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ART

the urban vision

Emigdio Vasquez, an Orange County muralist and painter who received his Master of Arts from CSU Fullerton, has completed over 20 murals in the last 25 years. His murals can be found in various venues such as the Anaheim Civic Center lobby and the facade of a residential garage.

Sergio O'Cadiz, a designer, painter, muralist and architect who began integrating concrete relief murals into his buildings, has created murals in Orange and Los Angeles Counties. His Rancho Santiago College "MEChA" mural will celebrate its twenty year anniversary this year.

Benjamin Valenzuela, a muralist, painter and teacher who began as an assistant to Emigdio Vasquez, has worked with the Long Beach Parks and Recreation

Department in painting murals in Long Beach. Directing local youths as his assistants, Valenzuela creates portable murals that can be transported to the mural sites.

Yreina D. Cervantez, a third generation Chicana, is a muralist as well as a printmaker and teacher. Cervantez has worked on community mural projects in Los Angeles, Long Beach and Nicaragua. She focuses her work on the role of women in the manifestation of positive change.

Alma Lopez is the youngest of this exhibition's muralists. While working on her Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of California, Irvine, Lopez also works as a mural coordinator for the Social and Public Arts Resource Center (SPARC) on the production of murals throughout Los Angeles.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

MURAL ART: the urban vision



ural art has a rich history. The medium has continually evolved to meet the needs of the time. From the primitive cave paintings thousands of years ago at Altamira and Lascaux to the refined Italian Renaissance frescoes and the paintings of the modern Mexican mural renaissance, the function of mural art changed. Certainly the three great Mexican muralists of the twentieth century, Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, known as *Los Tres Grandes*, influenced the course of modern mural history. Invited to the United States to paint murals and teach, *Los Tres Grandes* were able to communicate their visual innovations to muralists during Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal period. However, mural art languished after WWII when government supported programs ended. Social realism and muralism were dismissed in favor of *avant-garde* abstraction, a movement that was heavily endorsed by art circles in the United States and abroad. Critical of endorsements that recognized only one kind of art, opponents argued against the notion of a single aesthetic and beauty. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s fought against this ideal of "universal" beauty. New emphasis was placed on cultural pride and individual definition. The Civil Rights movement was bolstered with alliances between farmworkers, urban working classes, student activists, and anti-war proponents. Sixties and seventies activism inspired a rebirth of muralism as a way to disseminate information. More importantly, muralists began to use murals as a means of self-expression. The murals began to depict images of social repression, and as a way to reclaim a cultural heritage. These new murals of the sixties and seventies were not government-funded projects on the walls of government buildings. They appeared in inner city ghettos and *barrios*, where depressed people lived. Murals became symbols of inspiration and empowerment for communities and for individuals within the communities.



heavily populated cities saw the greatest rise in muralism. The first notable murals of the sixties appeared in Chicago. In 1967 a group of African-American artists led by William Walker began the "Wall of Respect," depicting portraits of African-American

heroes. This urban mural movement soon found its way into cities like New York and Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, the Black Power Movement particularly influenced the Chicano community. With the Mexican mural tradition as part of their cultural heritage, Chicano artists quickly adopted the practice, helping establish Los Angeles as the Mural Capital of the World. Today, there are more than 1,000 documented murals in Los Angeles County alone.



hile many artists had participated in the social and political art movement of the sixties and seventies, with murals as one aspect, certain artists began to be identified as mural artists. As mentioned in the book, *Signs from the Heart*, published by SPARC, "Concerns about permanence, composition, formal experimentation and aesthetic quality became as important to muralists as the immediate political or organizing impact." While some mural artists continue to participate in museum and gallery exhibitions, many contemporary muralists focus on the community mural. Often the community mural involves a collaboration between artist and the people who make up the community, fostering an atmosphere of cooperation among residents. The community mural reflects the strengths of the community by serving as a public reminder of the diversity, spirit and heritage of its people. A mural does not lie enclosed within the protected atmosphere of a gallery or museum. It is exposed to the elements of weather. It is not for sale. *Mural Art: The Urban Vision* is an exhibition that does not challenge that aspect of public art but introduces, nevertheless, the constant experimentation of five contemporary mural artists. These muralists represent diversity in age, gender, style and profession, although they share the collective and personal experiences that murals provide. Vital to any artistic movement is how it reflects the needs of the time. The contemporary mural movement will continue to grow and reflect those needs while artists like these grow in maturity and skill.

Co-curators
Trang Nguyen
Karen Collins
January 1994

Murals Represented in the Exhibition

Emigdio Vasquez
Ninos Del Mundo (Children of the World) 1994
 Lemon Park, Fullerton, California

Emigdio Vasquez
One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of Progress 1982
 Anaheim Civic Center
 Anaheim, California

Emigdio Vasquez
Towards the Twenty-First Century 1985
 Manzanita Park
 Anaheim, California

Emigdio Vasquez
La Educacion y el Trabajo 1992
 Irvine Valley College
 Irvine, California

Sergio O'Cadiz
untitled 1982
 East Los Angeles Occupational Center

Sergio O'Cadiz
History and Evolution of the Chicano in the United States
The MEChA Mural 1974
 Santa Ana College (Now Rancho Santiago College)

Benjamin Valenzuela
Soaring Beyond the Stars 1993
 Admiral Kidd Park
 Long Beach, California

Yreina D. Cervantez
La Ofrenda (The Offering) 1989
 Toluca St. under the 1st St. bridge, Los Angeles, California

Yreina D. Cervantez
A Raindrop Falls on My Lips 1993
 Downtown Los Angeles, California

Alma Lopez
Welcome to Palms 1993
 Palms Middle School, Mar Vista, California

Alma Lopez
Milagro en Texas Lane (Miracle on Texas Lane) 1993
 Santa Paula, California