

## JUDITH F. BACA

Born in Los Angeles, California  
B.A. 1969, California State University Northridge.  
M.A. 1979, California State University Northridge.  
Lives in Venice, California.

Judith F. Baca is known as an artist and a leader in the art community; one of her many contributions to the Chicano mural movement is the "Great Mural" project — the longest mural in the world — painted by students and community youngsters under her direction. This project is proof of her concern for people and her use of art as a means of communication. The Great Mural traces the cultural histories of various ethnic groups who made the growth and flowering of the State of California possible.

The Gas Company commissioned Judith F. Baca to design and execute a mural about its own history; the result is a visual panorama tracing the company's past, present and future.

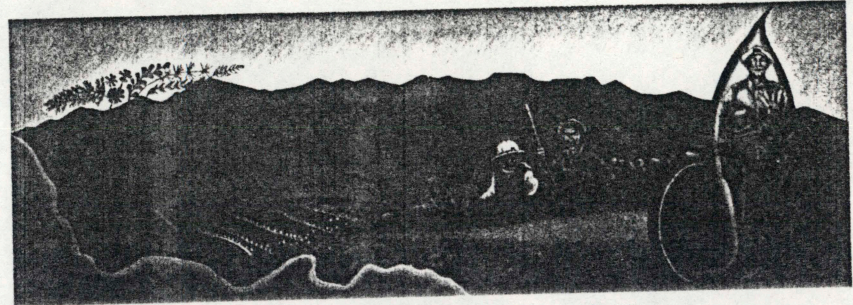
Its striking imagery includes the pipelines — as arteries which carry nature's resources — the generations of workers who connect this network of pipelines and the crews who, over the years have provided service and assistance to the many and far flung communities of Southern California.

In the process of researching, Baca toured underground storage fields, went on ride-alongs with appliance service representatives, and spent time with field workers, determined to experience first hand the complexities of this large company. Once familiar with the many intricacies of the operation, she saw people as the connecting links between past, present and future.

The mural's composition consists of three sections: the first, depicting natural gas and its origins in earth, wind and fire and the effect it had on the shaping of the landscape...its early uses in magic or natural sciences and its function as a lighting system on the main streets of the 1850's.

The image of the central section of the mural rests on a horizontally stretched map of Southern California, supporting a large pipeline which crosses the landscape of the Central Valley.

A blue, flame-shaped form emerges from the pipe's opening, framing the ghost-like figure of a 1942 service representative (inspired by a vintage photograph) — signifying that service is the lifeblood of the company. Behind



*From Pieces of Stardust, 1991-92 Acrylic on Canvas, 8'4 1/2 x 49'3 1/2" (Center Panel)*

the strong shape of the pipeline are figures of Latino workers, Irish immigrants, and an African American woman, all representing the rich ethnic mix of The Gas Company's employees. The point is clearly made that no one builds anything alone — that the past is a legacy to the present — especially for this kind of service which reaches directly into our homes.

The third panel projects into the future — with visionary imagery referring to natural gas flames, fuel cells, steam, heat, clean air, clean tide pools, a space shuttle against the early morning light. All alluding to The Gas Company as a resource with great adaptability and the potential to provide services which could beneficially affect the future of the natural environment. Reflecting on such ideas, the mural becomes a symbol of hope and pride, a tribute to all those whose achievements, have and will help shape the well-being and growth of Southern California.