MEXICAN AMERICAN EXTERIOR MURALS

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MURAL art became popular in the United States during the great depression, when wall paintings, sponsored by the Federal Arts Program of the WPA, were executed in public buildings across the land.[1] Currently mural art has become important on exterior walls of buildings and thus is part of an evolving pattern of street art.[2] This essay focuses on these murals as an element of the built environment that lends insight to cultural heritage, preferences, and change in a community. Exterior murals are now distinctive features in many urban landscapes, particularly in Mexican American districts of many cities. Here mural art is not only an artifact that embellishes the barrio landscape but also a vehicle for political and social expressions.[3]

Art and landscape are not new themes for geographers, but their emphasis has been on traditional art forms like canvas painting. A focus on less traditional forms like exterior murals presents several challenges not usually encountered in conventional studies of landscape art. Mexican American, or Chicano, mural art is relatively recent and not well documented in traditional sources. Much of the data presented here were collected in the field and through interviews with artists and art historians. Because these murals are part of the everyday landscape, they are exposed to the elements and can be ephemeral. Dating murals and ascribing artistry are not always easy tasks. Many early street murals and some recent ones have no date of execution or information about the artists. Whenever the information is available, I have indicated it in the captions for the figures.

Chicano mural painting began to appear in the American urban landscape during the 1960s, but the art form has roots in pre-Columbian Mexico. Another source of the form is Hispanic culture that was introduced from western Europe, especially in the decoration of church interiors. By the nineteenth century, wall painting was a folk practice that involved depiction of simple scenes from everyday life.[4] This tradition persists in the Mexican

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[1] Karal Ann Marling, Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

[2] Robert Sommer, Street Art (New York and London: Links Books, 1975); Environmental Communications, Big Art (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1977); Yoko Clark and Chizu Hama, California Murals (Berkeley: Miller Publishers, 1979); and Volker Barthelmeh, Street Murals (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982).

[3] Larry R. Ford and Ernst Griffin, Chicano Park: Personalizing an Institutional Landscape, *Landscape*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1981, pp. 42–48.

[4] Emily Edwards and Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Painted Walls of Mexico: From Prehistoric Times until Today (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), p. 172; and Antonio Rodríguez, A History of Mexican Mural Painting (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969), pp. 132–135.

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American community where interiors of restaurants are decorated with colorful murals, and the practice of painting exteriors of buildings for commercial purposes is also an extension of this vernacular folk tradition.[5]

Several renowned twentieth-century Mexican muralists, especially José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, were important in the emergence of Chicano mural art. These artists gained their reputations in Mexico during the 1920s, when they used mural art as an instrument of political expression by painting images about the revolution then sweeping the country.[6] In the 1930s, these muralists were commissioned by private individuals and institutions to paint in the United States. Orozco completed murals in Claremont, California; Hanover, New Hampshire; and New York City. Murals by Rivera appeared in San Francisco and Fresno, California; Detroit, Michigan; and New York City. Siqueiros painted only in Los Angeles and Santa Monica, California.[7] The places where these muralists were active in the United States were determined by the availability of commissions and were not necessarily related to the presence of a Mexican American population. The murals were generally at museums, universities, and art schools, although some graced the interiors of private homes and clubs. Only Siqueiros painted an exterior mural, and his experiments with techniques and his advocacy of exterior surfaces would prove instructive to later Chicano muralists.[8]

Chicano mural art emerged in the wake of the La Raza militancy of the 1960s and was concerned with expressions of ethnic identity and political activism (Fig. 1). The ethnic consciousness of that decade was instrumental in linking young Chicano artists with their cultural heritage. Art historians have suggested that Chicano studies programs at colleges and universities and books about Mexican muralism were the primary agents that diffused information about the Mexican masters to Chicano artists.[9]

Chicago was a center for a multiethnic murals movement during the

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[5] Alacia María González, Murals: Fine, Popular, or Folk Art?, *Aztlán*, Vol. 13, Nos. 1 and 2, 1982, pp. 149–163.

[6] Jean Charlot, The Mexican Mural Renaissance, 1920 to 1925 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 36–37.

[7] Jacinto Quirarte, Mexican Influence on U. S. Art 1930–1936, *in* A Hispanic Look at the Bicentennial (edited by David Cardus; Houston: Institute of Hispanic Culture of Houston, 1978), pp. 61–71; and Jacinto Quirarte, Mexican American Artists (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), pp. 31–38.

[8] Shifra M. Goldman, Siqueiros and Three Early Murals in Los Angeles, *Art Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 1974, pp. 321–327; and David Alfaro Siqueiros, Art and Revolution (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), pp. 210–214.

[9] Mildred Monteverde, Contemporary Chicano Art, *Aztlán*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1971, pp. 51–61; Manuel Martínez, The Art of the Chicano Movement and the Movement of Chicano Art, *in* Aztlán: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature (edited by Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 349–353; David Kahn, Chicano Street Murals: People's Art in the East Los Angeles Barrio, *Aztlán*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1975, pp. 117–121; Raymond Barrio, Mexico's Art and Chicano Artists (Sunnyvale, Cal.: Ventura Press, 1975); Shifra M. Goldman, Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 3–14; and Shifra M. Goldman, Mexican Muralism: Its Social-Educative Roles in Latin America and the United States, *Aztlán*, Vol. 13, Nos. 1 and 2, 1982, pp. 111–134.

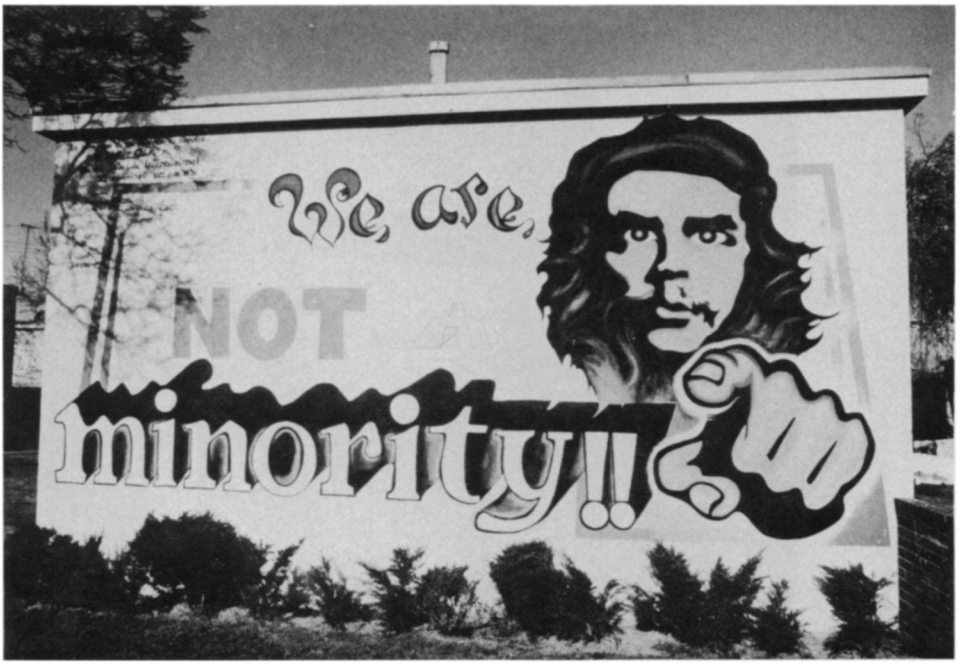

FIG. 1—"We Are not a Minority," El Congreso de Artistas Cosmicas de America, Estrada Courts Housing Project, Los Angeles, 1978.

1960s.[10] Mario Castillo painted "Metafísica," one of the earliest Chicano murals, on the Urban Progress Center on Halsted Street in 1968. Other Chicano murals of this period appeared in Denver, Los Angeles, and Del Rey (near Fresno), California. By the early 1970s, Chicano mural art had gained widespread attention from publication of articles on the murals in important countrywide and regional outlets.[11] Increased ethnic awareness brought a surge of mural painting in cities with politically active Mexican American populations, especially in California (Fig. 2).[12] Although Chicano mural painting evolved independently in some cities, it is not clear whether secondary centers were influenced by or had contact with artists in the major centers.

Chicano mural art diffused widely during the 1970s to cities with a Mexican American population.[13] Private groups of Chicano muralists orga-

[10] Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement (edited by Eva Cockcroft, John Weber, and Jim Cockcroft; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977), p. 28.
[11] Eric Kroll, Folk Art in the Barrios, *Natural History*, Vol. 82, No. 5, 1973, pp. 56–65; Jacinto Quirarte, The Murals of El Barrio, *Exxon USA*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1974, pp. 2–9; and Frank del Olmo, Murals Changing Face of East L. A., *Los Angeles Times*, 3 December 1973.
[12] Goldman, Mexican Muralism, footnote 9 above, p. 131; and Shifra M. Goldman, personal communication, 14 April 1983.
[13] Shifra M. Goldman, Affirmations of Existence, Barrio Murals of Los Angeles, *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1976, pp. 73–76; Victor A. Sorell, Barrio Murals in Chicago: Painting the Hispanic-American Experience on "Our Community" Walls, *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1976, pp. 51–72; Shifra M. Goldman, Resistance and Identity: Street Murals of Occupied Aztlán,

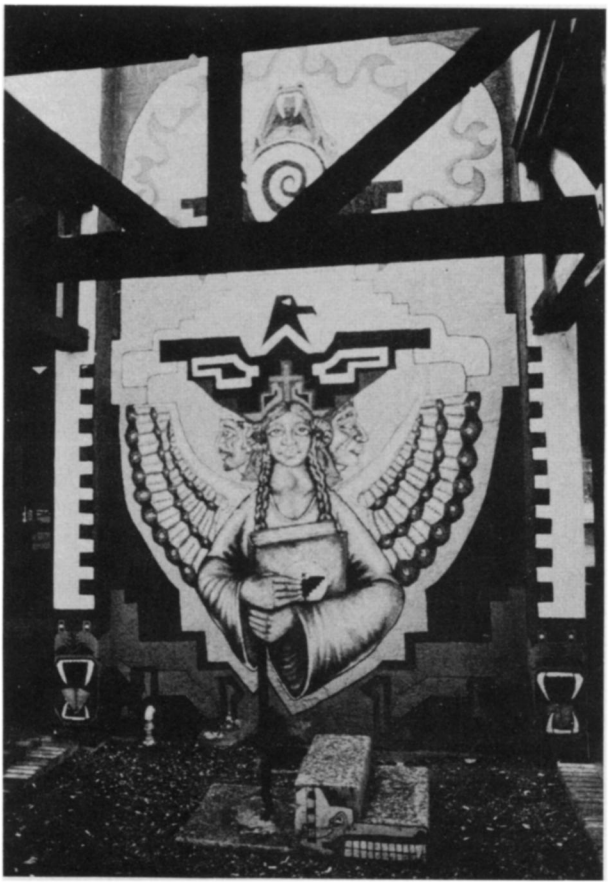

FIG. 2—"El Libro y la Esperanza de La Raza," Antonio Pazos Jiménez and David Tineos, El Rio Neighborhood Center, Tucson, 1976.

nized to promote the art in various cities: Mechicano Art Center and Goez Gallery in Los Angeles; Artes Guadalupanos de Aztlán in Santa Fe, Denver, and Phoenix; Galería de La Raza in San Francisco; and Toltecas en Aztlán in San Diego.[14] Although several groups of artists are known, the process of diffusing mural art is uncertain. It is probable that the National Community Muralists' Network (NCMN) was a catalyst in the spread of mural painting. NCMN was established at a conference in New York City in 1976 to encourage communication among muralists through informal letters, slide exchanges, and visits. With a headquarters in San Francisco, the organization

Latin American Literary Review, Vol. 5, No. 10, 1977, pp. 124–128; and Tim Drescher and Rupert García, Recent Raza Murals in the U. S., *Radical America*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1978, pp. 15–31.

[14] Leonard Castellanos, Chicano Centros, Murals, and Art, *Arts in Society*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1975, pp. 38–43; Geronimo Garduño, Artes Guadalupanos de Aztlán, *in* Toward a People's Art, footnote 10 above, pp. 202–212; Goldman, Mexican Muralism, footnote 9 above, p. 133; and Antonio Pazos Jiménez, personal interview, 6 April 1983, Tucson.

publishes *Community Murals Magazine*, a quarterly with a wide circulation among muralists.[15]

Murals in the Barrio Landscape

Chicano murals are found principally in the eighteen metropolitan areas that each had more than 100,000 Mexican Americans in 1980.[16] Wall art is primarily on building exteriors in the predominantly Mexican American districts or barrios of these urban areas. Field surveys suggest that murals are distinctive elements of the barrio landscape, that they exhibit specific meaning for the ethnic group, and that they give insight into the culture of the Mexican American community. The built environment of the barrio is the muralist's canvas because an assumption held by most Chicano artists is that muralism is a form of community art that should not be displayed in galleries associated with traditional art forms.

In order to analyze the relationships between mural art and its landscape, I conducted a field survey in El Paso, Texas, in 1982. The Mexican American neighborhoods in the city were delimited from 1980 census-tract data. Nineteen Chicano murals were found. They were located in barrios near the city center; none was seen outside the predominantly Mexican American neighborhoods (Table I). The walls of retail establishments, especially grocery stores, were favored sites, but murals also appeared on the facades of community centers and on structures in public parks. Several murals were on buildings in industrial districts that abutted the barrios; a small number of murals appeared on walls in housing projects, and one on a private house. A similar survey in 1983 in Tucson revealed the existence of twenty-five Chicano murals (Table I). All of them were within the boundaries of the main barrios. Ten of the murals were on the walls of two community centers, while only nine were located on retail establishments. Five murals were on two churches, a public-housing project, and a government building, while one was in a city park.

The geography of murals in these survey cities and elsewhere illustrates the relationships among public space, landscape decoration, and mural art in Mexican American communities. Community centers and public parks are valued social space in barrios.[17] They attract daily large numbers of local residents, a characteristic that results from both the relative inexpensiveness of recreation there and the legacy of public plazas in Mexico. Community centers and public parks contained almost 40 percent of the murals recorded in El Paso and Tucson (Fig. 3). Murals in these locations are ensured a high degree of visibility because of the social functions of these areas in a com-

[15] Drescher and García, footnote 13 above, p. 29; and Tim Drescher, personal communication, 29 September 1984.
[16] Daniel D. Arreola, Urban Mexican Americans, *Focus*, Vol. 34, January–February, 1984, pp. 7–11.
[17] Shirley Achor, Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1978), pp. 110–112; and Fernando D. Vázquez, El Acre: A Study of Space, *El Grito*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1972, pp. 75–87.

TABLE I—MURAL SITES IN EL PASO AND TUCSON

SITE	EL PASO	TUCSON	TOTAL (N = 44)
Community centers/parks	6	11	17
Retail establishments	6	9	15
Housing projects/apartment buildings	2	2	4
Industrial buildings	4	0	4
Churches	0	2	2
Governmental buildings	0	1	1
Private houses	1	0	1

Source: Data collected by author 1982–1983.

munity. Murals on retail establishments form public displays that are dependent on the decision of the owner of a structure. Neighborhood grocery stores and eateries were particularly attractive for Chicano mural art (Fig. 4). In a barrio, these types of establishments frequently function as social nodes where the large volume of local traffic enhances the visibility of murals.[18] Public-housing projects are a common institutional feature of the barrio landscape.[19] The large walls at the ends of apartment blocks are exceptionally good surfaces for mural art. Although the public-housing projects in El Paso and Tucson had few murals, elsewhere projects contained large numbers of murals (Figs. 5 and 6). The Estrada Courts in Los Angeles had thirty-nine murals in 1975, and the Cassiano Homes in San Antonio had thirty-five murals in 1983. In a public-housing setting, the role of a mural as both a social statement and a landscape ornament is pervasive, emphasizing to residents and outsiders alike that murals are elements of the public identity of Mexican Americans.

In addition to landscape decoration, murals have an important socializing function in a Mexican American community. Substantial, written histories of barrios are relatively recent.[20] By and large, group history has been an oral tradition. Chicano mural art is a visual artifact supplementing this oral tradition. Murals often become material embodiments of historical identity for a group by re-creating and projecting images of well-known religious and patriotic personalities as well as historic events. Many Chicano murals include Mexican revolutionary figures like Miguel Hidalgo, Benito Juárez, and Emiliano Zapata, while others illustrate historic events like the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (Fig. 7). As elements of the built environment, murals

[18] Mary Ellen Goodman, The Mexican-American Population of Houston: A Survey in the Field 1965–1970, *Rice University Studies, Monograph in Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 1971, pp. 17–27.

[19] Donald L. Zelman, Alazan-Apache Courts: A New Deal Response to Mexican American Housing Conditions in San Antonio, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 87, No. 2, 1983, pp. 123–150.

[20] Richard Griswold del Castillo, The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850–1890: A Social History (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979); Mario T. García, Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880–1920 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); and Ricardo Romo, East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

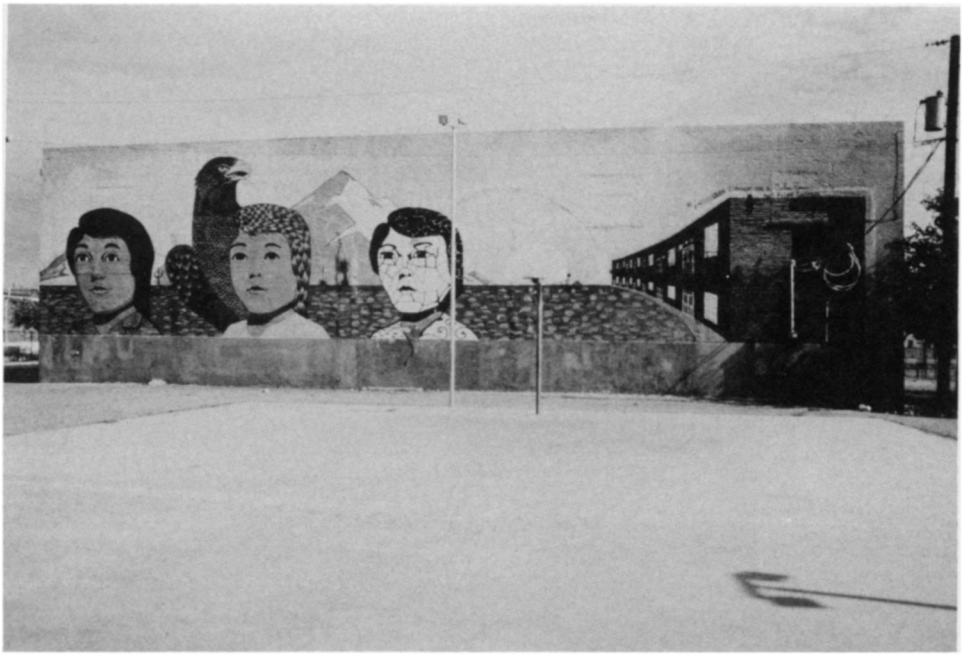

FIG. 3—"Entelequía," Carlos Rosas and Felipe Gallegos, Boys Club, El Paso, 1976.

FIG. 4—Untitled, J. Ruiz, El Porvenir neighborhood store, Austin, 1981.

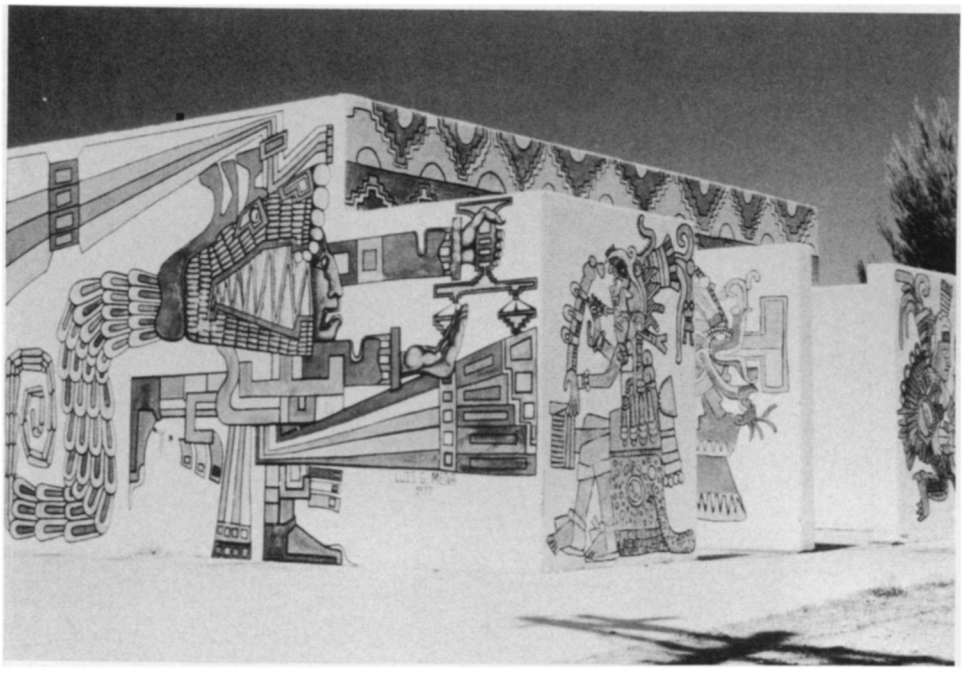

FIG. 5—Untitled, Luis G. Mena, South Tucson Housing Project, South Tucson, 1977.

FIG. 6—"The Sighting," Juan Hernandez and Steve Adame, Cassiano Homes, San Antonio, 1978.

FIG. 7—"Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo Feb. 2, 1848," Juan Hernandez and Steve Adame, Cassiano Homes, San Antonio, 1978.

with historic themes serve as mnemonic devices in the absence of written histories. Barrio murals thus demonstrate how a landscape functions as an enculturating medium to strengthen group memory.[21]

The process of painting murals in barrios is more than landscape decoration or perception of the past, because it involves community participation in the construction of the art. By the 1970s mural painting was an accepted community activity that often involved local school youths under the supervision of an artist. This process received impetus from the founding of the inner-city mural program by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1970. Later some cities sponsored local programs. In Los Angeles, the city council started a citywide mural project with a cross-cultural emphasis in 1974, and the first director of the program was a Chicana artist. A similar arrangement, the City Walls Project, was initiated by the Metro Denver Urban Coalition in 1979. Although many of these programs were later discontinued because of political and economic changes, the legacy was passed to a new generation of young muralists who learned their craft in a government-financed project. Such public support for the arts may yet reap positive returns for the Mexican American community as new Chicano muralists bring their ideas and experiences to barrio landscapes in the future.

[21] Amos Rapoport, The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Nonverbal Communication Approach (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 65–70 and 80–81.

Murals as Cultural Mirrors

An emphasis on particular themes, bright colors, and bold outlines characterized early Chicano murals. Some common symbolic associations drew heavily on Mexican themes and included pre-Columbian iconography (Figs. 5 and 6), representations of the mestizo (Fig. 3), Mexican patriots (Fig. 4), union motifs and La Raza symbolism (Fig. 2), and religious characterizations (Fig. 9), especially the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico and a symbolic image in earlier Mexican political struggles.[22] These subjects appeared in many murals and projected concepts of group identity and class struggle, but they gave little evidence of regional distinctiveness or place consciousness.

In recent murals, especially ones in areas with an established tradition of mural painting, Chicano artists appear to be shifting from previous themes toward new dimensions of expression. One trend that is gaining popularity is the incorporation of local landmarks and the use of place-specific themes. These give recently painted Chicano murals a place identity that was often absent from the early murals, although landscape and setting were present. For example, some early Chicano murals in San Francisco depicted cable cars.[23] Even Diego Rivera admitted that the muralist's intention "must not lie outside the function of the place in which his painting has its being."[24] Rivera filled murals that he painted in San Francisco with symbolism about California as a land of abundant resources and opportunity, while his murals in Detroit portrayed the automobile manufactural process from raw materials to finished product. Nevertheless, place identity in early Chicano murals was secondary to ethnic symbolism and political expression.

A recent reconnaissance of mural art in urban barrios produced ample evidence of the shift in mural subjects, although new and old themes sometimes appeared together in the same mural. Recently painted murals in Phoenix and Tucson used the giant saguaro cactus, which is found only in Arizona and parts of Mexico, as a regional symbol that ties the mural to the Sonoran desert (Fig. 8). The frequent representation of a Yaqui Indian dancer in these murals is also evidence of a regional link with northwestern Mexico and southern Arizona, for both areas have a significant Yaqui population. Landmarks like the Franklin Mountains that border the northern perimeter of El Paso, the interstate highway that bisects the city, and the tower of the Asarco smelter rising prominently at the western entrance to the city are local identifiers in Chicano murals in El Paso. A recent mural in El Centro, California—a border town that serves the agriculturally rich Imperial Val-

[22] Eric R. Wolf, The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 1958, pp. 34-39.
[23] Rupert García, Raza Murals and Muralists: An Historical View (San Francisco: Galería de La Raza, 1974).
[24] Diego Rivera, Portrait of America (New York: Covici, Friede, 1934), p. 14.

FIG. 8—"Children of the Desert," Daniel P. León, Tucson, 1981 (now destroyed). (Photograph by Gary C. Peterson)

ley—used native desert plants and the agricultural landscape in a background to highlight the Virgin of Guadalupe (Fig. 9). Despite the agricultural orientation of the region and the dominant Mexican American population in the valley, farmworker themes and La Raza expressions were absent from this mural.

Local landmarks sometimes anchor a mural to a particular neighborhood. A mural in San Jose, California, identified the local barrio by depicting the parish church that, in fact, is right across the street from the community center on which the mural is painted. Two churches in El Paso were symbolized in a mural standing so that the belfries of one are visible beyond the right side of the painting (Fig. 10). In some barrios, the name of a neighborhood was placed in a mural as a territorial marker—for example, Barrio Logan in San Diego, Barrio Anita in Tucson, and Barrio Segundo in El Paso. Many barrios are located in central-city areas and are proximate to a central business district. The depiction of high-rise buildings in some recent murals is another technique to give specific reference to place. Skylines are particularly striking in Chicano murals in Los Angeles, San Antonio, El Paso, and Tucson (Fig. 11).

Environmental themes have surfaced in some recent Chicano murals. The opening panels of a series of murals along West Hubbard Street in Chicago were executed under the direction of a Chicano artist and stressed

FIG. 9—Untitled, artist unknown, Catholic Community Services, El Centro, California, no date.

FIG. 10—Untitled, artist unknown, Tula Irrobali Park, El Paso, no date.

FIG. 11—Untitled (detail), artist unknown, The Chapel of the Resurrection, Tucson, no date.

animal and wildlife scenes as well as environmental pollution. Animal conservation was also a theme in a fleet of mobile murals painted by Chicano artists on truck trailers owned by Clipper Exxpress, a Chicago-based firm.[25] A Chicano muralist in Houston recently painted an environmental mural titled "Humanity in Harmony with Nature," an ironic and perhaps intended contradiction in view of the rapid growth of that urban area in the past decade.[26] "Balance," a mural completed in Denver in 1980, exhibited a similar environmental message (Fig. 12). Conservation and environmental motifs are beginning to appear in Los Angeles murals. A local Chicano group painted a portable minimural titled "Watt Next America?" in 1982 that showed the former secretary of the interior placing oil-drilling platforms in Santa Monica Bay. A Chicano artist completed a city-block-long mural in a street underpass in Santa Monica. The mural features an aquatic theme with whales and dolphins, marine animals that have attracted attention from conservationists.

Changes in the content of Chicano murals imply a shift in the message that they convey to the Mexican American community. Mural art during the 1960s and 1970s was a means to beautify neighborhood landscapes, to portray cultural heroes, and to instill ethnic pride. The early Chicano murals

[25] Sorell, footnote 13 above, pp. 68–69.
[26] Shifra M. Goldman, Chicano Art Alive and Well in Texas: A 1981 Update, *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1981, pp. 34–40.

FIG. 12—"Balance," Carlos Sandoval, Chevron Distributing Co., Denver, 1980.

promoted group consciousness through a collective ethnic identity, but recent mural painting appears to emphasize place-environment identity. One might argue that the shift toward a local identity in mural art represents a regression in the Chicano movement away from countrywide political concerns to a provincial focus on local setting. However, this transition may portend a healthy progression. Consider the attitude toward local setting that has burgeoned in Anglo-American society in recent decades. The extraordinary growth of both the historic preservation movement and American affection for past landscapes are manifestations of this consciousness.[27] In the Mexican American community, murals that emphasize regional attributes could be a signal of a maturing local consciousness for this minority group. A reward from this evolution in geographical awareness could be increased sensitivity to regional distinctiveness, because subtle but important differences among Mexican Americans reflect varied regional origins in Mexico and the borderlands. From this perspective, the increased emphasis on local identity in the images and the themes of Chicano mural art could be interpreted as an outgrowth of a positive, independent viewpoint that Mexican Americans hold of themselves and their communities.

[27] Donald W. Meinig, Environmental Appreciation: Localities as a Humane Art, *Western Humanities Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1971, pp. 1–11; Peirce Lewis, Defining a Sense of Place, *Southern Quarterly*, Vol. 17, Nos. 3 and 4, 1979, pp. 24–46; John B. Jackson, The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), pp. 89–102; and Robert B. Riley, Speculations on the New American Landscapes, *Landscape*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1980, pp. 1–9.

FIG. 13—"Division of the Barrios and Chavez Ravine," SPARC under the supervision of Judith Baca, Tujunga Wash, North Hollywood, 1983.

This new confidence is illustrated by the willingness of some artists to explore themes that do not have an immediate Mexican American ethnic focus. The attention to environment and conservation in Chicano mural art is an attempt to bridge from a purely Mexican American iconography to large issues that involve mankind and the global ecosystem. Two important changes initiated by the exploration of new images are the appearance of Chicano mural art outside barrios and a quest for recognition from viewers who are not Mexican American. East Los Streetscapers, a Los Angeles Chicano muralist group with a decade of experience with public art, has developed a series of acrylic-on-canvas, portable minimurals that are available for sale and exhibit. One of these murals, "Gateway to Manifest Destiny," was painted on the Gateway Memorial Arch at St. Louis in 1982 with place and environmental motifs. New murals in Los Angeles have been painted outside barrios.[28] Curiously, this pattern was followed by earlier Mexican masters who depicted the revolution in their country but explored other themes in the murals commissioned in the United States.[29]

Exploration of new themes and images does not mean abandonment of a heritage. Chicano artists continue to paint street art about the Mexican American community. Two contemporary murals exemplify this persisting

[28] David R. Botello, personal communication, 1 April and 7 October 1983.
[29] Quirarte, Mexican Influence, footnote 7 above.

tradition. In North Hollywood, California, a single mural of the multipaneled "Great Wall of Los Angeles" that stretches along the concrete-lined channel of the Tujunga Wash addresses the theme of barrio division and destruction (Fig. 13). On the left, Mexican American families and their homes are encircled by freeways, a poignant reference to the practice of routing highways through low-income neighborhoods. On the right, a series of symbols combine to show the construction of Dodger Stadium on the ruins of a Mexican American barrio at Chavez Ravine. A portable minimural, painted by East Los Streetscapers in 1982 and titled "The Invasion of Fernando," projects contemporary concern for the Mexican American community by making a powerful statement about illegal immigration from Mexico. Set against a backdrop of the Los Angeles skyline and Dodger Stadium, pitcher Fernando Valenzuela, a Mexican national, is shown striding over a chain-link fence—the so-called "tortilla curtain"—that divides the United States from Mexico. Beneath the majestic figure of the Dodger pitcher, illegal Mexican immigrants are cutting through the same fence.

These paintings depict the old theme of mural art as a vehicle of social and political expression and the new emphasis on place identification. They make explicit the importance of mural art to a particular ethnic group and suggest that mural painting will continue to be a mirror of social conditions and group consciousness for the Mexican American community.