film), a lightbox, and serigraph print with the image titled *Mural Remix, Artist Unknown, Untitled 1970s*, as well as her use of video for *Action Portraits*, which transformed the image from a static object into an enactment. De la Loza's process recovered this local knowledge from erasure. My analysis of López's and de La Loza's "Chicanafuturist" murals elucidates each artist's process of unearthing historical memory as an integral part of their Chicana re-vision of history to embolden women as well as Mexican American, Chicana/o/x, and Latina/o/x audiences today. Their murals carried messages of hope and continuity while encouraging the next generation of Angelinos/as/xs to honor and preserve their local knowledge in East Los Angeles.

Alma López's *Las Four* and *Maria de Los Angeles* (1997)

Alma López was born in Los Mochis, Sinaloa, México, in 1966, and was raised in the neighborhood of El Sereno in Los Angeles, California. After graduating from UC Santa Barbara and receiving her bachelor of arts, in 1988-89 she began to work with the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) alongside co-founder Judith F. Baca. From 1990 to 1997, López completed her master of arts degree at UC Irvine while working at SPARC as an artist and mural project coordinator. In 1992, Erin J. Aubry's article titled "Solid Images" for *The Los Angeles Times* mentioned López's involvement as co-project coordinator of the Great Walls: Neighborhood Pride Program, which was funded by the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Commission beginning in 1988 to complete over forty murals throughout the city. López's commentary noted that these murals represented something beyond a painting on a wall and explained, "a mural is a narrative, it speaks to a community, as well as for a community."¹⁸⁹ Co-coordinator Lindsey Haley would join López in locating a site for a mural and consulting with local community members before starting. In some cases, the community would reject the concept, resulting in the re-location of the mural project. This approach was Baca's and SPARC's method of experimenting with mural production as well as directly engaging with the local or regional community as part of the design and making process.

In addition to participating in SPARC's Great Walls: Neighborhood Pride Program, López was the research and teaching assistant in Baca's course titled "Beyond Mexican Murals" taught at UCLA. This course was offered after the appointment of Baca as professor in the César E. Chávez Department of Chicano Studies in the fall of 1996.¹⁹⁰ As the California Arts Council

¹⁸⁹ Erin J. Aubry, "Solid Images," *The Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1992, 3.

¹⁹⁰ The UCLA César E. Chávez Department of Chicano Studies was formed in 1993 after students and faculty participated in a 14-day hunger strike. The Mexican American Cultural Center was established in 1969, later named the Chicano Studies Center (1971) and then the Chicano Studies Research Center in 1980. During the initial founding of the department in 1993, UCLA developed a new "center for interdisciplinary instruction (CII)" and hired six faculty. In 1996, Judith F. Baca was hired in the Chicano Studies and World Arts and Cultures departments

Artist-in-Residence working with SPARC and the UCLA César E. Chávez Center, López led the design and completion of two portable murals for the Witness to Los Angeles History: Digital Mural Project in Estrada Courts. This project consisted of six digital murals measuring 8 feet by 9 feet that were printed on vinyl and were displayed as suspended banners from the ceiling of the Estrada Courts Community Center (Figure 1). The venue was also the local gymnasium and was accessible to the greater community of Estrada Courts. López's murals, *Maria de Los Angeles* and *Las Four* were a result of this collaborative project with UCLA students Patricia Ramirez, Christina Gorocica, and others enrolled in the course.

The mural *Maria de Los Angeles* depicted a matriarchal lineage representing residents of Estrada Courts like María de Los Angeles, Patricia, and the Familia Peña as three generations of women thriving in Los Angeles with roots in Mexico (Figure 2). The overall design was a collaborative project led by López with UCLA student Patricia Ramirez and other participants from the UCLA César Chávez Center. López explained that the mural “pays tribute” to female family members like the grandmother, represented by the two elderly women on the left side, who are seen as the “keeper[s] of its history.” In the center, the mother figure was described by the artist as an embodiment of “strength and nurturing,” her portrait overlaid on the sculpture of Coatlicue.¹⁹¹ Below, the image of the Virgin Mary as La Virgen de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe) divides the composition into two halves, situating the ancestral presence of the

at UCLA after teaching at UC Irvine from 1983-1996. See the history of the UCLA César E. Chávez Department of Chicana/o & Central American Studies, <https://chavez.ucla.edu/about/history/> and UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) history, <https://www.chicano.ucla.edu/about>.

¹⁹¹ Alma López, “Maria de Los Angeles: Pre-Columbian and Post Conquest Goddesses; ¿Qué Esconde La Esperanza? / What is Hidden in Hope?” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* vol. 20, no. 1 (1999), 81. Per López, the Coatlicue symbolized the “pre-conquest goddess” and La Virgen de Guadalupe embodied the “post-conquest colonial goddess,” signifying a “long history of strong female representation” as both cultural and ancestral.

ancient and colonial past at the center, demarcating the younger generation on the right and the ancestors on the left side.¹⁹²

The figure of a young Chicana is shown on the right standing amidst the blossoming roses while signaling the continuation of this matriarchal lineage as the daughter. López described the young Chicana as the one “who will carry on the family legacy as a proud and empowered member of the long lifeline of women.”¹⁹³ The abundance of red, yellow, and white roses signaled a celebration of the growth of the family and community but also referenced the apparition story of La Virgen de Guadalupe. The Late Post-Classic Aztec sculpture of the goddess Coatlicue is illuminated with a bright golden outline emphasizing the red-yellow color of the statue as an enigmatic aura or energy. The background mirrors this red, orange, and yellow hue reminiscent of the sunsets of Southern California filling the sky above the elderly women. Meanwhile, the young Chicana stands next to a blue sky with scattered sunset-colored clouds, reflecting a new day and a continuation of ancestral culture and memory.

This historical and cultural lineage is embodied by the Coatlicue sculpture, an Aztec artifact excavated in 1790, now located in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. The Coatlicue, named “serpents her skirt” or “she of the serpent skirt,” is known as the mother of the Aztec’s principal deity Huitzilopochtli as well as his half-sister Coyolxauhqui and half-brothers the Centzon Huitznahua.¹⁹⁴ It was her daughter Coyolxauhqui who commanded the

¹⁹² This combination of La Virgen de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe) and Coatlicue was first envisioned by Chicana artist Yolanda M. López in 1978 for her print of *Coatlicue and Guadalupe*. The design was later used to complete the portable mural titled *Nuestra Madre* (1981-1988). See Rodríguez-Gómez’s “Our Mother” Portable Mural: Yolanda M. Lopez’s *Nuestra Madre* 1981-1988,” in *X as Intersection: Writing on Latinx Art*, October 29, 2025. <https://uslaf.org/essay/our-mother-portable-mural-yolanda-m-lopezs-nuestra-madre-1981-1988/>.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁹⁴ Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 64.

Centzon Huitznahua to kill their mother and to plot the attack during the birth of Huitzilopochtli, resulting in her dismemberment. Elizabeth Hill-Boone described the statue as a standing female figure whose head and neck have been “severed by a cut at the top of the clavicle,” where two serpents emerge and “face each other so that the profile of each serpent heads forms one half of the face.”¹⁹⁵ Her anthropomorphic body also includes avian feet with claws, as well as forearms and hands represented as snakes positioned in a “grasping” or attacking gesture. The female body is also shown with “pendant breasts,” explained by Hill-Boone as a characteristic of a “mature woman who has already given birth,” which further emphasized her maternal role.¹⁹⁶

This Coatlicue sculpture is also wearing a necklace consisting of alternating hearts, open-palm human hands, and a “pendent” skull hanging in the front symbolizing the sacrificial offerings of fallen warriors. The cord of the necklace is identified by Hill-Boone as “a rope of blood” indicated by the “wavy lines” and the “circular discs” that are then tied in a “knot” from the back.¹⁹⁷ The Coatlicue was venerated as a goddess of fertility, preciousness, death, sacrifice, and also described by the Spanish friar Diego Durán as one of the “sustainers of the sky.” Hill-Boone explained that these deities functioned as “sky bearers,” supporting the celestial stars and planets that surround Huitzilopochtli as the sun. Hill-Boone’s interpretation of the Coatlicue sculpture also recognized three other “Coatlicues” that are “nearly identical” and were part of a “set” of other Coatlicue-type sculptures that surrounded the Templo Mayor in Tenochtitlán. She also proposed to interpret the giant Coatlicue statue as a representation of a “conquered” woman like Coyolxauhqui, defeated by Huitzilopochtli, symbolizing the Tzitzimime or “ancient man-

¹⁹⁵ Elizabeth Hill-Boone, “The “Coatlicues” at The Templo Mayor,” *Ancient Mesoamerica* vol. 10, no. 2 (July 1999), 189-190.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

eaters who appear in times of darkness when the sun fails.”¹⁹⁸ Cecelia F. Klein described the Coatlicue deity as not only Huitzilopochtli’s mother but also the “grand creatrix” of all “beings and objects that inhabited the Aztec universe.” Per Klein, Coatlicue “voluntarily” sacrificed her body to create the sun.¹⁹⁹

López’s mural unearthed the Coatlicue sculpture once again and re-contextualized it through a “Chicanafuturist” perspective that focused on seeing this goddess as part of the matriarchal lineage of the Peña family but also a symbol of their continual legacy. The portrait of a woman in the middle of Coatlicue’s necklace becomes part of the precious gift offered to the goddess as sacrifice. Also, the placement of this woman’s portrait above Coatlicue’s necklace and La Virgen de Guadalupe evoked a spiritual or votive request to help the soul reach heaven. Coatlicue’s symbolism as an offering to the sun was redirected by the artist to fit a new role, one that enabled the continuation of her daughters. The image of La Virgen de Guadalupe placed underneath Coatlicue’s necklace evoked their duality as mother-figures and harbingers of death. Her lifeless body becomes part of the earth, to be buried or cremated but in essence returning the remains to the soil. This re-contextualization of the Coatlicue and La Virgen de Guadalupe as mother goddesses is further emphasized by the merger of these images in the center representing sacrifice but also regeneration and life.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 204. Hill-Boone explained, “the year date of 12 Reed that is carved between the shoulder blades of the Coatlicue and Yotlicue” could also refer to the beginning of the second Age or Sun as mentioned in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* when the “Jaguar Sun” event occurred when the “sun did not continue.” There was a period of darkness and people were eaten by jaguars and other man-eaters like the Tzitzimime.

¹⁹⁹ Cecelia F. Klein, “A New Interpretation of the Aztec Statue Called Coatlicue, “Snakes-Her-Skirt” *Ethnohistory* vol. 55, no. 2 (Spring 2008), 244-245. Per Klein, “Rather than dying as an enemy in battle, Coatlicue sacrificed herself voluntarily to provide the Mexica with the warmth, light, and changing seasons that brought them crops, food, and good health.”

The image of the Coatlicue is also acknowledged by López and SPARC as referencing the “origins of our indigenous past,” and La Virgen de Guadalupe symbolized the “post-Conquest Catholic mother figure.”²⁰⁰ This trio of mother figures created a synergy of “Marias” coupling the Indigenous Mesoamerican deity Coatlicue with the Catholic image of La Virgen de Guadalupe, the fusion of the two icons creating a whole new mother-goddess image. López’s re-conceptualization of Coatlicue and La Virgen de Guadalupe as a merged entity revived the term Tonantsi or Tonantzin in Nahuatl which translates to “Our Revered Mother.” Franciscan friar Alonso de Molina explained that the word Tonan translated to Spanish signified “nuestra madre, our mother.”²⁰¹ However, this translation also concerned the Spanish friars, including Bernardino de Sahagún, because it was used to reference the Virgin Mary although it did not reference one particular deity or the name of a specific Indigenous goddess. Louise M. Burkhart explained that the term Tonantzin or Tonan would have been a way of referring to a female or mother figure with “respect” and it was often spoken as a reference to multiple pre-Columbian goddesses or “divinities.”²⁰²

Chicana/x artists and feminist writers in the 1980s resurfaced the name Tonantzin or Tonantsi as a way of affirming the translation from Nahuatl to Spanish as “Our Holy Mother,” resulting in La Virgen de Guadalupe as Coatlicue. Gloria E. Anzaldúa explained, “La Virgen de Guadalupe’s Indian name is Coatlalopeuh. She is the central deity connecting us to our Indian

²⁰⁰ Judith F. Baca, SPARC, and Alma López, “Witness to Los Angeles History Project: Estrada Courts” information pamphlet in SPARC’s archive on the project. Social and Public Art Research Center, Venice, CA. 1997. Courtesy of SPARC and Judith F. Baca. p. 1-4.

²⁰¹ Louise M. Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature*, Institute for Mesoamerican Studies Monograph 13 (Albany: University of Albany, 2001), 11.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 11.

ancestry.”²⁰³ Anzaldúa also noted, “another aspect of Coatlicue is Tonantsi,” because of the mother and earth goddess connection referencing anthropological studies by Ena Campbell and Alan R. Sandstrom in the 1970s-80s on the “Aztec earth and fertility goddess Tonantsi” in the Totonac culture. Anzaldúa later concluded, “Tonantsi became Guadalupe,” representing the “good mother, split from her dark guises,” embodying the ideal Catholic or Christian chaste woman and the protector of the Mexican people.²⁰⁴ Anzaldúa’s interpretation of Campbell’s and Sandstrom’s research surrounding the name Tonantsi created a nuanced interpretation of the syncretism of Christianity and Indigenous Nahuatl or Aztec spirituality and cosmology. The Nahuatl people of the Huastec region and the Totonacs were adversaries of the Aztec’s militaristic dominance in the region, which led to their worship of the mother deity Tonantsi over Huitzilopochtli.

Ana Castillo elaborated upon this context surrounding the Tonantzin-Guadalupe mother goddess and stated, “most Mexicans and Mexicano-Americans recognize Her as Tonantzin, “Our Mother.”” Castillo then noted, “our mother was every mountain, every summit, sometimes hand-built, on which one could climb and pray to Mother Earth.”²⁰⁵ Chicana/x feminists proposed a new interpretation of Coatlicue, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and the word Tonantsi or Tonantzin by

²⁰³ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, “Entering into the Serpent,” in *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 49.

²⁰⁴ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, “Entering into the Serpent,” in *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 49-50. See also Notes, footnote 9, Anzaldúa references Burr Cartwright Brundage, *The Fifth Sun: Aztec Gods, Aztec World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 154, 242. She states that “in some Nahuatl dialects Tonantsi is called Tonantzin, literally “Our Holy Mother.”” See also James J. Preston’s *Mother Worship: Theme and Variations* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 5-50. Ena Campbell’s “The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Female Self-Image: A Mexican Case History,” and Alan R. Sandstrom’s “The Tonantsi Cult of the Eastern Nahuatl,” are sourced by Anzaldúa to explain the “renewed reverence of Tonantsi” by the Nahuatls in modern Mexico. Sandstrom’s analysis was concluded from data collected in 1970-1973 in the Huastec region of central Mexico and Campbell’s essay noted scholarship that suggested the name of Guadalupe was mistakenly translated from the Nahuatl word Coatlatloqueuh, meaning “the one who has dominion over serpents.”

²⁰⁵ Ana Castillo, “Introduction,” in *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1996), xvi.

challenging the patriarchal history of the Aztec empire which placed Coatlicue as a conquered mother and instead focus on her maternal power. The image of La Virgen de Guadalupe from 1531, known as the miraculous apparition on the tilma or cloak of Juan Diego, showed a pregnant mother indicated by the black ribbon wrapped above the waist.²⁰⁶ López's image also reminds viewers of the evangelization of the Nahuatl peoples to Christianity, when the veneration of Indigenous deities was suppressed altogether, all aspects of their rituals and spiritual ideologies replaced with Catholic icons like the Virgin Mary. In this instance, La Virgen de Guadalupe reappeared from the blossoming roses sustaining the presence of Indigenous and Native American culture and tradition to enlighten and empower the future generation of Chicanas, Mexicanas, and Latinas in East Los Angeles.

The title of the mural was inspired by a local activist and resident of Estrada Courts named María de Los Angeles; thus, the image was also made to honor her legacy. This activist's name also references the founding of the city of Los Angeles, which was originally called El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Ángeles de Porciúncula, further situating these mural projects as community-based public art for the people.

López's approach to the title of *Las Four* (*The Four*) employs a feminized spelling that referenced the Chicano-themed mural finished in 1993 titled *Los Cuatro Grandes* (*The Four Great Ones*), also known as *Chicano Ancestors*, made by Ernesto de la Loza. Ernesto de la Loza's mural *Chicano Ancestors* was painted within the resident housing at Estrada Courts

²⁰⁶ Ibid., xix. Per Castillo, "La Virgen wears the fertility sash, She is *en cinta*, pregnant, but the little symbol of the forthcoming child that dangles below it is the nagvioli flower, which represented Huitzilopochtli, the great, ferocious sun god of the Aztecs." See also F. Gonzalez-Crussi's chapter titled "The Anatomy of a Virgin," in *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1996), 11. Also, Susan D. Buell, "Our Lady of Guadalupe: A Feminine Mythology for the New World," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* vol. 51, no. 4 (December 1982), 399-404.

depicting idealized male figures from Aztec, Chicano, and Mexican culture and history.²⁰⁷ The mural shows an Aztec ruler or noble on the left side entering the scene with four men standing horizontally in the center starting with César E. Chávez, settled next to a UFW red and black flag on the floor. Alongside Chávez are Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, two well-known figures of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1912, standing next to the character “Cantinflas” created by Mexican actor, filmmaker, and comedian Mario Fortino Alfonso Moreno Reyes. This character of Cantinflas was renowned in Mexico and Mexican American or Chicano communities in the U.S. because of his portrayal of the everyman, humble but also adept and astute.

The only female figure is a semi-nude woman resembling either Mexican actor Dolores del Río or María Félix, painted topless with her arms crossed over her chest in a seductive gesture that doesn’t expose her breasts. She is drawn wearing a white loincloth skirt tied by a thin piece of string and a multicolored headdress with turquoise jewels and gold feather earrings. Her elaborate feathered accessory attached to her outfit, painted in the Mexican flag colors of red, white, and green, suggests an Indigenous Mesoamerican connection.²⁰⁸ The depiction of Dolores del Río or Maria Félix dressed in feathered regalia shown as an exotic Indigenous-mestiza female with European features was created by Ernesto de la Loza to convey a beautiful Chicana or Latina woman. López described this female figure as a “very sexy half-dressed Aztec

²⁰⁷Alma López, “Las Four,” in *Ciudad Híbrida / Hybrid City: The Production of Art in “Alien Territory,”* ed. ADOBE L.A. (Los Angeles: Southern California Institute of Architecture and University of Southern California, 1998), 72. López explained, “To this visual world, my contribution would go beyond the sexualized images of Ixta and the tattoo women: to create complex multi-dimensional images of women parallel in presence to Zapata, Villa, and the Aztec warriors.” The mural by Ernesto de la Loza, *Chicano Ancestors*, was painted on Hunter Street within the Estrada Courts housing zone, described by Tim Drescher and Holly Barnet-Sanchez as “for residents’ eyes only,” that is, painted for the community members of Estrada Courts. See Drescher and Barnet-Sanchez, “Estrada Courts: For Resident’s Eyes Only,” in *Give Me Life: Iconography and Identity in East LA Murals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 111. See figure 5.7. See also, USC digital library, “Los cuatros grandes, Boyle Heights, 1993,” https://digitallibrary.usc.edu/asset-management/2A3BF1116E4B?FR_=1&W=1397&H=747.

²⁰⁸ Ernesto de la Loza’s *Chicano Ancestors* or *Los Cuatro Grandes*, 1993, USC digital library, https://digitallibrary.usc.edu/asset-management/2A3BF1116E4B?FR_=1&W=1397&H=747.

princess,” that was a “larger than life image” filling a new mural within Estrada Courts.²⁰⁹

Through a Chicana/x feminist re-conceptualization of *Los Cuatro Grandes* López’s mural *Las Four* redirected the attention toward real women represented as mothers and daughters, not women objectified or presented as romanticized Indigenous characters.

López completed *Las Four* with assistance from UCLA student Christina Gorocica, who also photographed the four women placed in the forefront of the composition named Rosalba and Carina Espinosa, Felicia Gonzalez, and Ruby Virgen. These four women are shown sitting in front of the blue door of their apartment homes in Estrada Courts with the ghostly appearance of four heroic women in Chicana/o and Mexican history filling the sky above them. These figures are identified from left to right as United Farm Workers Union (UFW) co-founder and activist Dolores Huerta, the Mexican Catholic nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a Mexican “soldadera,” and Guatemalan Indigenous rights activist Rigoberta Menchú Tum. Together these women illuminate the pathway forward for the young women as the ancestral sages of the past and present. These renowned historical figures represent what López described as the “spiritual nourishing” of the future generation.²¹⁰

López composed a digital collage using image manipulation software to incorporate paintings and photographs of each figure into the composition, including two images in color and the others in black and white. The portrait of Dolores Huerta is based on a color photograph circa the 1980s-1990s where Huerta is looking directly at the viewer with a radiant smile while confidently waving the UFW red and black flag. To Huerta’s right side the portrait of Sor Juana

²⁰⁹ Alma López, *Ciudad Híbrida / Hybrid City*, 75.

²¹⁰ Alma López, “Las Four” written explanation of the mural project published on the “Built L.A.” website from the early 2000s. A printed copy of this write-up, dated 03/27/01, was examined at UC Santa Barbara, Special Collections Library, Shifra M. Goldman Papers, CEMA 119, box 37, folder 1, p. 3 out of 5.

Inés de la Cruz is sourced from the eighteenth-century painting by Spanish painter Juan de Miranda showing her traditional nun attire with a rosary and personalized “escudo de monja” or devotional badge. Sor Juana is known by the surname the “Tenth Muse” or “La Décima Musa” because of her poetry and writing, but also because of her criticism of the Catholic Church for suppressing the education of women. Her letters to theologians defending her intellectual studies became groundbreaking examples of patriarchal resistance within the Church as she was elevated as an influential feminist icon for Chicanas in the U.S. and Mexico.²¹¹ Next to Sor Juana is the portrayal of a Mexican “soldadera” based on a historical photograph by Agustín Víctor Casasola of Adela Velarde Pérez, one of the many soldaderas or women soldiers who participated alongside men in the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1912. This figure is commonly referred to as “Adelita” from the Mexican corrido or folk song named “La Adelita,” representing all women who fought in the Revolution but also cared for the male soldiers who were wounded and sick. Lastly, the image of Rigoberta Menchú, copied from a color photograph circa the 1990s, affirming the 1992 event when she received the Nobel Peace Prize, is shown wearing a huipil or white blouse in the traditional fashion worn by Indigenous Guatemalan women. All four figures are superimposed over the white paint of the doorway’s wooden frame displaying only the top portion of their bodies from the waist up.

Behind these four women the Coyolxauhqui stone rises amid the blue sky and white clouds overlapping with the black and white photograph of the ancient sculpture. Through a Chicana/x feminist perspective, López redefined Coyolxauhqui’s role as a deity sacrificed by war, violence, and empire to embody a warrior spirit that is ever-present and is revived by the

²¹¹ Charlene Villaseñor Black, “A Chicana Art Historian Contemplates Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2017), 1-16. “Sor Juana as Feminist Icon in Contemporary Mexican and Chicana/o Art,” *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: The Collected Works*, trans. Edith Grossmann; ed. Anna More (Norton Critical Edition, June 2016), 292-303.

presence of the young women. The reproduction of the stone sculpture shows one-half of the entire object displaying the top section of the goddess's head, arm, and a glimpse of her disarticulated torso. López's interpretation of Coyolxauhqui as an "Aztec moon goddess" relates to other Chicana/x feminists who also viewed this deity as a representation of the moon's wax and wane cycle. For example, Anzaldúa described the Coyolxauhqui stone as "the locus of resistance, of rupture, of implosion and explosion, and of putting together the fragments and creating a new assemblage." It was this process of re-membering or putting back together the pieces of a fractured identity that was represented by "Coatlicue's daughter, Coyolxauhqui, la diosa de la luna."²¹²

Anzaldúa visited the Denver Museum of Natural History in Denver, Colorado, in 1992 to view the exhibition *Aztec: The World of Moctezuma* and was astounded by the sculpture. She stated,

I stare at the huge round stone of la diosa. She seems to be pushing at the restraining orb of the moon. Though I sense a latent whirlwind of energy, I also sense a timeless stillness — patiently waiting to explode into activity. To me Coyolxauhqui also embodies Chicana/Mexicana writers' resistance and vitality.²¹³

Anzaldúa knew of Coyolxauhqui's story and noted that she exemplified "women as conquered bodies," but also the psychological and physical traumas perpetrated onto all women. This connection between the narrative of the "conquered" woman and the violence done to women by Chicano and Mexican men is drawn from Anzaldúa's critique of the patriarchal dominance of the Aztec mythos. She continued to explain, "Coyolxauhqui represents the psychic and creative process of tearing apart and pulling together (deconstructing/constructing). She represents

²¹² Gloria E. Anzaldúa, "Border Arte: Nepantla, el lugar de la frontera," in *Light in the Dark, Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, and Reality*, ed. Analouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 49.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

fragmentation, imperfection, incompleteness, and wholeness.”²¹⁴ Thus, the goddess was re-conceptualized as the moon in a constant cycle of repair and disrepair but also maintaining the strength of fallen warriors as part of her struggle.

The importance of Coyolxauhqui as a representation of a celestial entity and as a signifier of the moon and a warrior was part of López’s reimagining of the icon as a lunar goddess. In “Unframing Coyolxauhqui,” Gaspar de Alba rewrote the narrative from The Florentine Codex to “rebuild” her power and underscore her status as a warrior goddess but also relating this mythos to the process of “writing about the self.”²¹⁵ To view Coyolxauhqui as a warrior goddess inspired López to portray her as a continually rising figure that promotes mending and healing rather than sacrifice and death. This approach reframes the Aztec narrative through a Chicana/x feminist decolonial imaginary, signaling a shift in consciousness where women and goddesses are representations of renewal and the reconstruction of the self.

In ancient Mesoamerican mythos and cosmology, the Nahua deity known as Coyolxauhqui, “bells on her face” or “bells on her cheeks,” is represented by the metal coyolli or small bells adorning her cheeks, her ear “ornaments,” circular “elements,” and eagle feathers in her hair, defining her name and year sign. Michael D. Coe explained that she was an “avatar for

²¹⁴ Ibid., 50.

²¹⁵ Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *[Un]framing the “Bad Woman”: Sor Juana, Malinche, Coyolxauhqui, and Other Rebels with a Cause* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 131-172. Gaspar de Alba discusses the use of Coyolxauhqui in relation to the femicides in Juárez, Mexico, due to the killings of women workers in the maquiladoras or the factories along the U.S. Mexico border. In “Mapping the Labyrinth,” the story of “Unframing Coyolxauhqui” began with the statement that “Coyolxauhqui was framed.” This new version was also inspired by Anzaldúa’s view of Coyolxauhqui as a “warrior goddess” whose actions were understood as “activism,” which was also part of the seven steps in the process of *conocimiento* or self-knowledge.” Gaspar de Alba also mentioned the “call to action,” to draw out the “Coyolxauhqui consciousness.” Like the dismembering process, it is a breaking down of one’s sense of identity in order to be put back together and “rebuild.” p. 190-201.

the moon” but also Huitzilopochtli’s “malevolent sister.”²¹⁶ Karl Taube and Mary Miller noted that there is no “explicit evidence” to identify Coyolxauhqui as a moon goddess.²¹⁷ More generally, the violent act of dismembering and decapitating the warrior sister of Huitzilopochtli offered a visual narrative that corresponded with the Nahuatl, Aztec, and Mexica worldview and cosmological philosophies surrounding life, death, and renewal. Human sacrifice and self-sacrifice were a characteristic of Coyolxauhqui’s deity status and honoring of the body of the female warrior as the offering or tribute to the sun, sustaining a balance in nature and humanity.

Carmen Aguilera explained that Coyolxauhqui, also named Malinalxochitl, represented the deified woman warrior but also a “celestial goddess” representing the earth, stars, and fertility who was honored with “beheading sacrifices.” Per Aguilera, her blood fertilized the earth but the “stars on her forehead” and her “open mouth, teeth, and tongue indicate she is a *tzitzimitl*, a being whose habitat is also the sky.”²¹⁸ These qualities confirm her celestial power as part of the Milky Way. Aguilera described the symbolism surrounding her dismemberment as representative of a sacrificial offering of women who died during childbirth known as the “*mocihuaquetzque*” or “*mocihuaquetqui*,” meaning “women who ascend or rise” because they have died like “brave warriors” like the “*cihuateteo*.”²¹⁹ The significance of Coyolxauhqui as an “astral goddess” is that she accompanied the sun, as the moon and the stars of our known galaxy. According to Aguilera, Coyolxauhqui’s dismemberment is the “image of total defeat, combined

²¹⁶ Michael D. Coe and Rex Koontz, “The Aztecs in 1519,” in *Mexico: From the Olmecs to the Aztecs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 216-217. The sculptural artifact was re-surfaced in 1978 at the site of Templo Mayor in present-day Mexico City.

²¹⁷ Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 68-69.

²¹⁸ Carmen Aguilera, *Coyolxauhqui: The Mexican Milky Way*, with critical description of the monument by H.B. Nicholson (Lancaster, California: Labyrinthos, 2001), 27.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

with the idea of eternal rebirth. Her death represented a passage from a mortal to an eternal celestial life. Her opened eye shows that she is fully alive in spite of dismemberment.”²²⁰

After the unveiling of *Las Four*, López was notified of an unfortunate incident that damaged the mural. López explained,

A few weeks after the murals were installed, several of the young men in Estrada damaged *Las Four* mural. The administrative staff believe that the young men probably stacked blue exercise mats, and jumped up and down with a knife stabbing the hanging vinyl mural. A UCLA student heard that *Las Four* had been cut and said that it had been “Coyolxauhqui[’d].” This was such irony. When some of the young men in Estrada Courts first saw *Las Four* they complained that we should have selected “better girls.” When we asked what were “better girls,” they responded, “any girls except those girls.” We were informed that one of the guys had dated one of the girls, and that now some of the girls were dating outside of Estrada Courts. After we heard that they might damage the mural, we warned the guys that if this happened then *Project Life*, the mural representing them, would be taken down. And unfortunately, the young people of Estrada would not be represented.²²¹

López recalled the moment when the mural was slashed, but also that one of the young ladies featured in the mural was harmed by her boyfriend who also lived in Estrada Courts.²²² This abhorrent act was an ironic turn of events because the young women interpreted this violence

²²⁰ Ibid., 29. This was considered of a higher order because they died with the child still in the womb. See also David Carrasco, “The Religion of the Aztecs,” in *Religions of Mesoamerica: Cosmovision and Ceremonial Centers* (Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., 1990), 74-75. Carrasco described the mythos as a story with “several layers of meaning” symbolizing the “daily sunrise above the sacred mountain (earth) and the elimination of the moon (Coyolxauhqui) and the stars (*centzon huitzhanua*).” This Nahuatl origin myth can also represent their cosmovision and “daily experience of nature” viewed as constant “celestial conflict, war, and sacrifice,” which corresponded with the “natural order” as a “violent order” where reciprocity and renewal are remembered through ritual sacrifices at the mountain called Coatepec. In addition, there is historical evidence of a “crucial battle” taking place at Coatepec in which a leader named Huitzilopochtli killed an enemy woman warrior named Coyolxauhqui and decapitated her.

²²¹ Alma López, *Ciudad Híbrida / Hybrid City*, 72-75. See also Kathleen Fitzcallaghan Jones, “The War of the Roses: Guadalupe, Alma López, and Santa Fe,” in *Our Lady of Controversy: Alma López’s Irreverent Apparition*, ed. Alicia Gaspar de Alba and Alma López (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 63-65.

²²² Alma López Gaspar de Alba, in conversation with the author during an event at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) on March 11, 2025. This detail was mentioned after discussing the visceral anger and hate that pushed the young men to not only destroy the mural but also take out their rage on the women themselves through domestic violence and slander.

from a small group of men as a direct correlation to the dismemberment of Coyolxauhqui. López later reflected,

After the mural was damaged Christina and I met with the young women. We talked about Coyolxauhqui and the strong women portrayed rising behind them. They said that the reason they believed the mural was damaged was because when they were younger some of them would associate with and date some of the neighborhood guys. They felt they were mistreated, viewed as property belonging to the guys, and that their dating options were limited because once a girl went out with one guy she could not go out with his friend without being considered a whore. Therefore they began dating guys who live outside of Estrada Courts. The young women asked us not to remove *Project Life* because this act would mean that they were playing games with the guys and they did not want to be engaged with them in any way. To them the vinyl mural was only a mural, and they knew their world extended beyond the neighborhood.²²³

Coyolxauhqui was reawakened by López and the young women as a relevant narrative that sounded the alarm on the continued violence and wrongdoings done by men to women. The story of Coyolxauhqui resonated with the four women who perceived the slashing of the mural as a parallel reaction from the young men who treated them as property. The loss of the mural did not discourage the young women from dreaming of a more just future. It was the idea of their world extending “beyond the neighborhood” embodied by the image of *Las Four* that endured and kept their memories and happiness alive.

The digital images of *Las Four* and *Maria de Los Angeles* are preserved by the artist and have been reprinted on paper or metal since then. For example, the 2023-2024 traveling exhibition *Xican-a.o.x. Body*, organized by the American Federation of Arts and co-curated by Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, Marissa Del Toro, and Gilbert Vicario, featured a small print of *Las Four*.²²⁴ Writing in the catalog, Ondine Chavoya explained that soon after *Las Four* was

²²³ López, *Ciudad Híbrida / Hybrid City*, 74-75.

²²⁴ Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, Marissa Del Toro, and Gilbert Vicario, *Xican-a.o.x. Body* (Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2024), organized by the American Federation of Arts. The title of the mural was misspelled in the catalog. Also, as noted by C. Ondine Chavoya, the name “is also a critical, intertextual commentary on the patriarchal histories of Chicano art and Mexican muralism by referring to the Chicano art group Los Four as well as the catchphrase ‘los

“damaged and ultimately destroyed,” López created a digital print that could “circulate as a multiple in response.”²²⁵ López’s strategy to create multiples of the original image continues to push the boundaries of our understanding of Chicano muralism. No longer tied to specific physical locations, murals can now be transformed into digital images existing online as well as into prints in small or large format.²²⁶

My analysis views López’s digital and moveable murals for the Witness to Los Angeles History: Digital Mural Project in Estrada Courts as ephemeral objects printed on vinyl that became permanent online. López’s *Las Four* and *Maria de Los Angeles* portrayed a “Chicanafuturist” re-vision of the past that unearthed the ancient Aztec sculptures while repairing the legacy of women living in Estrada Courts visualized through a condensed timeline. Clara Román-Odio elegantly stated that these murals stirred historical memory and “cultural pride” by “reclaiming” the urban neighborhoods of East Los Angeles. She added that López’s “heroic iconography of her Aztlán originates in women’s bodies, which are linked to a spiritual female ancestry from the pre- and postconquest era.”²²⁷ Román-Odio’s insight on López’s images of “Tonantzin-Guadalupe-Coatlicue-Coyolxauhqui” as well as the depiction of everyday women elaborated upon the importance of self-representation and self-determination. These women represented the persistence of the previous generation supported by the resilience of goddesses, heroines, scholars, artists, and activists nourishing the dreams of the young Chicanas.

tres grandes’ which refers to artists José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros,” p. 58, footnote 6.

²²⁵ C. Ondine Chavoya, “Queer *Movidas*: Chicana Camp and Genealogies of Resistance,” in *Xican-a.o.x Body* (Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2024), 50.

²²⁶ Alma López Gaspar de Alba, “Censored,” <http://almalopez.com/censored.html>.

²²⁷ Clara Román-Odio, “Queering the Sacred: Love as Oppositional Consciousness in Alma López’s Visual Art,” in *Our Lady of Controversy: Alma López’s “Irreverent Apparition”* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 136-137.

Sandra de la Loza's *Mural Remix* (2011)

Sandra de la Loza was born and raised in East Los Angeles. From 1990 to 1992, de la Loza worked with the silkscreen department as an intern for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., traveled to Mexico City while participating in an education abroad program with the University of California to study at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), and finished her bachelor's degree at the University of California, Berkeley.²²⁸ After finishing her undergraduate studies, de la Loza returned to Los Angeles and began working as a public high school teacher. She also enrolled at East Los Angeles Community College (ELACC) to pursue a "secondary credential" as an art teacher but eventually stopped. De la Loza then returned to her art practice and founded the guerilla art collective, the Pocho Research Society of Erased and Invisible History (PRS), and organized an interventionist public art project titled *Operation Invisible Monument* in 2022. The purpose of this act was to "covertly" install commemorative plaques at sites of "unattributed or 'white'-washed monuments of the past" throughout East Los Angeles.²²⁹ By 2004, de la Loza graduated with a master's in fine arts with an emphasis in photography at California State University, Long Beach.

Jennifer Ponce de León described Sandra de la Loza's Pocho Research Society of Erased and Invisible History (PRS) as an unofficial historical society that re-conceptualized the practice

²²⁸ Sandra de la Loza studied Chicano Studies at UC Berkeley. See "About Sandra de la Loza" in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) press information sheet, 2011, <https://www.lacma.org/press/mural-remix-sandra-de-la-loza> Also, C.V. curriculum vitae, circa 2023, www.hijadela.net.

²²⁹ Sandra de la Loza, "Introduction," and "Operation Invisible Monument," in *The Pocho Research Society Field Guide to L.A.: Monuments and Murals of Erased and Invisible Histories* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2011), 1. One of the plaques was placed where David A. Siqueiros's *América Tropical* (1932) was located containing textual information about the mural and its censorship with the words "the entire mural was whitewashed." pp. 6. See also Jennifer Ponce de León, "Historiographers of the Invisible," in *Another Aesthetics Is Possible: Arts of Rebellion in the Fourth World War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 108.

of “historical production” and the “object of the past,” bringing to the forefront “social agents, practices, and historical forces that are regularly rendered invisible in official histories.”²³⁰ Most of these interventions are collaborative, with the artist working with other artists, writers, archivists, and local community members to reimagine public art and history. Ponce de la León noted that the Chicano movement was a key aspect of her identity and art practice influenced by the 1970s era and culture but also by her older brother Ernesto de la Loza, who produced several notable murals in East Los Angeles. De la Loza explained her brother taught her to “cruise, look at the city, look at the people, reflect,” and to think of art as not a “profession” but a “lifestyle.”²³¹ The Chicano art movement’s impact on the artist’s life and identity was fundamental to her aesthetic and interventionist practice protecting the local art history.

The 2011 publication, *The Pocho Research Society Field Guide to L.A.: Monuments and Murals of Erased and Invisible Histories*, included other PRS interventionist projects that focused on the Chicano-themed murals on the walls of Estrada Courts. De la Loza explained that “muralism is an art form that uniquely explores questions about space and power within the urban landscape. And yet, neglected, vandalized, and buffed, East L.A.’s murals and the histories they contain stand to disappear.”²³² This chapter was dedicated to recuperating the local history but also highlighted the unique quality of each mural from the perspective of a local tour guide. The comic book design and feel of the mural tour became an intimate look into the lives of everyday women characterized by “Payasa,” a Chicana chola or pachuca figurine shown wearing black sunglasses, a long green trench coat, and lavender shirt who guided the reader to each

²³⁰ Jennifer Ponce de León, 80-85.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 100-102.

²³² Sandra de la Loza, “A Guided Tour of Murals in East L.A.,” 56-57.

mural site to discuss the character's memory of coming together with the "homegirls." Payasa elaborated upon this experience of viewing each mural as a place where community members could "kick back in front of a different mural every day and get transported to another world."²³³ There is even mention of de la Loza's brother Ernesto de la Loza's mural *Organic Stimulus* (1975), highlighting their own "real magic mountain," referencing an amusement park outside of the city but also implying the mural was a better alternative.

Payasa later discussed the repainting and deterioration or tagging of the murals over the years, including a segment titled "wall of buffed murals," where murals that are tagged by "young graffiti heads" are buffed or painted over with white or mustard color paint creating a rectangular whitewashing of the bottom half of the wall. There was a sense of optimism by Payasa as she mentioned that despite the absence of the mural one can still "hear the murmur of the tales these murals tell," conjuring the living memory of the space and people. The purpose of the character of Payasa, who is based on a local woman named Mary, a respected member of the Estrada Courts community, was to personify the local histories of the Chicano themed murals. De la Loza described the murals of East Los Angeles as forgotten monuments that stand in "honor" of the Chicana/o artists that produced them in the 1970s. This PRS project is a precursor moment that marked the artist's intervention in collecting content about the murals in an effort to preserve and revive the local history of the previous generation of Chicana/o artists. Many of these murals no longer exist due to deterioration, whitewashing, repainting, or being buffed because of graffiti; therefore, the guided tour served as another form of archiving the invisible past, but also celebrating it, from the perspective of a Chicana/x homegirl.

²³³ Ibid., 62-63. The figurine character resembled the collectable Homies series of plastic toy sculptures representing urban Mexican American and Chicano culture. The Homies series was invented by David Gonzales in 1998.

Then in 2011, the Getty Institution's *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980* provided de la Loza another opportunity to continue this interventionist art practice to focus on the invisible Chicano murals of East Los Angeles. The exhibition *Mural Remix* was part of the multi-part exhibitions cycle *L.A. Xicano*, organized by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC). This show was curated by Chon Noriega, with Sandra de la Loza's repurposing of the photographic archive of Nancy Van Lauderback Tovar. The exhibition *Mural Remix: Sandra de la Loza* opened on October 15, 2011, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in the Ahmanson building (Figure 4).

Most of Nancy Van Lauderback Tovar's documentation focused on murals that were in situ. Some have been restored and continue to be present in the community, whereas many others have been destroyed, whitewashed, or removed. The Nancy Tovar Murals of East Los Angeles collection of over 600 slides is accessible online via the UCLA Library digital collection.²³⁴ The database contains 314 images and metadata on the murals photographed by Van Lauderback Tovar from 1974 to the early 1980s. This project emerged out of happenstance when Van Lauderback Tovar asked the artist for help using a new scanner. De la Loza explained,

She was preparing to put together a slide show from her slide documentation of Eastside Chicano murals for the grand opening of a new art space in Boyle Heights, the First Street Studies, that a mutual friend, Lilia Ramirez, had invited her to participate in. While I flipped through boxes containing over 600 slides, I expected to encounter familiar territory, since I believed that I already knew Chicano muralism through childhood experience during the inception of the 'movement,' visits to sites, and time put into reading about this period. Instead, her collection opened into a wild and rich array of color, patterning, and iconographic imagery that defied my preconceptions. From *placas* to landscapes to abstract patterning to fully developed narrative murals, her 'organic' archive in a sense pricked at the popular view of muralism that tended to focus on figurative and narrative works with more visually identifiable "Chicano" and political themes. Tovar's photographic archive emanates a new light, shattering the codes of "what was" by providing material to identify new patterns, new kaleidoscopes

²³⁴ Nancy Tovar Murals of East L.A.: <https://digital.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/zz001ndq5p>.

of light.²³⁵

The exhibition emerged from these findings. The PRS's mission to encourage the conservation of and advocacy for the restoration of Chicano murals in East Los Angeles was further manifested in other installations. For instance, the performance *Action Portraits* designed by de la Loza in collaboration with Joseph Santarromana, Fabian Debora, Lilia Ramirez, Raul Gonzalez, Timoi, Sonji, and Roberto del Hoyo, raised the visibility of Tovar's slide archive but also the artist's message of restoring and preserving local murals.

In *Action Portraits* (2011), the various performers paint their bare skin with the repeated patterns of the original symbols and figures painted on the murals on their bodies (Figure 5). Each brushstroke and layer of paint revealed the original design, described by the artist as "kaleidoscopes of light," visualized as abstract and geometric symbols. During the opening of the exhibition at LACMA, these videos were projected three at a time onto the 20-foot walls of the interior gallery space evoking the experience of viewing large scale murals painted outdoors. According to Adolfo Guzman-Lopez, this was the "strongest part" of the exhibition because of the impression of seeing "several videos of topless men and women in various stages of painting their chests and faces with wide paintbrushes," until each body "split like tectonic plates" and "fold[ed] into each other."²³⁶ The display of the male and female nude body also prompted viewers to gaze upon these ethnic bodies as stand-ins for the anonymous artist and their community murals.

²³⁵ Sandra de la Loza, "Mural Remix: Sandra de la Loza, Los Angeles County Museum of Art," in *L.A. Xicano*, edited by Chon A. Noriega, Terezita Romo, and Pilar Tompkins (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2011), 190.

²³⁶ Adolfo Guzman-Lopez, "SoCal Focus: L.A. Artist Remixes Lost and Iconic Eastside Murals," *PBS SoCal*, November 1, 2011, <https://www.pbssocal.org/socal-focus/l-a-artist-remixes-lost-and-iconic-eastside-murals>.

Karen Mary Davalos drew attention to the “tension” between the public and private representation of the men compared to the female performers in the video because the viewer is “forced to focus on the mural motifs, and the muralists’ bodies become the canvas that holds the image.”²³⁷ She continued to explain how the female artists appear with “breasts already painted, an act that disguises sex and gender,” but also denied a “sexualized” viewing of the performance. The male performers were also semi-nude but there was no paint already covering certain parts of their bodies. Furthermore, Davalos mentioned that by “withholding racialized and gendered readings of the muralists’ bodies, de la Loza increases the resonance of a communal location and place.”²³⁸ From this perspective, the act of painting the body, either male or female, personifies the murals but also removes race, gender, and body type to focus on the emerging image. By the end of the video their bodies are completely painted and become unrecognizable, further conveying the abstract form of the mural and diluted presence of the artists.

The vanishing of the muralist is interpreted as an analogy of the anonymous or forgotten Chicana/o artist who painted the mural, but whose memory continues as the image lives on. This approach prompted viewers to find a deep connection to the psychedelic colors and patterns displayed on a lightbox, serigraph print, or as a recorded performance — an homage to the original murals on the walls of local buildings and public places. De la Loza removed the preconceived notion of what a masterful mural looked like and focused on the value of the work of anonymous artists, even if their murals had been destroyed, whitewashed, or buffed. The archive not only provided evidence and preserved the original mural images, but also revived the

²³⁷ Karen Mary Davalos, “Introduction,” in *Chicana/o Remix: Art and Errata since the Sixties* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 10.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

murals of Boyle Heights, Estrada Courts, and Ramona Gardens as well as random walls graffitied or painted by anonymous or unknown artists.

This exhibition project also represented the artist's refusal to let the Chicana/o/x and Mexican American murals of East Los Angeles disappear from the consciousness of the next generation. This exhibition centered on recovery but also transforming our temporality, by traveling through time to relive the 1970s in the twenty-first century. Her determination to revive the significance of each mural prompted a "Chicanafuturist" re-vision embodied as guerilla art, performance, video, and other mediums. For instance, de la Loza resurfaced an anonymous artist's mural and transformed the original design using image manipulation software, reproducing each symbol as a kaleidoscopic arrangement. One example is the slide image of the mural depicting five Indigenous Mesoamerican icons such as two black eagles facing toward emblems resembling the Maya ruler Lord Bird Jaguar emerging from the mouth of the plumed serpent deity Kukulcan. These figures are drawn surrounding a red and yellow sun and an anthropomorphic warrior with eagle feathers superimposed over a dark-beige background (Figure 6).²³⁹ The central figure was sourced from the Aztec wooden drum or huehuetl of Malinalco, also known as the "earth drum" or Tlalpanhuehuetl in Nahuatl.²⁴⁰ This image was then re-arranged and re-conceptualized by de la Loza and named *Mural Remix, Artist Unknown, Untitled 1970s*, showing a multiplied image with fractal shaped designs via digital collage.

²³⁹ Sandra de la Loza, "Mural Remix: Sandra de la Loza, Los Angeles County Museum of Art," in *L.A. Xicano*, edited by Chon A. Noriega, Terezita Romo, and Pilar Tompkins (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2011), 193. This slide image is not part of the digitized archive in the Nancy Tovar digital collection.

²⁴⁰ The Tlalpanhuehuetl is part of the collection of the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, Mexico. The wooden drum can be viewed on their website. https://mna.inah.gob.mx/colecciones_detalle.php?id=2915 To view the original Yaxchilan lintel 15 featuring Lord Bird Jaguar and Lady Wak Tuun, see the British Museum's website, The Yaxchilan Lintels, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_Am1923-Maud-1.

For the show at LACMA this image was reproduced as an installation printed on Duratrans — a popular brand of translucent film — that was illuminated from behind by LED light boxes, each measuring 4 feet high by 4 feet wide. These installations utilized technology commonly used for advertising influenced by commercial art where the lightbox is used similar to the neon light sign or billboard. In the exhibition *Seeing Chicana: The Durón Family Collection*, launched in 2024 at the Monterey Museum of Art, the image resurfaced as a serigraph print measuring 33 inches by 33 inches (Figure 7). In the form of a serigraph print, the context of the original image existing as a mural is obscured by the size and abstract quality of the artwork. Davalos explained that the artist “employed abstraction” to reveal “political concerns or philosophical questions” concerning the preservation of local history relating to the Chicana/o mural movement in East Los Angeles.²⁴¹

De la Loza introduced the concept of the “social sublime” to describe the “transformative and transcendental impetus that affects both the social actors involved in the production of the mural (the artist and community volunteers) and the larger society within which the mural is located.”²⁴² This idea of the “social sublime” is conveyed by the geometric forms and the painted bodies of artists who are separated from their personal identities, race, or gender to embody the positive and negative memory of the Chicano mural movement. De la Loza explained,

The platform of the mural provided a physical space in which to materialize counternarratives that questioned and reimaged existing political and social structure. It allowed members of a community to walk to the edge of the known and the unknown and directly experience the possibility of another self, one

²⁴¹ Karen Mary Davalos, “Reframing Expectations of Chicana, Chicano, and Chicana/x Art: The Durón Family Collection,” in *Seeing Chicana: The Durón Family Collection*, Monterey Museum of Art (Berkeley: Edition One, 2024), 32.

²⁴² Sandra de la Loza, “La Raza Cómica: An Investigation into the Space of Chicana/o Muralism,” in *L.A. Chicano*, edited by Chon A. Noriega, Terezita Romo, and Pilar Tompkins (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2011), 61.

outside the frame or language of their existing worlds.²⁴³

The archival image was reanimated in the performance of *Action Portraits* and reimagined as psychedelic fractal shapes in *Mural Remix*, *Artist Unknown*, *Untitled 1970s* while resurfacing the social, political, and cultural realities of the past to change the outcome of the future. The production and design of murals in the 1970s was linked to social experiences that engaged with the younger generation, including moments of distress and fear involving the police and the profiling of Chicano youth.²⁴⁴ For the younger generation, mural making encouraged them to envision new futures and manifest these ideas as enlarged images on the walls that they see on a daily basis.

Through a “Chicanafuturist” perspective, the unknown or fragmented history was transformed to envision a future that emboldened the Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x community then and now. This exhibition project revitalized Chicana/o/x muralism because at the time there was a city-wide moratorium (dating back to 2002) on the production of new mural projects. Sandra de la Loza explained during an interview with Chon Noriega that she was “attracted to the challenge of finding meaningful and relevant ways to activate this history given the current context,” to prove that although these murals were neglected, whitewashed, or removed their presence lingered and artists continued to revive the mural movement despite its disruption.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Ibid., 61.

²⁴⁴ Sandra de la Loza discussed collective subjectivity through the lens of the social sublime to explain the embedded social aspects of muralism, which included a quote from Judithe Hernández to describe the experience of painting a mural outside on the walls of the neighborhoods of East Los Angeles with local youth. Hernández recalled a moment that was “terrifying and wonderful at the same time,” because of an incident when she witnessed a local police officer grab a twelve-year-old, “raising the youth four feet off the ground,” and immediately afterward more police officers arrived at the scene with guns drawn at the artists and youth. This resulted in the arrest of the youth assistants and a homeowner who supported the mural project on his building. De la Loza explained, “the mural is not solely an aesthetic practice but also one that is performative, spatial, and social.” See “La Raza Cós mica: An Investigation into the Space of Chicana/o Muralism,” in *L.A. Xicano*, 60-61.

²⁴⁵ Sandra de la Loza interviewed by Chon Noriega, “Mural Remix: Q&A with Sandra de la Loza,” November 2, 2011, Los Angeles, California. Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Unframed,

The installations and performances for *Mural Remix* engaged in unearthing the past to make this local knowledge accessible and relatable to the next generation by enabling the youth to visualize their own reality. The possibilities of a thriving community without discrimination or harassment from law enforcement are pictured in these murals through conceptual and psychedelic imagery described by de la Loza as having a “dream-like reality” influenced by the previous generation’s exploration of an alternative experience.

After years of re-examining Van Lauderback Tovar’s collection, the artworks took on new meaning, becoming portals instantly providing the artist a glimpse into the 1970s with the ability to convey this knowledge of Chicana/o aesthetics to the present-day. As noted by Franklin Sirmans, head of contemporary art at LACMA, the project provided audiences with a “nuanced” way to consider a “vital aspect of the city’s art history,” because these artworks were not just “an homage or another mural.”²⁴⁶ These iterations approached Chicano muralism through a contemporary lens, another manifestation of what I discuss as a “Chicanafuturist” mural, which was central to de la Loza’s PRS interventionist public art practice. The constant destruction and reinvention of each mural transform its meaning and physical existence generation after generation.

<https://unframed.lacma.org/2011/11/02/mural-remix-qa-with-sandra-de-la-loza>. The city of Los Angeles implemented a moratorium on the production of new murals in 2002 until 2013. See Catherine Saillant’s article on the lifting of the ban in 2013. Saillant, “Council lifts ban on public murals,” *The Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 2013, <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-xpm-2013-aug-28-la-me-0829-murals-20130829-story.html>.

²⁴⁶ Carolina A. Miranda, “Art Talk: Intramural Activity,” *ArtNews* (October 2011), 36. <https://www.hijadela.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Art-News.pdf>.

Conclusion: Muralism without Borders

My research serves as an *ofrenda*, an offering of gratitude to women artists whose experiences and contributions to the Chicano and Mexican mural movement are celebrated and honored for generations to come. Each chapter identified Chicana/x, Mexicana, and Latina/x artists and their portable murals that envisioned her-story, echoing the Chicano Movement's call for self-representation and self-determination. This study showed how each artist's portable mural signified a reframing of the patriarchal, political, and nationalist iconography often seen in Chicano muralism. My approach prioritized the experience of women artists and their murals depicting Indigenous Mesoamerican cultures and everyday Chicana/x and Latina/x women as the protagonists of alternative historical narratives. These murals pictured a future where cultural healing and remembrance of local knowledge represented an active form of resilience generation after generation.

This manuscript also reflects my positionality as a Chicana artist and scholar writing about Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana muralists to enrich the canon of Chicana/o and Mexican art history. Why are there no great women muralists? To answer this question, I proposed a Chicana/x feminist and futurist lens, theorized as a Chicana/x re-visioning, to identify the participation of women artists in Chicano and Mexican mural history. These Chicana/x and Latina/x artists created their portable murals to redefine the genre of Chicano muralism by portraying women and Indigenous Native American peoples and their culture as integral to local and global histories. Thus, each chapter demonstrated the power of women's art through the portable and digital mural as mobile messages of resistance and transformation. Their use of ideas and cultural icons of the past shaped their reimagined present and future.

In Chapter One, Judith F. Baca's, Barbara Carrasco's and Josefina Quezada's murals portrayed the experiences of Indigenous Mesoamerican, Native American, and ethnic peoples as integral components to their reimagined her-story of Southern California. Chapter Two focused on Juana Alicia's, Carmen León's, and Patricia Rodríguez's murals that evoked the saying, "la cultural cura," the phrase embodied as deified goddess figures as well as Ohlone and everyday women. Their use of conceptual characters reassured the viewer that their actions today can repair the wounds of the past through cultural healing, renewal, and remembrance. In Chapter Three, my analysis of Alma López's and Sandra de la Loza's digital murals interrogated the idea of the portable mural and the use of technology to convey visual narratives that empowered Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x communities in East Los Angeles. I applied Catherine S. Ramírez's concept of "Chicanafuturist" art to explain López's and de la Loza's use of archival content and image manipulation software to reinvent Chicano muralism.

In conclusion, this investigation of Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana artists and muralists insists on a broader understanding of both the muralist and mural making. Throughout the manuscript I identified women muralists that I view as "great" artists to answer Linda Nochlin's infamous question as well as demonstrate the hidden or absent voices of women artists within Chicana/o/x and Mexican art history.²⁴⁷ My approach was also influenced by Emma Pérez's concept of the "decolonial imaginary" and Chela Sandoval's "differential consciousness," which allowed me to re-contextualize Chicana/o art history by inserting a Chicana/x, Latina/x, and Mexicana perspective. Pérez described the "decolonial imaginary" as part of third space feminist practice that reveals the silenced or omitted experiences of women of

²⁴⁷ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 145-178. Nochlin's 1971 essay challenged art history to reconsider the idea of "great" artists by demystifying androcentric historiographies in European art. Her question also informed my research question, why are there no great women muralists?

color. According to Pérez, the decolonial imaginary is part of the critique of “hegemonic feminist theories” that uncovers the “hidden voices of Chicanas” that have disappeared into the “interstitial gaps” in modern history.²⁴⁸ This study contributes to Pérez’s and Sandoval’s theories by asserting a Chicana/x re-vision of history that amplifies the voices of women artists in the Chicano art movement from the late 1960s to today.

Shifra M. Goldman also provided valuable insight on writing a social art history that prioritized the experiences of women of color. Per Goldman, to uncover these “hidden histories” scholars must “overturn or fracture” hegemonic histories to form new timelines filled with stories from a Chicana/x or Latina/x point of view.²⁴⁹ Goldman encouraged future art historians to write social art histories that revises these hegemonic narratives by identifying new heroines and protagonists, in the process replacing the “well-worn” heroes of Chicano art. The title of my conclusion, “muralism without borders,” explores new frontiers surrounding the genre of mural making and muralism with an impetus to locate the presence of women muralists. This study is a point of departure for future scholarship to propose broader investigations into women’s art in the Chicana/o art and mural movement.

²⁴⁸ Emma Pérez, “Introduction” in *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xvi.

²⁴⁹ Shifra M. Goldman, “Hidden Histories: The Chicano Experience,” in *Tradition and Transformation: Chicana/o Art from the 1970s through the 1990s* ed. Charlene Villaseñor Black (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2015), 52. Per Goldman, “to excavate a hidden history often means to fracture or overturn the existing and exclusionary hegemonic history; it means to replace the well-worn heroes and heroines (and heroines there surely are!) with new faces, personalities, and agendas. It means to revamp the way history is considered to reevaluate its agents and processes.”

Appendix: Illustrations

Chapter 1:

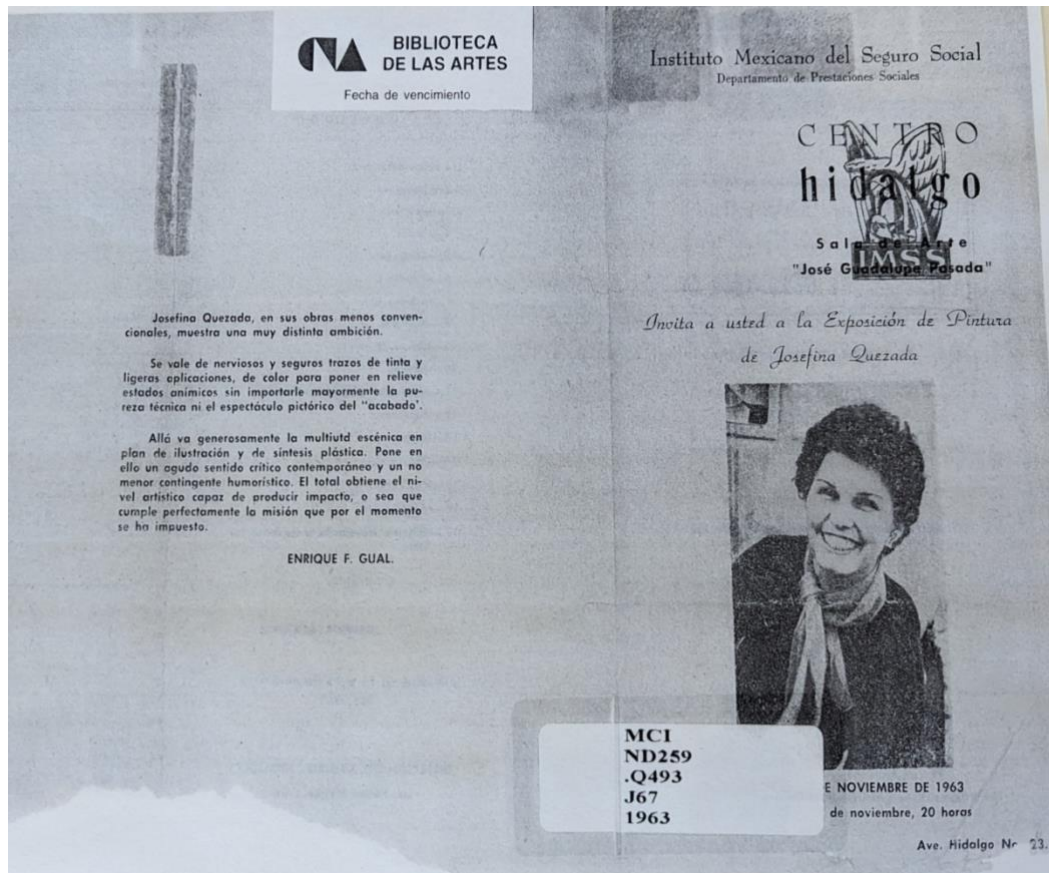


Figure 1. Unknown Photographer. Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, Departamento de Presentaciones Sociales. Exhibition of Josefina Quezada's artworks at Sala de Arte José Guadalupe Posada, Centro Hidalgo. November 1963. Biblioteca de la Artes, Centro Nacional de las Artes, Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico.



Figure 2. Photographer Unknown. Untitled. A color photograph of Josefina Quezada in front of mural titled *Mensaje de amor y paz* (*A Message of Love and Peace*). 1978. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, *Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation (CARA)* Papers, collection 10, box 6.



Figure 3. Photographer Unknown. Untitled. Color Photograph of Josefina Quezada's *History of Maize* mural, right panel. Circa 1980s-1990s. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, *Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation (CARA)* Papers, collection 10, box 6.



Figure 4. Josefina M. Quezada. *History of Maize*. 1978. Oil on canvas. 8 feet x 16 feet. Alta Med Art Collection, Los Angeles, CA. Photographed by the author in 2022. Left Panel.



Figure 5. Josefina M. Quezada. *History of Maize*. 1978. Oil on canvas. 8 feet x 16 feet. Alta Med Art Collection, Los Angeles, CA. Photographed by the author in 2022. Right panel.



Figure 6. Barbara Carrasco. *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective*. 1981. 16 feet x 80 feet (40 or 43 panels, 4 feet x 8 feet each). Acrylic on Masonite and wood. Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, CA. Photographed by author in 2017 at L.A. Union Station.



Figure 7. Laura Aguilar. Photograph of Barbara Carrasco, circa late 1980s. Published in *La Gente*, May 1983. Front cover image for the article titled, “The History of Los Angeles: A Mexican Perspective,” written by Beatriz Echaveste and Gloria Estolano. UC Santa Barbara Special Collections Library, Galería de la Raza Archives, CEMA 4, box 43, folder 6.



Figure 8. Barbara Carrasco. *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective*, detail of right section with scene of Siqueiros's *América Tropical* whitewashed. 1981. 16 feet x 80 feet (40 or 43 panels, 4 feet x 8 feet each). Acrylic on Masonite and wood. Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, CA. Photographed by author on November 17, 2024.



Figure 9. Barbara Carrasco. *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective*, detail of left section. 1981. 16 feet x 80 feet (40 or 43 panels, 4 feet x 8 feet each). Acrylic on Masonite and wood. Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, CA. Photographed by author in November 2024.



Figure 10. Barbara Carrasco. *L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective*, detail of right bottom section with group portraits. 1981. 16 feet x 80 feet (40 or 43 panels, 4 feet x 8 feet each). Acrylic on Masonite and wood. Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, CA. Photographed by author in November 2024.



Figure 11. Rod Rolle. *Judy Baca Studio*. Black and white photograph of Judith F. Baca with artist assistants. 1989-1990. Rod Rolle “Photo Stories” in the photography exhibition, “Spirit of Community.” https://rodrolle.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/Spirit-of-Community/G0000ve9fGufjEhI/I0000MkP_Zc9hfbY/C0000QOjp2wEQtT8



Figure 12. Judith F. Baca. *The Future of Guadalupe or Angel of Guadalupe: Dreams of the Future*. Guadalupe Murals Project. 1990. Four panels each measuring 8 feet x 7 feet. Acrylic on wood. Guadalupe City Hall, Guadalupe, CA. Tony Martindale, *Santa Maria Times*, staff photograph from 2017. https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/gallery-visit-the-murals-that-can-be-found-hiding-in-guadalupe/collection_b5695927-63b2-504e-9f22-4361f76bdea4.html#4

Chapter 2:



Figure 1. Photographer unknown. Untitled. A color photograph of Patricia Rodríguez in front of the portable mural *Goddess Tlazolteotl*, circa 1982. UC Santa Barbara Special Collections. Galería de la Raza Archives (CEMA 4). Series 8. Slide albums 4.



Figure 2. Photographer unknown. Untitled. A color photograph of Patricia Rodríguez in front of the portable mural *Goddess Tlazolteotl*, circa 1982. UC Santa Barbara Special Collections Library. Galería de la Raza Archives (CEMA 4). Series 8. Slide albums 4 and 10.



Figure 3. Patricia Rodríguez. *Goddess Tlazolteotl*. 1982. 4 feet x 6 feet. Politec acrylic on wood. UC Santa Barbara Special Collections. Galería de la Raza Archives (CEMA 4). Series 8. Slide albums 4 and 10.



Figure 4. Patricia Rodríguez. *Goddess Tlazolteotl*, detail of torso. 1983. 4 feet x 6 feet. Politec acrylic on wood. UC Santa Barbara Special Collections. Archives of Centro Cultural de la Raza (CEMA 12). Series 6. Box 166.



Figure 5. Patricia Rodríguez. *Goddess Tlazolteotl*, detail of top portion. 1983. 4 feet x 6 feet. Politec acrylic on wood. Galería de la Raza. UC Santa Barbara Special Collections. Archives of Centro Cultural de la Raza (CEMA 12). Series 6. Box 166.

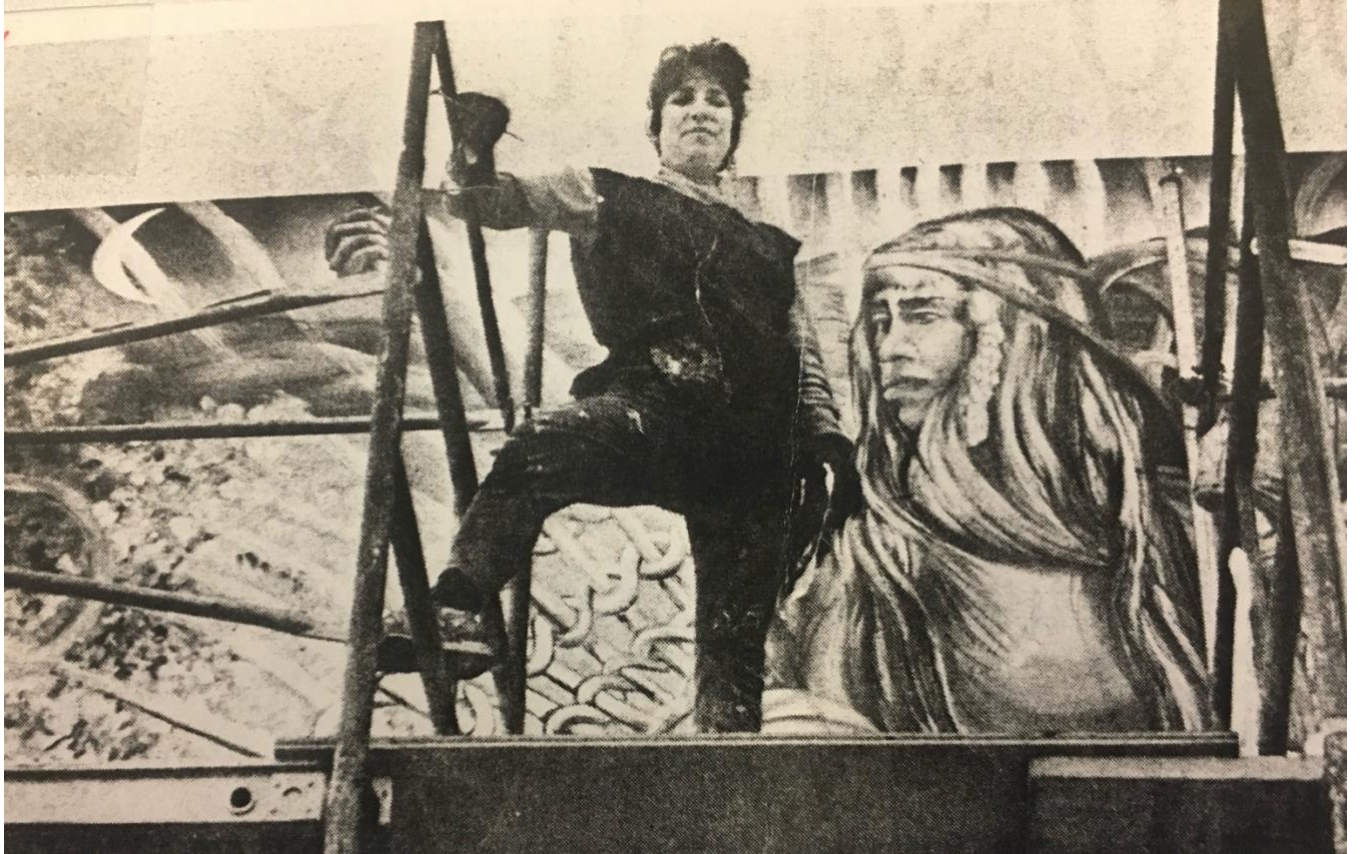


Figure 6. Unknown Photographer. Juana Alicia on the scaffold in front of the mural. *San José City Times*. January 1992. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 7. Juana Alicia. *Regeneración (Regeneration)*. 1991. Acrylic on wood panels. 12 feet x 24 feet. Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA), San José, CA. Courtesy of the artist. All Rights Reserved.



Figure 8. Juana Alicia. *Regeneración (Regeneration)*. 1991. Acrylic on wood panels. 12 feet x 24 feet. A color photograph of the mural displayed outdoors and documented by the artist in San José, California, circa 1991. Courtesy of the artist. All Rights Reserved.

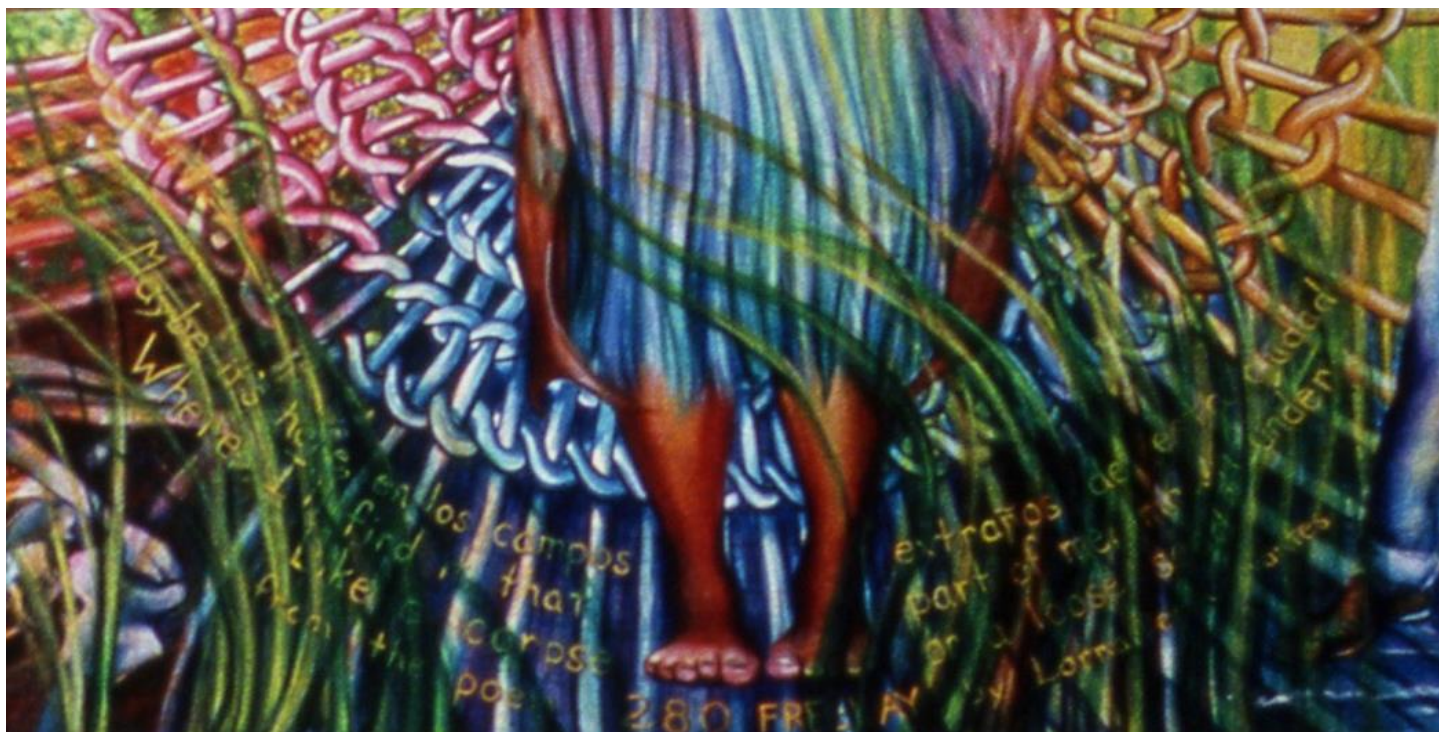


Figure 9. Juana Alicia. *Regeneración (Regeneration)*, detail of text. 1991. Acrylic on wood panels. 12 feet x 24 feet. Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA), San José, CA. Courtesy of the artist. All Rights Reserved.

The text reads: “Maybe it’s here, en los campos extraños de esta ciudad. Where I’ll find it, that part of me mown under, like a corpse, or a loose seed.” A quote from the poem titled “Freeway 280” by Lorna Dee Cervantes completed in 1954. <https://poets.org/poem/freeway-280>



Figure 10. Carmen León. Photographed by Shmuel Thaler for the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. 1991.
Linda Pope, "Carmen León's Latina Vision," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. December 6, 1991.

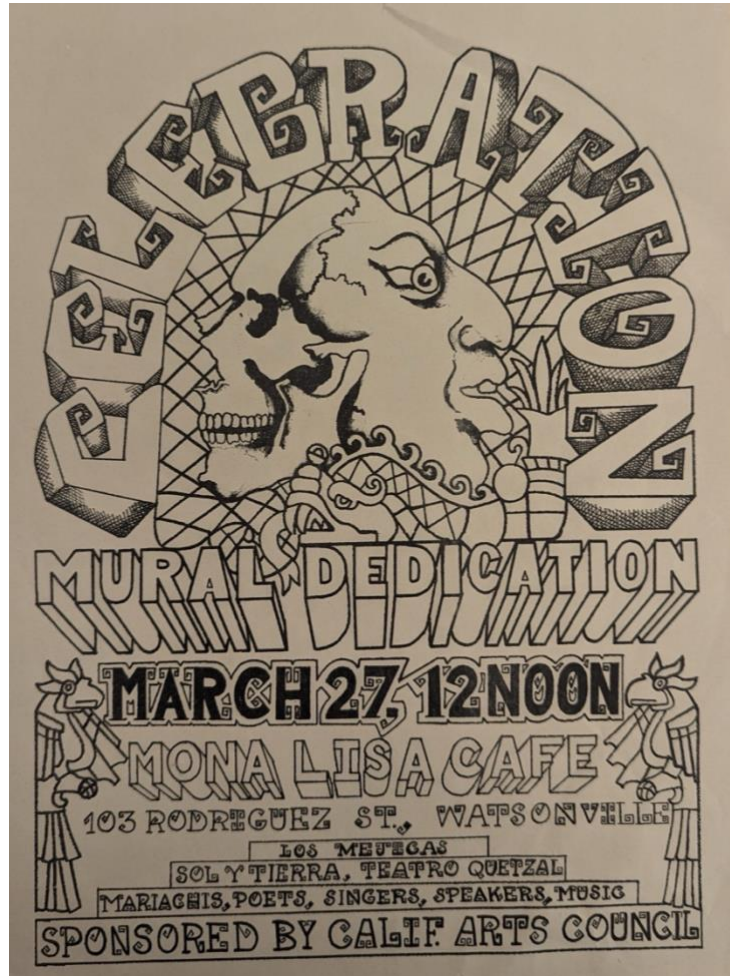


Figure 11. Unknown artist. Mural dedication flier for the “Mona Lisa Café” mural in Watsonville, California. March 27, 1977. Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Eduardo Carrillo Papers, circa 1975-1997. Box 2. Folder 8. Photographed by author in 2023. See also, Carmen León Papers, <https://californiarevealed.org/do/4dde18a6-a679-4489-8498-3be3bc8cfafe>



Figure 12. Unknown photographer. Untitled. Mike Wallace, "Murals in tradition of Mexican folk art," *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian*. May 7, 1977. Page 9. Carmen León Papers, California Revealed, Museo Eduardo Carrillo. <https://californiarevealed.org/do/0be51104-27db-4233-ba34-ca1072e1fdde>



Figure 13. Carmen León. *La Cultura Cura*. 2020. Acrylic on wood. 4 feet x 8 feet. Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery, Watsonville, CA. Photographed by the author in November 2021.



Figure 14. Carmen León. *La Cultura Cura*. 2020. Acrylic on wood. 4 feet x 8 feet. Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery, Watsonville, CA. Photographed by the author in November 2021.



Figure 15. Carmen León. *La Cultura Cura*. 2020. Detail of left and right section of the portable mural. Acrylic on wood. 4 feet x 8 feet. Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery, Watsonville, CA. Photographed by the author in November 2021.



Figure 16. Carmen León. *La Cultura Cura*. 2020. Detail of bottom section of the portable mural. Acrylic on wood. 4 feet x 8 feet. Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery, Watsonville, CA. Photographed by the author in November 2021.

Chapter 3:



Figure 1. Unknown photographer. Estrada Courts Community Center circa 1997. Color photograph. Estrada Courts Community Center, East Los Angeles, California. Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) and the Estrada Courts Community Center, Digital Mural Project at Estrada Courts. Courtesy of Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) and Judy Baca.



Figure 2. Alma López. *Maria de Los Angeles*. 8 feet x 9 feet Digital mural printed on vinyl. Estrada Courts Community Center, East Los Angeles, California. Destroyed. Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) and the Estrada Courts Community Center, Digital Mural Project at Estrada Courts. Courtesy of Alma López Gaspar de Alba.

<https://almalopezblog.blogspot.com/2013/02/new-yearnew-blog.html>



Figure 3. Alma López. *Las Four*. 1997. 8 feet x 9 feet Digital mural printed on vinyl. Estrada Courts Community Center, East Los Angeles, California. Destroyed. Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) and the Estrada Courts Community Center, Digital Mural Project at Estrada Courts. Courtesy of Alma López Gaspar de Alba. <http://almalopez.com/censored.html>



Figure 4. Sandra de la Loza. *Mural Remix*. 2011. Installation. Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, California. Archived in the artist's website.

<https://www.hijadela.net/selected-works/2010s/mural-remix/>



Figure 5. Sandra de la Loza. *Action Portraits*. 2011. 3-channel video installation with Joseph Santarromana and with participation by Fabian Debora, Lilia Ramirez, Raul Gonzalez, Timoi, Sonji, and Roberto del Hoyo. Video installation and photographs of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) exhibition *Mural Remix* are archived in the artist's website. <https://www.hjadela.net/selected-works/2010s/mural-remix/>



Figure 6. Unknown artist. Untitled. Circa 1970s. East Los Angeles, California. Detail of Aztec / Mexica imagery in Chicano mural by an unknown artist. Nancy Tovar Murals of East L.A. Collection. Image taken from Sandra de la Loza's "Mural Remix: Los Angeles County Museum of Art," in *L.A. Xicano* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2011), 190-194, pp. 195.



Figure 7. Sandra de la Loza. *Mural Remix, Artist Unknown, Untitled 1970s*. 2011. 33 inches x 33 inches. Serigraph. The Durón Family Collection. The Monterey Museum of Art, Monterey, California. Photographed by author in 2024.

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