



My Barrio:

Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County

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INTRODUCTION

Natalie Lawler

There's a stretch of freeway, where the 405 and 22 intersect at the edge of Garden Grove, that often smells like dirt and cabbage. Hugging the freeway in plain sight, looking south, is farmland. It's a secretive place without signs or roadside produce stands – the land is part of the US Naval Weapons Station in Seal Beach. No barrier stands between the busy freeway bottleneck and the open rows of crops. Nevertheless, farm plots are leased out and groups of fieldworkers can occasionally be spotted hunched over the produce – sometimes cabbage, sometimes strawberries, maybe pumpkins. It's hard to tell at 60 miles an hour what grows there, but you can always spot the workers. Low, crouched figures grouped together, wrapped in bright clothing that gives them life against the brown and green earth. Not far away, a truck or a school bus that dropped them off; a few dreary shacks in the distance. Their lives are entirely anonymous to the thousands of cars buzzing past; their hands will have dug into and picked over acres of earth before rush hour.

On the other side of the narrow freeway, looking north, a tall, thick concrete wall shelters the golfers at Old Ranch Country Club. Perhaps they, too, stand out against their manicured grass, only you can never see them. Instead, a couple long rows of bizarre cloned paintings in gold frames hang along the wall – highway beautification at its most functional: energizingly colorful, floral, and geometric, the portrait-sized paintings are a cheery, meaningless distraction from the usual traffic. In Orange County, bright colors in public spaces tend to exist in controlled, confined doses. Colors aren't usually used as thought-provoking tools.

“ WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL, THE ART I WAS TAUGHT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH MY LIFE HERE. SO I DECIDED TO CREATE A BODY OF WORK THAT WAS PERSONAL AND RELEVANT TO MY BARRIO. ¹ ”

Emigdio Vasquez created artwork that challenged Orange County's more prominent narrative of wealthy beachside neighborhoods. He painted the brown bodies and brown histories that defined our earliest communities and economy. Having grown up in the heart of Orange, the son of Mexican immigrants, in a barrio populated by families who worked in citrus fields and packinghouses, Vasquez knew Orange County in possibly its most pure form. After a brief stint as a construction laborer, he spent roughly forty years here as a professional artist. He was an emerging artist during the height of the Chicano Movement in the 1970s; his large body of work includes numerous easel paintings and over thirty public murals that strongly identified with the movement's emphasis on workers' rights, social equality, and indigenist ideologies.

Vasquez produced much of the local art history that Orange County should be known for and should protect. It is with this perspective that Chapman University is proud to present the exhibition, *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*, in conjunction with the Getty Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA initiative. We hope to initiate discourse not only about Vasquez's prolific career, but also about the larger political impact of his decidedly Chicana/o-centered murals. Vasquez plastered color – both physical and social – onto our sprawling suburban Orange County landscapes. Countywide, buildings and houses tend to be a limited spectrum of beiges, greys, pastels, and desaturated hues. To paint vibrant, vivid life onto that rigorous beige is a bold act. And it's important to note that Vasquez didn't exaggerate color. A self-identified social-realist painter, he did not embellish the present or dwell in sugary nostalgia – he painted what was immediate and real.

The mural that serves as the centerpiece for our exhibition, *El Proletariado de Aztlán*, is a short walk from Chapman's campus in Orange: leave behind the titanium white and ochre brick buildings of main campus, into the rows of low-slung craftsman houses; after a few blocks of homes in slate blue or stale rose and chalk white, turn right on Cypress Street and look left. On the side of a one-story residential triplex is the eight-foot-tall head of an Aztec warrior, long turquoise quetzal feathers trailing his helmet. A woman carrying a bushel of lettuce, a miner, farm workers in the field and on strike, pachucos, a lowrider, and friends and family from the barrio are all magnified across the 64-foot-long wall.

The mural has stood there since Vasquez painted it in 1979, a source of pride for the Orange Barrio. After more than thirty years of exposure to sun, rain, wind, creeping weeds, and car exhaust, Chapman University – who purchased the property in 2013 – worked with the Orange Barrio Historical Society, Vasquez and his son, Higgy, to restore the mural back to vibrancy.

Our exhibition, spread across two gallery spaces, uses this early Vasquez mural as a guidepost to place his work in contemporary and historical contexts. Identifying *El Proletariado de Aztlán* as a bridge shared by the Orange community and Chapman University, the exhibitions will nourish dialogues concerning the emergence of Chicana/o politics, identity, and artistic sensibilities in the North Orange County region.

In the Guggenheim Gallery, Vasquez's easel paintings connect to the language of contemporary artists who emphasize communities of and in color. Ana Serrano and Patrick Martinez find inherent humanity in the most physical, frontal elements of their neighborhoods – buildings, neon signs, and stucco; portraits and photography by Ken Gonzales-Day, Shizu Saldamando, and Alejandro Sanchez document lives through social and private gazes; Ramiro Gomez champions the hardest working and least-recognized, painting them as subjects rather than the luxurious environments they maintain; Cynthia Herrera and Dulce Soledad-Ibarra use site-specific video or interactive projects to dig into the deeply personal and psychological bonds that underlie neighborhoods and families. These works explore the visual construction of identities today, at times conflicting with and at times confirming the experiences of Vasquez thirty years prior. Vasquez's paintings echo the same social realism of his mural works, but in a more traditional compositional space they invite an intimate understanding of his friends, his family, and his barrio.

Providing a framework for this aesthetic language, the exhibition continues in the Argyros Forum Henley Galleria by outlining critical events and movements of Mexican and Chicana/o history. The ancient Aztec homeland of Aztlán (present-day southwestern US), The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and Mexican Mural Movement (1920s-1970s), California school segregation, zoot suit and pachuco culture, *bracero* programs in the US and the rise of the United Farm Workers of America, and the development of MEChA are all important touchstones for the modern Chicano Movement. They are also linked directly to Vasquez personally, politically, and artistically. He devoured history books, drawn to the images and stories of humans who defined each epoch. A timeline of Vasquez's career and a detailed look at *El Proletariado de Aztlán* round out the exhibition, serving as a guide to many of the other murals he painted as a chronicle of Chicana/o history.

The essays in this catalogue expand upon these core themes across the larger exhibition. Denise Johnson positions Vasquez's career and artistic ideology squarely within the national Chicano Movement – he was simultaneously a devout student of his own cultural history and unwavering teacher. His murals served as beacons to reclaim and recenter the narrative of communities of color in Orange County – a tradition that is maintained and modernized by contemporary artists outside of the mural practice. In the role of teacher, Vasquez nimbly balanced his message with the more mollifying intentions of his murals' commissioners. This push-pull relationship is explored by Jessica Bocinski. With his heightened attention to community inclusion and recognizable figures, Manon Wogahn finds in Vasquez a pure commitment to social realism – art created by and for the working class.

In tandem with the exhibition, Chapman students have created the first comprehensive map of over 30 public murals by Vasquez, available as a free downloadable app. The map allows users to navigate their own tour of Vasquez's murals in Orange County, but it also serves to identify the communities where he worked. Aside from one mural at Irvine Valley College, the vast majority are sprinkled throughout Anaheim, Fullerton, Santa Ana, Placentia, and Orange. Since the 2010 census, these neighborhoods in North Orange County have been identified as increasingly Hispanic or Latina/o – the population is 78% in Santa Ana alone. But this data is also relatively new: only the past four US censuses have included a direct identifying question about Hispanic or Latina/o heritage. Our exhibition, makes a strong case for Latinas/os, Chicanas/os, and other people of color having always been a substantial, contributing population in our region, not a recent development. Orange County, after all, was once Aztlán. Vasquez's murals are a treasured reminder of this. As a continuation of his legacy, Chapman has commissioned a new mural on our campus that will connect the community of Orange and the university in a shared commitment to visual culture. The mural, generously funded by the Ellingson Family, will be painted throughout the run of the exhibition by Vasquez's son, Higgy, who apprenticed under his father for many years.

Chapman's project is multi-faceted, but by no means exhaustive. Our hope is that this exhibition and related projects serve as tools, a starting point for dialogue. Spread across four campus locations and a mobile app to send viewers further afield, we are coaxing

our students and campus community to explore local neighborhoods and bring neighboring communities to explore ours. In a time of increasing digitization and virtual experiences, a walk through the barrio or into a gallery is an opportunity to create a stronger connection, a gesture of acknowledgement. Murals demand physical presence – they’re framed by rooftops, stairways, brick walls, garbage cans, high-rise windows, barbed wire, crown moulding, and fences. Visually and physically, they reflect the communities and people who surround them. They transform the surfaces they’re painted on, creating spaces that engage and educate rather than corral – social environments from tangible ones.

El Proletariado de Aztlán teaches us to acknowledge these spaces and lives that are lived in plain sight. Emigdio Vasquez championed his barrio one public commission at a time. Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, and other people of color in Orange County know that the earliest culture of our land belongs to their ancestors; they are not a minority. Farm workers on the side of the freeway and all across California’s fertile geography nurture our food without fanfare. Their names don’t appear next to the strawberries they picked, the grapes they trimmed. Our exhibition seeks to do right by these lives and histories that are so deserving of recognition.

When I walk onto Chapman’s campus every morning, little golf carts are zooming around, each one filled with different tools for their drivers’ tasks: electrical wiring, buckets of paint, drills and hardware, boxes of mail, catering supplies, bulging trash bags. Landscapers are usually winding down, tying up big canvas bundles of grass and clippings. Construction workers are grouped around their big lunchboxes filled with homemade meals. They operate this campus before, during, and after business hours. They are helpful, humble, wonderful people, and the only ones here who wear uniforms, their names usually stitched on their chests. This exhibition would not have been possible without their daily dedication.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *EL PROLETARIADO DE AZTLÁN*, 1979.

Restored by Higggy Vasquez in 2013. Restoration sponsored by Chapman University, Orange, CA.
Photograph by Jessica Bocinski.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Appositely, *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County* has been a project that has drawn on enthusiasm and support far beyond the community of Chapman University. The opportunity to join over 70 prestigious institutions in the ambitious Getty Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA initiative has supported us in forming partnerships and fostering friendships throughout our geographic region. Our own project has grown far beyond the temporal outcome of physical exhibitions, towards critically developing our own permanent collections to more fully embrace the contributions of Latin American artists to modern and contemporary art in Southern California.

The genesis of the project *My Barrio* occurred in the Orange Barrio itself. In 2013 Chapman University undertook the restoration of a mural by the renowned Chicano artist Emigdio Vasquez. Fittingly, the restoration was skillfully executed by the artist's son, Higgy Vasquez. We are immensely grateful to the members of the Vasquez family for their continued investment of time, energy and expertise, and also for their generosity and friendship towards Chapman University. We acknowledge Higgy Vasquez, who will also paint a new mural on campus; the filmmaker and director Katherine Bowers, who will document the process of completing the new mural; Emigdio Vasquez's daughter Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill; and Steve Tuthill.

My Barrio has been an opportunity to trace issues central to Vasquez's historic Chicano murals into the present day. We are tremendously grateful to the contemporary artists represented in the Guggenheim Gallery exhibition for their recognition of our vision, and for generously working closely with our curators. We extend very special thanks to Ken Gonzales-Day, Ramiro Gomez, Cynthia Herrera, Dulce Soledad Ibarra, Patrick Martinez, Shizu Saldamando, Ana Serrano, and Alejandro Sanchez; in addition we would like to recognize Julian Bermudez, Charlie James Gallery, and Luis de Jesus Los Angeles.

As a laboratory for student learning, the Chapman University Art Department Collections nurtures the development of student scholars who train with Collections staff and contribute valuable research. While many students have participated in this project, we want to especially thank the extraordinary young scholars Jessica Bocinski and Manon Wogahn who consistently went the extra mile to ensure that multiple aspects of this project were accomplished in a polished and professional manner. Their insightful essays form a central part of this catalog. We also record our thanks to Cailin Grantham, Tanya Leon, Alison Pirie, Garret Hill, Katie Peck and Lauren Ross.

In line with our mission, we look for every opportunity to integrate exhibitions with the academic curriculum. In this instance students from Professor Denise Johnson's course on the Chicano Art Movement supplied research and visual records of Emigdio Vasquez's murals: Kelsey Anderson; Christian Azar; Haley Bergeson; Vincent Carolan Foster; Brooke Fessler; Olivia Hosbein; Elise Jacobsen; Jennifer Johnson; Ellen Too; Briana Leonard; McKenna Robbie; Michael Stevantoni; Caitlin Teoman; and Manon Wogahn. We extend special thanks to Stephen Tyler and Rachel Wiegmann for their enthusiastic efforts to document all existing murals for the app and this catalog, as well as hunting down information on demolished murals, and sleuthing to record the exact locations of these works (some of which are behind buildings, enclosed by fences, and at sites without addresses).

The multi-disciplinary nature of *My Barrio* has led to collaboration with a great many of our colleagues throughout Chapman University. Firstly, we thank President Daniele Struppa and Provost Glenn Pfeiffer for their continued support and encouragement. The germ of inspiration for this project came from the talented team of Natalie Lawler, Curator of the Art Collections, and Denise Johnson and Wendy Salmond of the Department of Art, and Karen Lloyd of Stony Brook University. The project's ambitious scope and its inclusivity is testament to their commitment and vision. A debt of thanks is due particularly to Wendy Salmond for her support of the project from the very beginning, her editing of all three essays under short deadline, and the love with which she enthusiastically promoted the project within the Chapman community, and the neighborhoods that border the Orange campus. We thank, too, the following colleagues for their generosity and enthusiasm: Lauren Menges and Lisette Ocampo of the Leatherby Libraries for research assistance; Paul Apodaca; Erin Pullin; Chris Roach; Stephanie Takaragawa; Sheri Ledbetter and Dawn Bonker for their public relations expertise; Chris Pagel; Drew Farrington, Ivy Montoya Viado, Eric Chimenti and the Ideation Lab for graphic design; Claudine Jaenichen, Justin Walsh, and Jeanie Randazzo of the Department of Art; Patrick Fuery, Mary Shockey, Barbara Piscitelli, Laura Silva and Taryn Stroop of the Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Drew Moshier and Ryan Burns for making possible the new app locating Vasquez's murals in Orange County, along with students Omar Sherief, Emily Daskas and Jordyn Romero.

For research and other multi-faceted assistance with such a wide-ranging project, we are also indebted to many people outside the campus including the Orange Barrio Historical Society and the residents of the Orange Barrio, CA; Lizeth Ramirez, Archivist/Reference Librarian at the Orange County Public Library; Maria del Pilar O'Cadiz; Gustavo Arrellano; Joy Lambert, Reference and Instruction Librarian, Pollak Library, CSU Fullerton; Caroline McCabe, Santa Ana College Gallery Coordinator; Donald Lagerberg, Professor Emeritus, California State University, Fullerton; Lawrence Johnson, Professor Emeritus, California State University, Fullerton; Kevin Cabrera, Director of the Heritage Museum; Aimee Aul, Director of Education, Fullerton Museum; Stephanie George, The Workman and Temple Family Homestead; Gerald Padilla, Fullerton College, Ethnic Studies Department Chair; Gordon Winiemko; Edward Hayes Jr., Curator of Exhibitions, and Lourdes I. Ramos, President and CEO, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach; Salvador Güereña, Director, California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives at the University of California Santa Barbara Library; Rebecca McGrew, Senior Curator, Steve Comba, Associate Director/Registrar, and Justine Bae, Museum Coordinator, of Pomona College Museum of Art; Sheila Taylor Smale; Raul Davis, owner of the Tlaquepaque Restaurant and the owners of Moreno's Restaurant; Fred Ortiz; Paul and Sylvia Myrvold; Miguel Navarro; Ana Cuevas; the watchful eye of Alexander Myrvold.

The Emigdio Vasquez mural on which this project rests dates from 1979. We decided that commissioning a new mural for campus would be a fitting tribute to and continuation of the legacy of Chicano murals in Orange County. This could never have been achieved without a generous gift from the Ellingson Family, which allowed us to commission Vasquez's son, Higgy Vasquez to create a mural celebrating Chapman University's rich history. We acknowledge the following for their part in realizing this goal: the Chapman

University Campus Planning team of Kris Olsen, Ken Murai, Kati Bye; Rick Turner, Ed Blatchford, Vincent Medina and Vince "Buzz" Farmer of Facilities; and special consultant Jose Loza.

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As Director of Chapman University's Art Collections, I would like to specially acknowledge the outstanding contributions of the curatorial team. Their fastidious research, energy, and generosity as mentors to students shine throughout this project. Very special thanks are due to Project Director Natalie Lawler for her extraordinary ability to galvanize and inspire so many people to become involved and contribute. Denise Johnson's curatorial expertise and sensitive perception has brought to light connections between the past and present that we hope provoke and surprise. And, much gratitude to Marcus Herse for his keen curatorial eye, design acumen, and ability to achieve tasks discounted as not possible.

Lindsay Shen, Director, Chapman University Art Collections

Natalie Lawler, Curator, Chapman University Art Collections, and Project Director

Denise Johnson, Faculty, Department of Art, and Curator

Marcus Herse, Director, Guggenheim Gallery, and Curator



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EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *NUESTRA EXPERIENCIA EN EL SIGLO VEINTE*, 1980

Restored by Higgy Vasquez, 1996. Salvation Army Temple, Anaheim, CA.
Photograph by Marcus Herse.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *EL PROLETARIADO DE AZTLÁN*, 1979.

Restored by Higgy Vasquez in 2013, Orange, CA.
Restoration sponsored by Chapman University.
Photograph by Jessica Bocinski.

MY BARRIO: EMIGDIO VASQUEZ AND CHICANO IDENTITY IN ORANGE COUNTY

Denise Johnson

The Spanish term *barrio* means neighborhood and speaks to familiar, well loved spaces. While it can sometimes refer to a “slum,” it is more often used neutrally to refer to a space that is part of a larger whole. As in the case of the Orange Barrio within Orange, CA, this usage implicitly acknowledges groups who have been pushed to the margins, and the cultural ties that flourish in those border spaces as a result. Reflecting this, for those in the American southwest who have ever called a barrio “home,” the word conjures gleeful stories, comforting past times, and rites of passage speaking to shared histories that are lovingly protected. Nonetheless, when spoken by English speakers (Anglo, Chicana/o and otherwise) in the broader context of the US, *barrio* often takes a pejorative tone, connoting a blighted neighborhood full of unsavory characters and dangerous corners. For these users, the word evokes ghettos,² high rates of poverty, decay, and crime.

Similarly, the word *Chicana/o*’s persistently complicated entanglements reveal unsettling, and unsettled, political terrain. The origins of *Chicana/o* are not known, but likely relate to the Nahuatl term *Mēxihcah*³ and is a play on the “sh” pronunciation of the “x” by the Conquistadors. In use for decades, by the 1960s the term had been widely adopted by activist groups to assert a positive identity and a sense of proud heritage for Americans of Mexican descent. However, Chicana/o has never been a term that Mexican Americans have collectively ascribed to.

Given these contested meanings, that Emigdio Vasquez painted *El Proletariado de Aztlán* in 1979 on the side of a garage in the Orange Barrio, is particularly poignant. The garage was part of a complex constructed on the site

of long dilapidated tenement houses used to shelter orange pickers (and providing little beyond a roof overhead) who worked in nearby orange groves or at the Villa Park Orchards Association Packinghouse.⁴ Formed in 1924 by a men’s Bible study group to assist the farm workers,⁵ and funded by several nearby churches,⁶ the Friendly Center next door was host to numerous *jamaicas* (street fairs), weddings, holiday celebrations, and school gatherings, proving an important hub that nurtured community and wove strong neighborhood bonds. Just steps away from this center, Vasquez’s mural is spatially connected to, and contextualized by a valued source of food, friendship, and spiritual sustenance to residents of the Orange Barrio.

As such, *El Proletariado de Aztlán* is at once a striking offer of gratitude, and a resilient testimony to the very community that had long gathered at the Friendly Center’s steps. The mural offers a lush panorama to the center’s northern windows, and fittingly, community bonds are the foundation of its subject matter. Beginning at *El Proletariado*’s western corner, mythic Aztlán flourishes and is overseen by a majestic Aztec warrior whose profile is progressively repeated in two successive archetypes representing dignified men who appear to be just a generation apart. As the ancient horizon proceeds forward, figures referencing the artist’s life story⁷ emerge like mountains from the soil and are greeted by farm labor organizer, Cesar Chavez who flanks the eastern corner of the mural with a welcoming smile.

The mural’s eastern wall, which faces Cypress Street, is punctuated by a warm portrait of Hank Luna of the Friendly Center. In the scene that unfolds around him, the representation of Chicana/o history shifts to the modern era via a call to strike on a red banner emblazoned with the word, *HUELGA* and the stylized eagle that by the time of Vasquez’s painting had become a symbol of the Chicana/o movement. A nostalgic scene depicting the Cypress Street Market



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *LA JAMAICA*, 1988

Oil on canvas.
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill.
Photograph by Garret Hill.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *FRIENDLY CENTER MURAL*, 1964 (DETAIL).

Friendly Center, Orange, CA. Covered by drywall.
Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Orange Public Library.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *PANCHO VILLA ON A HORSE*, c. 1965.

Vasquez Family home, Orange, CA.
Overpainted c. 1995.
Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill..

and 1940s era pachucos fluidly rolls into depictions of a young contemporary Chicana, and neighborhood teens who bear witness with/to a graffiti image of Che Guevara.⁹

As though announcing the start of a symposium, in *El Proletariado de Aztlán*, Emigdio Vasquez triumphantly claims the space of home, both mythic and personal, for Chicanas/os, his people and his neighbors. His subjects simultaneously stand in the ancestral territory of the indigenous people of Mexico (now the southwestern states of the US) and on a conceptual plane that references the actual street where the viewer stands. In this way, the viewer too, is invited to participate in the conversation. Brilliantly colored and lovingly rendered, the compositional effect references ancient Mesoamerican friezes,¹⁰ thereby collapsing time and place in service of meaningful dialogue and visual exchange between the gathered proletariat - actual and painted. Standing unpretentiously at the center of the Orange Barrio, and touchingly guarding the attached dwellings, the work offers a grand mural procession to the people of the Orange Barrio.

Described by his family as a keen scholar of history, and someone who genuinely believed in the power of education to transcend the barriers of classism and racism, Emigdio Vasquez would consistently use the compositional device of an assembly of everyday people to elevate their struggles and triumphs on the mural plane. In this way, beginning with his first known mural works - a mural painted inside the Friendly Center in 1964,¹¹ and *Pancho Villa on a Horse*, executed c.1965 on his parents' backyard patio wall - the artist embarks on a mission to reclaim the "American" narrative. As the artist describes,

Art must be more than aesthetic or decoration. Art creates an environment which enlarges humanity. The painted image is a vehicle which expresses a wide array of human feelings. These feelings are a commentary on our lives and times.¹²

Such an ideology was likely bolstered through a collaboration in 1974 with Sergio O'Cadiz on the now famous MEChA Mural, *History and Evolution of the Chicano in the United States*, for Santa Ana College's Neally Library, that coincided with hard won achievements by Chicana/o student organizers in Southern California high schools and universities. Through these, Emigdio Vasquez leapt confidently to his largest known mural, *Memories of the Past, Images of the Present* (1978). Painted on a tall, open wall on the southern side of the Ibero-America Market, the mural faces a shady retreat known as Little People's Park. In-and-of-itself, the park is significant to the character of the neighborhood, as it was established when residents appealed to the city of Anaheim to improve a vacant lot deemed disposable. As well, the mural work marks Vasquez's first public commission.

Again, understanding place proves essential to appreciating Vasquez's message. The Ibero-America Market, like the Friendly Center in the Orange Barrio, was an anchor for Anaheim's Penguin City Barrio.¹³ Specializing in the foodstuffs essential to Mexican dishes, Chicanas/os had to rely on smaller neighborhood grocers such as the Ibero-America Market to avoid open hostilities at national grocery chains that did not stock so-called "ethnic" ingredients that were staples to barrio diets. Vasquez painted *Memories of the Past, Images of the Present* to commemorate a 1970 riot that occurred in Little People's Park after police responded to a call concerning shots fired by arresting a heckling bystander. Tensions erupted, and police wantonly beat passersby, then entered nearby homes to randomly mace, beat, and arrest Chicana/o residents.¹⁴ Vasquez responds to the violence of the riot with the lessons of resistance. In *Memories of the Past, Images of the Present*, we see the artist develop a strategic use of historical tableau to define Chicana/o identity. The resulting chronicle of Chicana/o history is a narrative for the people, by the people.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *SALT OF THE EARTH*, 2003.

Oil on canvas.
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill.
Photograph by Garret Hill.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *MEMORIES OF THE PAST, IMAGES OF THE PRESENT*, 1977.

Ibero-American Market, now Sohan America Market, Anaheim, CA.
Sponsored by the City of Anaheim.
Photograph by Katherine Bowers.

Beginning with heroes from the 1906 Magonista Rebellion, and the 1910 Mexican Revolution, Vasquez depicts indigenous peasants, striking farm workers, and contemporary residents in a photo realistic style that coaxes empathetic response. In what will become signature groupings, Vasquez also includes depictions of Mexican folk heroes Emiliano Zapata, and Pancho Villa, along with the juxtaposed profiles of an indigenous Mexican and a Spanish Conquistador. Vasquez defiantly explained in an artist statement for his master's thesis exhibition at California State University, Fullerton that he...

“ WANTED TO EXPRESS PERSONAL FEELINGS THAT WOULD REFLECT THE SENTIMENTS, ASPIRATIONS AND STRUGGLES OF THE CHICANO WORKING CLASS...BECAUSE AS AN ARTIST I DO NOT BELIEVE IN SEPARATING MY PICTORIAL VIEWPOINT FROM MY HUMAN AND SOCIAL ONE. ”

These are not merely nostalgic vignettes for Chicanas/os who, as T.V. Reed explains, “saw themselves as involved in a similar guerrilla struggle of poor farm laborers and industrial workers against Anglo domination in the United

States.”¹⁵ Rather, the work implores Penguin City Barrio residents to stand confidently in resistance (though the message is coded and sly, as Jessica Bocinski will argue).

Vasquez's inclusion of the Virgin of Guadalupe may seem an afterthought. However, her presence in the complex mural composition establishes at least three important references. First, Vasquez honors mestizos - people of indigenous and Spanish heritage - as the visage is understood to be a likeness of a mestiza woman, reiterating the concept of the Conquistador/Indigenous/Chicana/o profiles he commonly used. Additionally, beyond the image's obvious religious connections to Mexican and Mexican American communities, Vasquez further supports the valiant struggle of everyday people through the representation of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is the patron saint of the poor. Finally, hovering protectively over a family and near the heads of workers, Vasquez's representation of the Virgin of Guadalupe also refers to a depiction of her carried during the first UFW strike, called on September 16, 1965.¹⁶

While the Virgin of Guadalupe's image is small in comparison to the artist's historical subjects in *Memories of the Past, Images of the Present*, her significance to Chicana/o identity is evidenced in the care that residents have taken to re-paint and revitalize her representation over the years. Although the majority of the mural has severely decayed, faded, and flaked, the image of the Virgin gleams with new gilding. In the context of Mexican American assimilation and the declaration of Chicana/o space within Vasquez's mural, she gracefully urges patience, solidarity, and the nurturance of community bonds¹⁷ - something that locals continue to bestow on the image.

Irrefutably, the Mexican muralist movement and WPA murals of the 1930s influenced Vasquez's social-realist representational



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *RAICES DEL PACHUCO*, 1979.

George Washington Center, now at the Anaheim Downtown Youth Center Boxing Arena.
Sponsored by the city of Anaheim. Photograph by Katherine Bowers.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *MEXICO LINDO Y QUERIDO*, 1985 – 1988

Tlaquepaque Restaurant, Placentia, CA
Photograph by Stephen Tyler and Rachel Wiegmann

strategies (as Manon Wogahn’s essay expands upon). However, the less noted *pulqueria* landscape and scene paintings that commonly adorned Mexican American homes and businesses, appear to have opened a conceptual resolution to the systematic dismissal of Mexican American contributions to the American story for the artist. Vasquez’s inclusion of the Virgin of Guadalupe in *Memories of the Past, Images of the Present* and other murals, acknowledges this key Chicana/o signifier. The image hearkens to representations of the Virgin, saints, and other important religious figures depicted on personal altars, processional objects, and devotional cards that would have been valued features of Orange County barrio homes, and memorable components of celebrations at community hubs like the Friendly Center.¹⁸ Indeed, Vasquez draws attention to their influence in his work through his attentive rendering in several easel works included in *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*. Further evidencing his appreciation for pulqueria art, Vasquez avidly participated in the tradition with a series of murals, painted for restaurants in Orange, Anaheim, Placentia, Santa Ana, and Los Angeles.¹⁹ Many of the local restaurateurs who own the murals, continue to hold the works in high regard. As significant precursors to the radical Chicana/o murals of the 1960s, but operating less confrontationally, *pulqueria* art offered Vasquez an effective language for reclaiming the narrative of Chicana/o history.

Equally important to this reclamation, was the persuasive Chicano Movement demand for educational equity. In 1968, outraged by enduring high dropout and low graduation rates for Latina/o students, thousands of students from Lincoln High School in East LA walked out of classes to demonstrate on the streets in a call to end discriminatory policies, fire racist teachers, implement curriculum that included Chicana/o history, hire more teachers and administrators of color, and incorporate Mexican food items in cafeteria offerings. Led by Mexican American teacher, Sal Castro, Lincoln High students were soon joined by more than ten thousand students in nearby high schools, colleges and universities. These “blowouts,” as they were called, inspired by agricultural labor activism and the Black Civil Rights Movement, are considered

the largest civil rights protests by Latinas/os in US history. Their significance was witnessed throughout the western US as numerous groups mobilized, wrote declarations of their rights such as *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*,²⁰ argued the worth of Latinas/os to the American tapestry, and agitated for social justice.²¹

These student demonstrations certainly encouraged Emigdio Vasquez’s keen attraction to the public mural space. Not only did murals claim public spaces as a means of including Chicana/o history in the narrative when bureaucracies and institutions refused to bend, their public nature ensured that the story would be on view for decades - no small concern given the dire circumstances being confronted. Vasquez says as much when he shares in an Orange County Register interview, “When I was in high school, the art I was taught had nothing to do with my life here. So I decided to create a body of work that was personal and relevant to my barrio.”²²

Such a strategy - to tactically create murals located in Chicana/o barrios that were steeped in Chicana/o signifiers and history - nicely complemented Emigdio Vasquez’s personal dedication to the pursuit of higher learning. In this way, in familiar settings such as the Ibero-America Market, Vasquez used the mural space as metaphoric school desk, to which he invited all barrio residents. Once at the table, cultural traditions were elevated and a determined chronology of Chicana/o history was shared, moving the representation and the represented to a space of knowing - a woke space²³ - through an expansion of scale and insistent being. By painting murals next to sidewalks, near schools, and along park paths, Vasquez brings the stories denied in the curriculum - and cut from textbooks - directly to the Chicana/o barrio.

In the exemplary work, *Nuestra Experiencia en el Siglo Veinte* painted in 1980 at the Anaheim Salvation Army Temple, Emigdio



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *CYPRESS STREET PACHUCOS*, 1998.

Oil on canvas.
From the collection of Emigdio “Higgy” Vasquez Jr.
Photograph by Garret Hill.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *NUESTRA EXPERIENCIA EN EL SIGLO VEINTE (DETAIL)*, 1980.

Restored by Higgy Vasquez, 1996.
Salvation Army Temple, Anaheim, CA.
Photograph by Marcus Herse.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *SUNDAY NIGHT AT HARMONY PARK*, 1999.

Oil on canvas.
From the collection of Emigdio "Higgy" Vasquez Jr.
Photograph by Garret Hill.

Vasquez declares his understanding of the mural as a site of awakening - a political place that welcomes a postcolonial consciousness denied elsewhere. *Nuestra Experiencia en el Siglo Veinte* is Vasquez's most complete chronology of the Chicana/o experience incorporating depictions of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, immigration to the U.S. for agricultural and industrial work through the Bracero Program, the whitewashing of David Alfaro Siqueiros's *America Tropical* (1932),²⁴ the Zoot Suit Riots, celebrations at The Harmony Park Ballroom,²⁵ WWI, WWII, the atom bomb, UFW strikes, contentious deportations that violated human rights through Operation Wetback, the Vietnam War, and Ruben Salazar's suspicious death during the Chicano Moratorium, among other important events and leaders.²⁶

Vasquez's commitment to browning the narrative, was steadfast and unwavering. Between 1964 and 2006, he is known to have created thirty-one private and public murals on concrete, stucco, concrete block, wood panel, and canvas; two theatre backdrops on canvas; two temporary murals, one on the side of an Orange County Transit District bus, and another for the Lowrider Car Show & Family Fiesta for the Orange County Fair; and to have assisted with and restored several other murals in Orange County.

Given his prolific mural making, it may be surprising that Emigdio Vasquez consider himself "a painter first," explaining that, "I wouldn't be in this business very long if selling paintings were the only source of support. I'd rather concentrate on my canvases, but murals allow me another source of income."²⁷ In response, while developing leveling strategies through the use of indigenizing imagery in his mural works, Emigdio Vasquez simultaneously built a prolific easel painting practice portraying a range of personal subjects from historical figures such as Fredrick Douglass - to barrio scenes - and custom cars; commercial still-lives, trompe l'oeil works, and landscapes. Starting in the late 1950s, Vasquez honed his rendering skills while working for a painting factory in Santa Ana under the pseudonym, Chavez. Producing surprisingly detailed, quaint images of pastoral villages that look vaguely Californian/Mexican,

Vasquez negotiated the demands of colonizing markets by painting scenes that were as authentic as the oral histories shared by his community.

In Chapman University's Guggenheim Gallery exhibition, *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*, the artist's easel works provide further evidence of his approaches to reclaiming the narrative. The Orange Barrio is an ever present subject, and numerous works speak gracefully to the plight of the working class. Together, the woke spaces developed in Vasquez's easel paintings, privately commissioned pulqueria murals, and public Chicana/o mural chronologies persistently nurture agency. They are a grassroots effort - working at the local level with everyday people - to effect the credible political change he desired, for the people he respected and loved.

Two generations forward, Chicana/o, Mexican Amercian, Latina/o and other artists of color continue leveling and building these reclaimed stories and spaces. Deservedly, the conversations they develop are varied and complex, layered with myriad dialogues stimulated by postmodern politics and postcolonial theory. In *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*, the political themes that percolate and weave through Vasquez's oeuvre - reclaiming dismissed histories; illustrating the contributions of people of color to the American story; centering audiences of color; offering gratitude and healing through the creation of woke spaces; and using art to spur social justice - find refreshing exploration in the works of Ken Gonzales-Day, Ramiro Gomez, Cynthia Herrera, Dulce Soledad Ibarra, Patrick Martinez, Shizu Saldamando, Alejandro Sanchez, and Ana Serrano. They are a testimony to the significance of Chicana/o artists of el movimiento, and heartfelt reminders that there is still much work to be done.



RAMIRO GOMEZ, *DESPUÉS DEL TRABAJO (AFTER WORK)*, 2016

Mixed media on cardboard.
Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art.
Photograph by Michael Underwood.
Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery.

Ramiro Gomez’s work has evolved from a commitment similar to Emigdio Vasquez’s invested depictions of the struggles of the working class. In collaged, painted, and installation works, often created on humble materials such as found cardboard boxes, Gomez explores the hidden labor involved in maintaining the manicured lawns and glittering facades of California’s upper middle-class and wealthy suburban neighborhoods.

Born in the Inland Empire, Gomez left art school to become employed as a live-in nanny. Finding himself in between the privileged realm of art, and encumbered by practical concerns, Gomez understood the power brewed in the unspoken. Just as with his formerly undocumented parents who have worked as janitors and graveyard shift truck drivers, Gomez realized a strong, albeit implicit, demand to be on the sidelines, unseen, and avoid interaction with his employers while working as a caretaker. His artistic practice astutely responds to the marginalization, by insistently making workers visible, describing the unspoken, and imagining the unrepresented.

Gomez’s moving critique gently bears witness to commonplace social and economic injustices, implicating those who benefit from these buried exploits, and urging restorative change. Whereas Vasquez combed UFW publications, the catalog accompanying *The Family of Man* exhibition at MoMA, NY in 1955, and *450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* for source material, Gomez looks to *Architectural Digest*, David Hockney paintings, and luxury car ads to upturn the western canon and brown the narrative. In doing so, he elevates his subjects above the terrible cloud of border walls and threats against sanctuary cities.

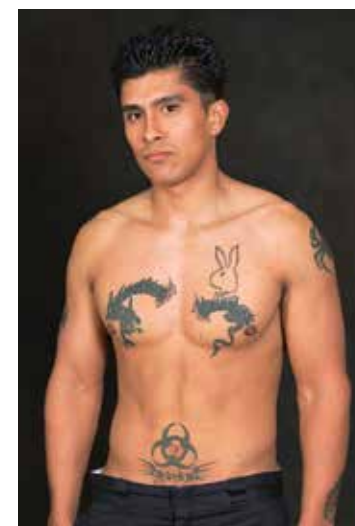
RAMIRO GOMEZ

KEN GONZALES-DAY

Ken Gonzales-Day’s work ritually navigates between the limitations of what can and cannot be represented. The artist’s well-known series, *Erased Lynchings* (2004 - 2006) began through a search for early photographic representations of Latinos.²⁹ Harkening to Chicana/o demands to be acknowledged in the historical narrative, Gonzales-Day began to question, “How do you represent something that has not to this point been represented, or has been erased or somehow made invisible?”³⁰ What the artist uncovered was the vicious (and forgotten) history of lynching in the west, which claimed numerous Latino lives often under romantic pretenses. These lynchings were ritually photographed (a newly popularized media with a booming market in California) and mass produced as postcards. By digitally erasing the lynched victim,³¹ the works “make the invisible - visible, and...resist the re-victimization of the lynching victim.” In doing so, Gonzales-Day pivots the gaze away from the salacious spectacle of the so-called “bandit,” and locks directly onto a consideration of the beneficiaries of the violence.

In the Guggenheim Gallery’s exhibition, *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*, Gonzales-Day continues to reshape and shift the viewer’s gaze with a new installation of portraits that center the critique on signifiers of difference and how idealized fictions continue to mark the Latino body a contested site. In the exhibition, the visitor is offered two takeaways from Gonzales-Day’s portrait series, one of three related bodies of work stemming from the artist’s six year experience searching newspaper archives for accounts of lynchings.³² In the portrait series, Gonzales-Day settles on the unnerving fact that most of the lynching victims he discovered were between the ages of 16 and 22, and recovers the erased subjects with piercing images of contemporary Latino males the same age of one of the lynched victims.³³

The act of consuming these images - tearing them from the wall and keeping them - interrogates the communication of power, and the role that images play in enforcing and disrupting hierarchies of control. The image of a delicate and worn sculpture, *Christos* (2003), seems to empathetically reflect and queer the body of *Memento Mori* (Anthony) with which it is paired. As the sculpture’s polychrome facade flakes away, the clay under-surface reveals a brown body with a penetrating gaze that then plays against, even counters, the larger-than-life photograph, *Memento Mori* (Gordon) (2005). In this way, Gonzales-Day echoes Emigdio Vasquez’s woke mural spaces. The artist expands, “There is still authorship somewhere. How to let other voices come out, how to let other narratives be visible, that’s something I think as an artist I can do; that I can do differently than a curator or differently than even an historian.”³⁴



KEN GONZALES-DAY, *MEMENTO MORI (ANTHONY)*, 2005.

Chromogenic print.
Courtesy of the artist and Luis de Jesus Los Angeles



KEN GONZALES-DAY, *CHRISTOS*, 2003.

Chromogenic print.
Courtesy of the artist and Luis de Jesus Los Angeles



CYNTHIA HERRERA, *MAKING GROUND*, 2014-ONGOING.

Community engagement project involving the collection of oral histories, community workshops, plantings, tea making, photographs, and a zine. Courtesy of the artist.

Cynthia Herrera's social practice, which incorporates the collecting of oral histories, workshops, photographs, and the making of zines actively engages with communities to find catharsis through the recovery of dismissed histories. The work grapples with fears, fractures, and erased histories, yet it does not settle in grief. Rather, Herrera's work is full of hope, celebrating the beauty of human relationships (to place and to one another) and the community bonds that found our fondest memories.

The first installment of *Making Ground*, took place in the last edges of the orange groves of Riverside, CA at Gloria's family nursery and agricultural site, known locally as "Casa Blanca." Faced with the encroachment of track housing developments on the last remaining greenbelt upon which this family-run nursery resides, the exchange of agricultural and cultural practice becomes the narrative of the site.

In the ongoing series of work, of which the Guggenheim Gallery's installation is the second installment, the artist will use the jamaica street fairs, lovingly held on Cypress Street from the 1940s to the late 1980s, "as a starting point for community building and healing the past with the present."³⁵ Playing with language and the vivid memories of Orange Barrio residents, Herrera will use the jamaica (hibiscus) plant as "the catalyst for community dialogue via propagating, planting, and tea making workshops to create a space for engagement."³⁶

In the understanding by which Miwon Kwon deconstructs the development of site-specific works in the 1960s and '70s and argues "'the work' no longer seeks to be a noun/object but a verb/process provoking the viewers' critical (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological conditions of that viewing,"³⁷ Cynthia Herrera's project actively works to level ground, by deeply connecting with residents of the Orange Barrio, past and present, to create what the artist calls "lifelines" - strong bonds created one-on-one, and doorstep-to-doorstep. As the artist has uncovered in her interviews with barrio residents, these lifelines once thrived in the Orange Barrio, created by shared experiences in the fields and packing houses, through food making, celebrations, and day-to-day survival. By re-establishing lifelines, *Making Ground*, will begin the process of "healing the past with the present."³⁸

CYNTHIA HERRERA

DULCE SOLEDAD IBARRA

Dulce Soledad Ibarra's work often considers themes of generational trauma and the familial bonds that work to protect and counter racism and socioeconomic oppression. In the sense that Guisela Latorre understands Chicana/o mural works as spaces that enact an exorcism of internalized racism, Ibarra's sculptural and video installations intend to decolonize the viewer's consciousness. Her moving explorations are radically generous and unsettling.

Ibarra locates her critique at the discovery that the traditional seven pointed piñata star shape refers to the seven deadly sins (greed, gluttony, sloth, pride, envy, wrath and lust); the paper craft derived in Asia and was brought to Latin America by European colonizers; which complemented a similar Mayan custom; and the breaking of the piñata was used by Spanish missionaries as a means of conversion. The tool proved quite effective in attracting young converts who were encouraged to break the piñata, and symbolically wash away their (indigenous) sins in a shower of shiny candy treats.

Through sculpted piñata works and the making of piñatas in community workshops, Ibarra discloses the means of conversion, revealing gaping wounds in the Chicana/o psyche. Rather than offering capricious seductions, Ibarra fills her piñatas with questions surrounding identity, assimilation, conversion and resistance. The video installation included in *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*, equally seduces and haunts. The work forges exciting connections to Emigdio Vasquez's pulqueria references, and further develops indigenist strategies of disruption and reclamation. Importantly, through these explorations, Ibarra culls deeply personal terrain, courageously crossing borders to heal the wounds of internalized racism.



DULCE SOLEDAD IBARRA, *PIÑATAS Y PREGUNTAS: SEEKING ANSWERS IN INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CONFLICTS*, 2017.

Installation with tissue paper and cardboard piñata, rope, wooden stick, pen, paper, and participants. Photographs by Christopher Vélez.





PATRICK MARTINEZ, *BOYLE HEIGHTS CAKE SPOT*, 2016.

Acrylic and stucco on panel. Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art. Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment. Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles. Photograph by Michael Underwood.



PATRICK MARTINEZ, *ELECTORAL COLLEGE*, 2016. NEON.

Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles. Photograph by Michael Underwood.

PATRICK MARTINEZ

Patrick Martinez's neon, painted, and printed works offer shrewd postcolonial critiques. Pointedly focusing on the violence enacted against people of color, Martinez makes wry comment on the sources of power, and the brutality employed by police forces and governments to maintain authority. His neon works, although cheerful in their glow, subversively offer gut wrenching truths and heartfelt commentary on race and socio-economic tensions through impossibly high hangings, references to hip-hop lyrics, and (key) words that cannot light. Employing the ubiquitous colors of working class neighborhoods throughout his oeuvre, Martinez's messages work to subvert the viewer's understanding of power. Likewise, the artist's enticing painted surfaces evoke the very surfaces of the bakeries and other barrio businesses he depicts - scarred, but loved and reclaimed.

Martinez's Pee Chee folder works (one of which will be available in the exhibition as a takeaway) intervene in hegemonic discourses by inserting portraits of individuals, such as Ruben Martinez, who have died as a result of police violence. Martinez explains,

“ I’M INTERESTED IN ISSUES OF YOUTH AND AUTHORITY...I’VE SEEN ALL KINDS OF SITUATIONS. THE L.A. RIOTS. MY BROTHER AND MY FRIENDS IN AND OUT OF JAIL. I’VE SEEN HOW THEY’VE BEEN TREATED BY THE AUTHORITIES SINCE THEY WERE YOUNG TEENAGERS. IT’S SOMETHING THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE HEAR ABOUT, OR YOU READ ABOUT IT, BUT YOU DON’T NECESSARILY SEE THE IMAGES.”³⁹

The artist continues the work of Chicana/o movement artists like Emigdio Vasquez by representing the dismissed and invisible. The work is vital, and necessary - woke in so many ways.

SHIZU SALDAMANDO

Shizu Saldamando's work offers touching explorations of familial bonds and casual rituals among friends that build a potent sense of belonging. Characteristically working from photographs (personal and found), the artist elegantly renders familiar subjects, then embellishes their representations with Japanese washi paper, gold leaf, glitter, and/or papel picado. She sees her use of collage as analogous to the means by which we construct identity - placing disparate pieces together, with specific elements moving fluidly in an out of importance depending on context. The work is intricate, close to the surface, and requires confident focus to craft. The resulting images, and their surfaces, hold the weight of holy objects and devotional images. As with Vasquez's photorealist exactitude, through loving representations of people that she knows and loves, Saldamando argues the importance of her subjects and their histories - elevating them and refusing their dismissal.

In the context of this exhibition, Saldamando's depiction of artist friend, Jesse Saucedo in *La Martha* (2013), is evocative of Chicana/o muralist representations of the soldaderas (female warriors of the Mexican Revolution) and La Adelita.⁴¹ Along with the portrayal of friends and their family members in *Huntington Park BBQ* (2005), Saldamando's portraits powerfully counter the machismo prioritized in Emigdio Vasquez's works, making apt point that within the reclamation of Chicana/o history, the stories and voices of women were often left on the margins. As well, in the ambiguous wood panel field of *La Martha*, the viewer's gaze is met with recognition - reminding us of our humanness, and the reasons why we might align with a group, a cause, or an identity. Similarly, the wood field moves the general to the personal, as the artist uses wood surfaces in reference to her grandfather, who survived the interment of Japanese Americans during WWII by making sculpture out of found pieces of wood.



SHIZU SALDAMANDO, *HUNTINGTON PARK BBQ*, 2005.

Colored pencil, mixed media on paper. Collection of Ricardo P. Reyes. Courtesy of the artist.



SHIZU SALDAMANDO, *LA MARTHA*, 2013.

Oil on wood. Courtesy of the artist.



ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ, *UNTITLED*, 2014-2017.

Silver gelatin print. Courtesy of the artist.

Alejandro Sanchez's photographic practice begins from a thoughtful, but wary, institutional critique. The untitled series of work included in the Guggenheim Gallery's exhibition centers around a community of micro-skaters who have found friendship and meaningful solidarity in the public, but cloistered scenes of skating rinks throughout Southern California. As with Emigdio's pachucos on the street, and zoot suiters in the Harmony Ballroom, strength is nurtured in Sanchez's scenes through shared experience and opportunities to bond. His custom roller skates are reminiscent of lowrider bicycles and flamboyant zoot suits - painstakingly crafted, and proudly worn. Equally, they serve an important signifier of belonging.

Joy seeps from the party scenes in Sanchez's photos, yet a palpable tension can be sensed along the edges. Seen as a subculture, the skaters are not openly welcomed at many skate rinks - even banned at some - and often struggle to find new skate spots as rink after rink either closes or becomes too risky to patronize because of the presence of aggressive security, blatant racism, and open hostility from mostly white owners. The work is mindful of the legalized segregation of Vasquez's youth, and a woke reminder of subversive racist strongholds today. At the same time, Sanchez's work is not mournful, nor angry. The photographs offer a space to dialogue and consider the intersectional struggles of many communities. Always present in Sanchez's work is a strong belief in the power of open dialogue to effect credible change.

ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ

ANA SERRANO

Ana Serrano's work affirms the importance of identity and celebrates the joy found through community in California barrios. The work speaks of cultural interchange, shifting borders, and the tensions that arise when a well loved barrio is deemed disposable, and developers move in to gentrify and homogenize its landscape and people.

Using cardboard, paint, collaged photographs, and glue, Serrano crafts three-dimensional miniature homes and small businesses that, when shown in multiple, take on the quintessential look of blue collar neighborhoods in Southern California. The artist excavates the built environment for modest signifiers to adorn her models, and is drawn to homespun details and evidence of inhabitants making do. Serrano's cardboard surfaces make the work warm and accessible while also offering an astute critique of the segregation of communities from gainful opportunities and the helpful attention of city governments. The artist explains,

Cardboard is something that's seen differently in different communities. There's plenty of people who will collect it and get reimbursed for it, so it equals money in certain neighborhoods, and it's seen as trash in other neighborhoods so I like that idea. I also like the fact that it's a material that's very approachable. I like my work to be approachable by a large audience. If it's cardboard it's something that people can easily understand. Even if the topics I approach can be heavy, the work in itself is very approachable.⁴²

(continued next page)



ANA SERRANO, *SARITA'S #1*, 2012.

Cardboard, inkjet print copies on paper, glue, and acrylic. Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art. Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment. Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles. Photo by Julie Klima.



ANA SERRANO, *MUSTARD HOUSE*, 2012.

Cardboard, inkjet print copies on paper, glue, string, and acrylic. Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art. Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment. Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles. Photo by Julie Klima.



ANA SERRANO, *IGLESIA LA LUZ DEL MUNDO*, 2012.

Cardboard, inkjet print copies on paper, glue, and acrylic. Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art. Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment. Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles. Photo by Julie Klima.



ANA SERRANO, *LEAVES IN HP*, 2012.

Cardboard, inkjet print copies on paper, glue, and acrylic. Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art. Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment. Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles. Photo by Julie Klima.

Although cheerfully colored, and sometimes decorated with humorous details, Serrano's sculpted buildings unavoidably bear the signs of low socioeconomic standing. Window air conditioners, security screens, uncouth satellite dishes, and oddly configured additions portray the do-it-yourself fixes and bootstrap ingenuity necessary in many barrios. On the other hand, mismatched paint patches and bucket planters also speak to the casual and familiar spaces of birthday parties, street basketball, and televisions blaring telenovellas. The work is strikingly reminiscent of Vasquez's painted scenes of the Orange Barrio.

In visually re-crafting the American story, Emigdio Vasquez insists on a fuller consideration of the Chicana/o experience that makes space for, and that respects the contributions of people of color. Like his noteworthy contemporary, Judy Baca, whose epic retelling of Los Angeles history from the perspective of women and people of color in *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* (1974 - 1984), the scale and magnitude of mural making in California not only revised the historical record, but as Guisela Latorre powerfully argues, it also offered a vital means for the oppressed to "exorcise...elements of internalized racism that hindered the creation of a newly politicized sense of self and community."⁴³ In this woke space, on level ground, Vasquez offers a place for healing to Chicanos/as. Justly, when the viewer stands in front of a Vasquez mural, they are often looking up, matching the dignified profiles painted on the mural.

Nonetheless, while Vasquez's murals powerfully reclaim the narrative, they do not assert a message at odds with the American Dream. Rather, as Guisela Latorre explains,

“FOR THE MOST PART, CHICANA/O WRITERS, ARTISTS, AND ACTIVISTS SOUGHT TO REDEFINE THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE HEGEMONIC CENTERS OF POWER BY INDIGENIZING RATHER THAN ERADICATING THE NATION-STATE. ADVOCATING FOR A RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES AS A NATION BY ACKNOWLEDGING ITS INDIGENOUS FOUNDATIONS, CHICANA/O THINKERS IMAGINED A RELATIONSHIP ON EQUAL FOOTING BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THEIR FORMER COLONIZERS, BUT ALSO NON-OPPRESSIVE WAYS IN WHICH COMMUNITIES CAN COME TOGETHER AS NATIONS WITHOUT VIOLATING THE RIGHTS, SOVEREIGNTY, AND AUTONOMY OF OTHER NATIONS.”⁴⁴

Emigdio Vasquez's insistent reclamation of the narrative throughout his career through varied media and representational strategies sought to level inequitable terrain, set a seat at the school desk, and nurture active political engagement in service of effecting change. In combining easel works by Emigdio Vasquez with works by contemporary artists, *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*, develops at least three important points. First, Chicana/o artists are offering hearty, complex explorations of the contemporary experience. Works by contemporary Chicana/o artists are multivalent, steeped in theory, and critically engaged. Nonetheless, they are not solely about the Chicana/o experience and identity - and why should they be? Secondly, while the Getty Foundation's Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA effort is wholly appreciated, the platform and opportunities need to be extended far beyond this singular effort. It's worth noting that, had we the square footage and time, this exhibition could easily have included hundreds more artists with equally strong, relevant, and evocative works. Finally, in as much, the exhibitions of PST: LA/LA stand as a resounding call to curators and institutions to (finally) do everything they can to ensure level ground for all people of color - viewers and artists alike.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *EL BARRIO DE ORANGE*, 1965.

Oil on canvas. From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill. Photograph by Garret Hill.

The Guggenheim Gallery exhibition, *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*, celebrates our barrio, and the works (large and small, portable and permanent, historic and contemporary) testify to the strength found in community. Given the contentious climate of current politics, and difficult dialogues on race yet-to-be, the contemporary works included in *My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County*, working in the spirit of Emigdio Vasquez, offer potent reminders of the strength found in shared experience, the wherewithal sustained through solidarity for a just cause, and that the dignity demanded by claiming space in the historical record vitally connects us.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *MEMORIES OF THE PAST, IMAGES OF THE PRESENT*, 1977.

Ibero-America Market, now Sohan America Market, Anaheim, CA.
Sponsored by the City of Anaheim.
Photograph by Katherine Bowers.

THE TRICKSTER ARTIST: EMIGDIO VASQUEZ’S NEGOTIATION OF CITY, COMMUNITY, AND SELF

Jessica Bocinski

The trickster, through various manifestations and adaptive disguises, is one of the oldest and most persistent characters to have captured the imagination of cultures around the world. As the infamous coyote and raven of Native American mythology, or the tortoise of African folktales, the trickster has created chaos out of structure and upturned the worlds of countless myths. While the trickster has been described as a hero, a villain, or something in between, he is ultimately a marginal figure whose power arises from his ability to exist between boundaries, to “live interstitially in the cracks, betwixt and between, marginally, to confuse and to escape the structures of society and the order of cultural things.”⁴⁵ Through his equivocal role, the trickster illuminates new perspectives that prompt the discovery of essential truths and new realms of existence.

The trickster’s cunning ability to reveal new worlds through adept navigations of social constraints renders him an ideal metaphor for the artistic career and works of Chicano muralist Emigdio Vasquez (1939-2014). Like the trickster, Vasquez worked within a liminal space⁴⁷ where he found ways to resolve the diverse expectations of city patrons, the community, and himself. Working within the parallel spheres of the community and the city, the personal and the institutional, Vasquez developed an artistic practice that gave voice to the dismissed perspective of Mexican Americans⁴⁸ and illuminated a world of shared human experiences.

By boldly claiming the spirit of the trickster, Vasquez established his pivotal role within the Chicano Art Movement. In its endeavor to define the Chicana/o identity, the Chicano Art Movement challenged Modernist discourses that espoused the avant-garde artist as a creative genius whose work transcended the mundane realities of everyday life. This “cult-of-the-artist” was founded upon the myth that art was produced and exhibited in a pure state, free from the biased influences of society.⁴⁹ As with the Mexican Mural Movement of the 1920s and 30s, public art created by Chicana/o muralists typically rejected this “cult-of-the-artist,” and instead explored the agency that art could have when it was intertwined with the daily lives of the public community. The possibilities of a socially involved artistic practice transformed the role of the artist, often conflating it with that of the activist. By rethinking the relationship between artist, representation, and community, the Chicano Mural Movement replaced the narcissism of the old adage “art for art’s sake” with the consciousness of “art for life’s sake.”⁵⁰ This ideal is perfectly exemplified by Vasquez’s master’s thesis artist statement, in which he states that he does “not believe in separating my pictorial viewpoint from my human and social one.”⁵¹

As the Chicano Mural Movement rejected the “cult-of-the-artist” model, the mythic notion of art separate from society crumbled with it. Early in the history of Chicana/o muralism, it became apparent that socially engaged art could not exist separately

from the communities it represented, just as it could not exist separately from the political institutions that represented them. Muralists were required to navigate the bureaucracy of city officials and other patrons who often opposed, either directly or indirectly, their imagery and its political significance. If, as feminist Audre Lorde contended in a famous 1979 speech, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” then what options were left to Chicana/o artists who sought to resist oppression through art, but relied on the resources of their oppressors to create it?⁵² Faced with this question, Chicana/o artists such as Vasquez learned how to navigate between a responsibility to themselves, their community, and their civic institutions. Sometimes this navigation resulted in empowering victories over the oppressive politics of urban development and gentrification, while in other instances, the murals, not unlike the history of the communities themselves, were whitewashed.⁵³

Vasquez’s career was shaped by city commissions. In an interview with art historian Guisela Latorre, Vasquez candidly stated that he started painting murals because the city of Anaheim hired him to do so.⁵⁴ In 1977, Vasquez started creating murals for Anaheim’s Youth Murals Program, designed to provide work for low-income teens. He worked for the city of Anaheim for eight years, and during that time he created eight murals in the city including Memories of the Past, Images of the Present (1978) and Nuestra Experiencia en el Siglo Veinte (1980).⁵⁵ It was during this residency that Vasquez developed his characteristic photorealistic style and chronologically organized compositions to depict the history of Mexican Americans.

Although these commissions were opportune for Vasquez as an emerging artist, they also challenged him to create designs that balanced the relative conservatism of his commissioners with his own more progressive political beliefs. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Vasquez was exposed to the ideology of socialism, Marxism, and the Chicano Movement. Dr. Donald Lagerberg, Emeritus Professor of Art at California State University Fullerton and the studio faculty member who worked closely with Vasquez as his graduate chair, described how the Chicano Movement was “very present, energetic and visible... both on and off campus.”⁵⁶ While completing his masters degree, Vasquez was inspired by the activism of the Chicano Movement, known as *el movimiento*, and discussed socialism and Marxism, along with feminism, historical determinism, language theory, criticism and advocacy, in Dr. Lagerberg’s classes and one-on-one.⁵⁷ Vasquez’s exposure to the theories of socialism within and outside of his studies had a significant impact on the content of his murals. The title of the Vasquez’s 1979 mural *El Proletariado de Aztlán*, for example, employs overt references to Marxist theory.

The term *proletariado* or “proletariat” refers to the social class that owns no means of economic production, such as special skills, machinery, or tools, and can only survive by selling its labor to the bourgeoisie, the small minority of private owners, for wages. From a Marxist perspective, capitalism is founded on the division of classes and the exploitation of the proletariat as a source of cheap labor. The railroad worker, silver miner, and farm laborers in *El Proletariado de Aztlán* represent the proletariat who are denied the profits of their own labor. Marxism contends that, as the proletariat becomes aware of its economic and political



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *EL PROLETARIADO DE ATZLAN* (DETAIL), 1979.

Restored by Higgy Vasquez, 2013
Restoration sponsored by Chapman University
Photograph by Jessica Bocinski.

division from the bourgeoisie, social unrest between the two classes will intensify until it culminates in social revolution. The result would be the establishment of socialism, a political and economic system based on the collective ownership of the means of production and equal distribution based on each individual's contribution to society. Vasquez's interest in the struggles of the working class and his affinity for socialism extended beyond the context of the Chicano Movement. He greatly admired figures such as Joe Hill and Mother Jones, who were activists within the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a socialist international labor union, and even included their portraits in some of his works, such as an untitled mural created in 1988 while he taught at Santa Ana College.⁵⁸ Many of Vasquez's other works, such as *Chicano Gothic* (1987), *Visions of Santa Ana* (1987), and *The Legacy of Cesar Chavez* (1987), include nods (some more overt than others) to socialist themes and subjects.

With personal ideologies that the cities of Orange County — a national emblem of conservatism for much of its history — were likely not sympathetic to, Vasquez developed a way to create narratives layered with subtle meanings in order to stay within the lines of what his commissioners would consider acceptable.⁵⁹ In an interview, Vasquez recounts how he was “subjected to [a] certain amount of restraints” when he needed to get approval from the city because they wanted him “to make art that is ‘safe.’”⁶⁰ Situated in the middle of crisscrossing ideals, Vasquez became the trickster who cleverly employed “a strategic ambiguity or openness” to negotiate the oppositional expectations of his audiences.⁶¹ Vasquez discussed how “all [he] could do was be subtle,” adding that many of the political themes of his works tended “to go over [the city representatives'] heads.”⁶² As the trickster, Vasquez was able to critique institutionalized systems of inequality and represent the struggles of Mexican Americans in Orange County in a way that was both boldly empowering to the community and appropriately respectful to the city. By doing so, every neighborhood, public school, and commercial street that housed one of Vasquez's murals became a contested site inscribed with conflicting systems of representation and symbols of identity that changed according to the expectations of the viewer.

One strategy that Vasquez employed to achieve this feat was the incorporation of seemingly benign political figures into his murals as an instrument of subtle activism. *In Towards the Twenty-first Century* (1985), for example, Vasquez included a quote by President Abraham Lincoln: “The strongest bond of human sympathy outside the family relation should be one uniting the working people of all nations and tongues and kindreds.”⁶³ In his interview with Guisela Latorre, Vasquez revealed how he understood this quotation to be a radical statement that called working-class people to unite against their oppressors. Despite the revolutionary tone of the quotation, the city of Anaheim did not object to its inclusion in Vasquez's mural. What the city interpreted as simply a historical reference to Lincoln, Vasquez, and likely other members of the community, understood as a statement of resistance.

Another way that Vasquez was able to push the boundaries of the city's expectations was through his photorealistic style and use of linear narratives that, at first glance, appeared purely documentary, but actually possessed latent symbolism within the



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *TOWARDS THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY* (DETAIL), 1985.

Manzanita Park, Anaheim, CA.

Sponsored by Carl Karcher Enterprises, Inc., Los Amigos de Anaheim, Mr. Manuel Reynoso, and the City of Anaheim.

Photograph by Stephen Tyler and Rachel Wiegmann.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *EL PROLETARIADO DE ATZLAN* (DETAIL), 1979.

Restored by Higgy Vasquez, 2013. Orange, CA.

Restoration sponsored by Chapman University.

Photograph by Jessica Bocinski.

contemporary Chicano Movement. In the political imagination of the Chicano Movement, Vasquez's depictions of Mexican-American laborers working closely with the land, as in *El Proletariado de Aztlán* or *Chicano Gothic*, symbolized the Chicana/o's mythic indigeneity and shared heritage. In *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (1969), a Chicano Movement manifesto that advocated for the self-determination of Mexican-Americans, the land of Aztlán "belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather crops and not to the foreign Europeans."

In this Marxist rejection of capitalism, the richness of the land belongs to the unified workers who tend it. Similarly, in *Nuestra Experiencia en el Siglo Viente* (1980), Vasquez represents the historical unfolding of the 1910 Mexican Revolution and its aftermath, with the figures of Zapata and the Flores Magón brothers looming over the peasants rallying for land reform, and the disenfranchised resorting to northern migration in search of a better life.⁶⁵ While this section of the mural might appear to be purely historical— an interpretation that is reinforced by the large "1910" painted on the top left of the scene— Vasquez viewed this event as a pivotal moment that shaped the modern Chicana/o identity.

In an interview, Vasquez stated that his depiction of the Mexican Revolution provided the historical backdrop for what he considered to be

"the political and economic forces that shaped the [current] Chicano experience."⁶⁶

Self-determinism—the right to assert one's own history—was one of the central tenets of the Chicano Movement and served as a way to challenge the mythic grand narrative of western history that discounted and silenced the experiences of the Chicana/o community. Vasquez was able to astutely bridge the gap between these two worlds, forging the connection between the historical past and the present. The title of the mural, *Memories of the Past, Images of the Present*, perfectly exemplifies this.

In the mural, Vasquez depicts scenes from the Mexican Revolution as well as the migration of indigenous peasants into the United States. He stated that he "wanted to convey the impact that this transition had on several generations of Chicanos and acknowledge the contributions that this process made on American society."⁶⁷ In the middle of this historical narrative, Vasquez also included an allegorical Aztec eagle warrior to represent the "fusion of the Indian and the Iberian cultures that resulted in the Mestizo... the ancestral forebears of the present day Chicano."⁶⁸ As much as Vasquez painted scenes from the past, his focus was always on illuminating the identities and experiences of the Mexican-American communities he lived in. By doing so, Vasquez created art that was intended to be more than just a purely aesthetic or documentary experience; his murals are imbued with an agency that compels the viewer to acknowledge the past and present experiences, the humanity, of the communities they represent.

Not only did Vasquez artfully assert the dismissed history of the Chicana/o people, but he also incorporated their experiences within the larger historical narrative of the United States, thereby rejecting the segregating structures of history in favor of a unified



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *NUESTRA EXPERIENCIA EN EL SIGLO VEINTE* (DETAIL), 1980.

Restored by Higgy Vasquez, 1996. Salvation Army Temple, Anaheim, CA.

Sponsored by City of Anaheim. Photograph by McKenna Robbie.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *MEMORIES OF THE PAST, IMAGES OF THE PRESENT* (DETAIL), 1977.

Ibero-America Market, now Sohan America Market, Anaheim, CA, 1978. Photograph by Brooke Fessler.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ ASSISTED BY LOUIRE M. HERNANDEZ, SILVIA MENDOZA, PERRY B. WARE,
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF PROGRESS, 1982.

Anaheim Civic Center.
Sponsored by the city of Anaheim.
Photograph by Kelsey Anderson.

lattice of diverse perspectives. This inclusive history is exemplified by Vasquez’s blending of Anglo and Chicana/o history in *One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of Progress* (1982).

In his representation of the history of Anaheim, Vasquez incorporated George Hansen (far left), considered the “Father of Anaheim,” Ah Foo (above Hansen), a Chinese-American handyman, Jean Pacifico and Martina Ontiveros (center), the original landowners of the site where Anaheim was later founded, and Mexican-American laborers.⁶⁹ The way in which Vasquez fluidly meshed distinct scenes and figures to create a unified composition illustrates a history that is composed of both shared and specific experiences. Vasquez presents the viewer with the opportunity to connect the lines between stories, to see the diverse intricacies that lie at the heart of any community. While Vasquez’s inclusive message was initially directed primarily at the Mexican-American community, his later murals such as *One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of Progress*, *Educacion y Trabajo* (1992), and *Towards the Solidarity of All People* (1987) illustrate the universal experiences of humanity, irrespective of ethnicity.

As the trickster artist, Vasquez was able to use the resources of his commissioners to expand the grand narrative of history and subtly offer visions of a socialist alternative to capitalism in the United States. By elucidating the shared experiences of the Chicana/o community and humanity as a whole, Vasquez transformed the government’s oppressive indifference into a pronounced weakness. By doing so, he demonstrated the ways in which authority and oppression inherently incite their own undermining. It was precisely the city’s apathy towards the Chicana/o community that allowed Vasquez to incorporate progressive themes into his murals undetected. That these latent themes and symbols were designed to be understood by the surrounding Chicana/o community only strengthened their sense of a shared understanding and experience that unified them against the institutions that refused to understand their struggles. *El movimiento* used the term “blood” to refer to this powerful connection that was “deeper than ideology and carried

not biologically... but through a shared cultural history of exploitation, oppressions, and resistance.”⁷⁰ Without negating cultural differences or suppressing the validity of distinct cultural experiences, Vasquez’s later murals universalized the “blood” of *el movimiento* by illuminating the untenable distinctions between people in society. In this way, Vasquez’s murals echo Chicana activist and union leader Dolores Huerta’s cautionary advice to not let “people drive wedges between us... because there is only one human race.”⁷¹

The disconnect between communities and their political institutions that Vasquez reconciled in his murals has continued into the 21st century, although in a different manifestation. Many of the Chicana/o murals in Orange County are slowly disappearing after years of neglect and disrepair. One of Vasquez’s murals, entitled *Un Dia en el Mercado* (1983), painted on Sancho’s Mexican Restaurant cross the street from Glover Stadium in Anaheim, was destroyed in the early 2000s, likely because it was already in disrepair when the new stadium was being built. Memories of the Past, Images of the Present is but a ghostly outline of what it once was.⁷² Now, in the midst of a divisive political and social climate, it is perhaps more important than ever to ensure the preservation of Vasquez’s murals. Individuals as well as officials at the city, county, and state level must now work collectively to preserve the murals that encourage us to cherish our similarities and revere our differences.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, THE LEGACY OF CESAR CHAVEZ, 1997.

Cesar Chavez Business and Computer Center, Santa Ana College, CA. Sponsored by the city of Santa Ana. Photograph by Stephen Tyler and Rachel Wiegmann.

UN SENTIDO DE PERTENENCIA: AZTLÁN, COMMUNITY, AND INDIVIDUALITY IN THE MURALS OF EMIGDIO VASQUEZ

Manon Wogahn

How does one earn the title, the Godfather of Chicano art? The name suggests a prolific career spanning decades, with works embodying the spirit and strength of the Chicana/o community, and active participation in a social movement that would deeply impact American culture. Emigdio Vasquez, the Godfather himself, accomplished all this. His choice of imagery, ranging from Aztec warriors to depictions of the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943, is undoubtedly political, and his self-definition as a “social realist painter”⁷³ cements his role as an artist for and of the working class. Vasquez shows concern for the proletariat in many of his paintings. The worker is never lost or forgotten in Vasquez’s murals; rather, he is at the forefront of each public piece. The characters in his works are individualized, ensuring that the figures are perceived as more than mere stereotypes of the working class. These painted figures represent the reality of the Chicana/o experience and encourage an empathetic engagement between viewer and mural.

Vasquez’s 1979 mural *El Proletariado de Aztlán*, painted during his studies at California State University, Fullerton, addresses past and present Mexican-American identity by celebrating the individuality and the achievements of the working class. By using friends and family as models for his mural subjects, Vasquez invites the community to participate in the mural production process. In this respect, he initiates a direct relationship between his art and the community for which it was intended, where the traditionally elitist practice of artmaking is democratically reinterpreted by and for the working class. This attention to the worker is at the center of Vasquez’s identity as a social realist painter.⁷⁴ His self-acknowledged preference for painting “real” subject matter—that is, subjects and events based on daily life and experience, particularly in the Orange barrio—made more immediate by his photorealist technique allow for a visual commentary on larger issues of conflict and struggle in American society. *El Proletariado de Aztlán* is socialist both in title and imagery: its representation of unified Mexican-American workers reinforces the title, which alludes not just to the Marxist proletariat, but also to Aztlán, the homeland of the Aztec civilization often thought to be located in the American Southwest.

It is not surprising that Aztlán appears in *El Proletariado de Aztlán* and other works by Vasquez. The concept of Aztlán surged in popularity during the civil rights movements of the 1960s. *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*,⁷⁵ a document drafted at the First Chicana/o National Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado in 1969, extends Aztlán beyond its historical context, using it as a vehicle for unification of the Chicana/o people:

“WE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE IS THE ONLY ROAD TO TOTAL LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION, EXPLOITATION, AND RACISM. OUR STRUGGLE THEN MUST BE FOR THE CONTROL OF OUR BARRIOS, CAMPOS, PUEBLOS, LANDS, OUR ECONOMY, OUR CULTURE, AND OUR POLITICAL LIFE. EL PLAN COMMITS ALL LEVELS OF CHICANA/O SOCIETY—THE BARRIO, THE CAMPO, THE RANCHERO, THE WRITER, THE TEACHER, THE WORKER, THE PROFESSIONAL—TO LA CAUSA.”⁷⁶

The Aztlán of the Chicano Movement, as illustrated in *El Plan*, is not just a geographical location which Chicana/o individuals are to reclaim. Aztlán offers a sense of belonging, highlighting a shared identity among those living and working in this land. Who is represented in *El Proletariado de Aztlán*? Miners, farmers, zoot suiters, workers on strike, and other members of the contemporary Chicana/o community are monumentalized in the mural. The leftmost end of the composition features an Aztec warrior, a symbol of ancient heritage. His compositional location, which places the modern-day figures to his right, signifies a progression from past to present, a linking of the working class of today to that of antiquity. Just as *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* draws on the power of Chicana/o heritage, so does *El Proletariado*. Additionally, the two creations read as manifestos—both document and mural are declarations of a common ideal. They are utopian in their push for equality and recognition of a group historically oppressed under a social and political regime, and both are uncompromising in their assertions of modern socio-political issues.

Vasquez’s talent lies in his ability to celebrate the working class in a socially relevant way that fosters empathy for the figures in his murals. He accomplishes this by combining his social realist style—itsself a merging of realism and social activism—with monumental scale,



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *EL PROLETARIADO DE ATZLAN* (DETAIL), 1979.

Restored by Higgy Vasquez, 2013. Orange, CA. Restoration sponsored by Chapman University.
Photograph by Jessica Bocinski.

“THEIR FACES ARE THERE. IT MIGHT NOT BE WHAT THEY WERE DOING, BUT THEIR FACES ARE THERE. THEY WERE PROUD OF THAT, THAT HE USED THE PEOPLE HE KNEW.”

Thus, the mural stands as an homage not just to the generalized working class, but more importantly to specific individuals. To truly understand the impact of this specificity, we must look to other murals that preceded Vasquez’s which similarly highlight the working class. Perhaps the most well-known American murals of the 20th century are those painted under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as part of the Federal Art Project (1935-1943). This New Deal program employed visual artists across the United States to alleviate the devastation of the Great Depression by employing artists to create public art. Murals were painted in libraries, post offices, and schools and, much like Vasquez’s murals, often focus on issues of the working class. However, unlike Vasquez, WPA artists typically painted generic figures that lacked individuality. Fletcher Martin’s 1935 mural *Mail Transportation*, painted for the San Pedro Post Office in Southern California, depicts mail transport across various global landscapes and cultures.

Martin celebrates the general laborer, sacrificing individuality in favor of universality: the mural’s strong, masculine workers, no matter their culture or global location, all maintain a level of uniformity. In most cases, eyes are either de-emphasized or entirely hidden, further restricting eye contact or a gaze-based connection between viewer and painted subject. Rather than painting distinct individuals, Martin represents the working class in a generalized manner.

historical and contemporary imagery and, above all, characters based on real people. These murals are not one-size-fits-all images in which a generic subject serves as a blank persona on which the viewer can project their own self and experience. The individualized figures are based on members of Vasquez’s community, well-known figures in Chicana/o activism, or taken from photographic sources in books like *450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures/450 Anos Del Pueblo Chicano/o*.⁷⁷ In *El Proletariado*, for example, members of the community are memorialized alongside Cesar Chavez and other workers. “Everybody was happy that he depicted them,” says Paul Guzman of the Orange Barrio Historical Society. Their faces are there. It might not be what they were doing, but their faces are there. They were proud of that, that he used the people he knew.⁷⁸



FLETCHER MARTIN, *MAIL TRANSPORTATION* (DETAIL), 1935.

San Pedro Post Office. Photograph by Denise Johnson.



PAUL JULIAN, *ORANGE PICKERS*, 1936.

Fullerton Post Office.

The same can be said about *Orange Pickers*, a 1936 mural by Paul Julian. Located in the Fullerton Post Office, the work is the only WPA post office mural in Orange County. As such, its depiction of young, similarly generalized figures picking and packing citrus is geographically appropriate. Though no doubt performing a laborious task, the figures appear comfortable and untroubled in their work. Compare these figures with the laborers in *El Proletariado*: the former are youthful, with anglicized features and nondescript emotions, while the latter are brown-skinned, with weathered faces and strained positions as they pick produce. It is as if Julian's orange pickers can drop their bucolic hobby whenever they please, while the proletarians in *El Proletariado* are bound to their work as a means of survival. Moreover, the racial ambiguity of Julian's figures is in direct contrast to the explicitly Mexican-American workers in Vasquez's works.

The WPA murals and Vasquez's works produce vastly different effects. Martin's mural promotes the fruitful results of unified action, while Vasquez's piece celebrates the harmony of unified individuals; Julian's *Orange Pickers* simplifies the act of picking oranges as a pastoral pastime, while Vasquez highlights the physical and social struggle of the worker. In both WPA murals, the generalized faces serve as blank templates upon which viewers can superimpose their own selves. The mural then becomes a vehicle for self-projection and, ideally, the impetus for self-driven action. Because of the nonspecific quality of the characters, this action is visible and redeemable by all. *El Proletariado de Aztlán*, like other Vasquez murals, places individuals in working class roles. The faces of farmers, field workers, miners, strikers, zoot suiters, and other Chicana/o figures come alive under Vasquez's brush. Gone are the abstracted faces and bodies of 1930s American muralism—deep wrinkles, expressive faces, and stoic positions characterize the personages of Vasquez's works. The characters' stories are not limited to their action(s) in his mural; rather, they extend beyond the wall, blending seamlessly into Chicana/o history, contemporary experience, and daily life. In the WPA murals, it is the viewer who brings individual experience to the mural, while in Vasquez's, this experience is explicitly provided.

This inherent presence of the Chicana/o experience does not make for a simple or passive act of viewing. Viewers must be conscious of their own participation in the work—no longer are they permitted to passively envision themselves doing the work of the subjects. Vasquez's viewers must truly attempt to understand the depicted Chicana/o experience in order to fully engage with the work. Vasquez is, in this way, a master of stimulating audience participation and empathy. He controls viewer responses through careful selection of imagery and style. In *Nuestra Experiencia en el Siglo Veinte* (1980), for example, Vasquez depicts a newspaper with a greyscale image of Chicana/o youths in a jail cell under the headline “Zoot Suiters Learn Lesson in Fights with Servicemen.” Vasquez pairs the newspaper, an explicit reference to the tension in Los Angeles of the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943, with a colorful depiction of zoot suiters, standing and laughing casually.

Like the zoot suiters in *El Proletariado*, these men appear to be located in a quiet suburb. The viewer is thus forced to acknowledge the discrepancy between the jailed figures, labelled by the media as “threats,” and the reality of the zoot suiters in



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *NUESTRA EXPERIENCIA EN EL SIGLO VEINTE* (DETAIL), 1980.

Restored by Higgy Vasquez, 1996. Salvation Army Temple, Anaheim, CA.
Sponsored by City of Anaheim. Photograph by McKenna Robbie.

their own neighborhood. The contemporary viewer cannot project a shared experience onto the zoot suiters; instead, they must make an active effort to empathize with the characters in the mural. Both the viewer and the painted figures maintain their own individuality, as the act of imposing one experience on top of another is replaced with a communicative relationship between audience and mural.

This relationship is not always understood. *El Proletariado* has prompted controversy in recent years. In particular, the mural's image of Che Guevara and the acronym OVC (referring to the Orange Varrio Cypress gang) has been interpreted as problematic. In 2009, thirty years after the mural was painted, the Orange Police Department began a gang injunction against OVC, claiming that *El Proletariado de Aztlán* was the gang's “flag,” and thus promoted criminality.⁷⁹ An Orange Police detective

attacked Vasquez’s muralism for portraying “rebellion against a perceived oppressive government through art.”⁸⁰ This issue arose again during the restoration of the mural in 2014 when an Orange Police officer pointed to the same section depicting Che Guevara and a graffitied fence as problematic.⁸¹ By focusing solely on a small portion of the mural perceived as gang-related and pro-criminal, these instances of police concern ignore the work as a larger whole. This issue goes beyond superficial stereotyping; it is an example of an interpretation of the mural that lacks empathy. In response to the persecution of his mural’s imagery, Vasquez stated simply, “I paint what I see in the barrio.”⁸² In light of this explanation, these negative perceptions of the mural seem not only superficial, but reflective of a resistance to understanding the wider Chicana/o experience as represented in the piece.

In the words of Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, “The artist is a direct product of life. He is an apparatus born to be the receptor, the condenser, the transmitter, and the reflector of the aspirations, the desires, and the hopes of his age.”⁸³ Emigdio Vasquez was certainly an artist whose works condensed, transmitted, and reflected the societal and political concerns of his time. His socio-political convictions, most notably his celebration of the proletariat and his representations of the Chicana/o working class in *El Proletariado de Aztlán*, indicated a profound awareness of the history and contributions of his community in contemporary Southern California. By creating detailed, individualized portraits of the working class, Vasquez ensured a representation of the Chicana/o experience that is not limited by the physical and symbolic boundaries of the painted wall. Instead, that experience is highlighted, and thus heightened, by the mural. To fully understand these works, the viewer must set aside their own sense of self and empathize with the painted individuals. There is no opportunity to superimpose personal subjectivity; the individual and their experience are already present, and the viewer must work to understand it. This is what makes Emigdio Vasquez’s murals so profound—they foster deep communication between viewer and subject, rather than a passive imposition of personal experience onto a blank figure. In other words, his murals don’t work unless you do.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ, *CHICANO GOTHIC*, 1987.

Santa Ana Memorial Park, Santa Ana, CA.
Sponsored by the City of Santa Ana. Photograph by Stephen Tyler and Rachel Wiegmann.

Friendly Center Mural, 1964. Friendly Center, Orange, CA. Covered by drywall.

Pancho Villa on a Horse, c. 1965. Vasquez Family home, Orange, CA. Overpainted c. 1995. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Rosemary Tuthill.

Mariachis de Jalisco, 1976. Moreno's Restaurant, Orange, CA.

Memories of the Past, Images of the Present, 1977. Ibero-American Market, now Sohan America Market, Anaheim, CA. Sponsored by the City of Anaheim.

A Peek at the Fifties, 1978. La Palma Drive-In, Anaheim, CA. Sponsored by the City of Anaheim.

El Proletariado de Aztlan, 1979. Orange, CA. Restored by Higgy Vasquez in 2013. Restoration sponsored by Chapman University.

Raices del Pachuco, 1979. George Washington Center, now at the Anaheim Downtown Youth Center Boxing Arena. Sponsored by the City of Anaheim.

Nuestra Experiencia en el Siglo Veinte, 1980. Restored by Higgy Vasquez, 1996. Salvation Army Temple, Anaheim, CA.

Emigdio Vasquez assisted by Louire M. Hernandez, Silvia Mendoza, and Perry B. Ware, *One Hundred Twenty-Five Years of Progress*, 1982. Anaheim Civic Center. Sponsored by the City of Anaheim.

Un Día en el Mercado, 1983. Sancho's Mexican Restaurant, Anaheim, CA. Sponsored by the city of Anaheim.

Towards the Twenty-First Century, 1985. Manzanita Park, Anaheim, CA. Sponsored by Carl Karcher Enterprises, Inc., Los Amigos de Anaheim, Mr. Manuel Reynoso, and the City of Anaheim.

Mexico Lindo y Querido, 1985 - 1988. Tlaquepaque Restaurant, Placentia, CA.

The Strongest Bond of Humans, 1986. Santa Ana College, CA. Sponsored by Santa Ana College.

Visions of Orange County, 1986. Demolished c. 1991. Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, CA. Sponsored by Bowers Museum and the California Arts Council.

Chicano Gothic, 1987. Santa Ana Memorial Park, Santa Ana, CA. Sponsored by the City of Santa Ana.

Towards the Solidarity of All Peoples, 1987. Demolished. Jerome Center, Santa Ana, CA. Sponsored by Bowers Museum and the California Arts Council.

Visions of Santa Ana, 1987. Angels Community Park, Santa Ana, CA. Sponsored by Bowers Museum and the California Arts Council.

La Juventud, Nuestras Raices y el Futuro (Youth, Our Roots and Future), 1987. Demolished. El Salvador Center, Santa Ana, CA. Sponsored by Bowers Museum and the California Arts Council.

Waiting for the Bus OCTD Art in Motion, 1987. Temporary mural painted on OCTD bus. Sponsored by OCTD Art in Motion.

La Mujer Latina, 1988. Maple Elementary School, Fullerton, CA. Sponsored by the City of Fullerton.

Children, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, 1988. Madison Park, Santa Ana, CA. Sponsored by Bowers Museum and the California Arts Council.

Untitled, 1988-1989. Santa Ana College, CA.

Spanish, Indians, and Today's Hispanics, 1989. Heritage Museum, Santa Ana, CA. Lowrider Car Show & Family Fiesta for the Orange County Fair.

Smile Now, Cry Later, 1989. Fullerton College, Wilshire Theater.

Recuerdos de mi Pueblo, 1990. Tapatio Restaurant, Santa Ana, CA.

Emigdio Vasquez assisted by Carlos E. Vasquez, Ben Valenzuela, Ricardo Guzman, and Leo Sanchez, *Visions of Orange County*, 1991. Orange County Transit District, now OCTA Terminal, Santa Ana. Sponsored by Bowers Museum.

La Educacion y el Trabajo, 1992. Irvine Valley College Library.

Un Pueblito en Mexico, 1993. Demolished c. 1991. Formerly Lawry's California Center, Los Angeles, CA. Sponsored by Disney Imagineering.

Niños del Mundo, 1994. Restored by Debra May, Rachel Burch and Tracy Lucero, 2012. Lemon Park, Fullerton, CA. City of Fullerton CUFFS Program.

Colonial Mother, Pride of Anaheim, and Blue Vase mural squares, 1994. Restored in 2017 by Higgy Vasquez. Citrus Park, Anaheim, CA.

Art and Play: Cornerstones of Creativity, 1995 - 1996. Demolished in 2012. Boys and Girls Club of Fullerton, CA. Sponsored by Citizens United for Fullerton Safety.

Emigdio Vasquez, Fullerton Union High School and Nicholas Jr. High School students, *Faces of Fullerton*, 1996. Fullerton Museum Center Auditorium, CA.

The Legacy of Cesar Chavez, 1997. Cesar Chavez Business and Computer Center, Santa Ana College, CA. Sponsored by the City of Santa Ana.

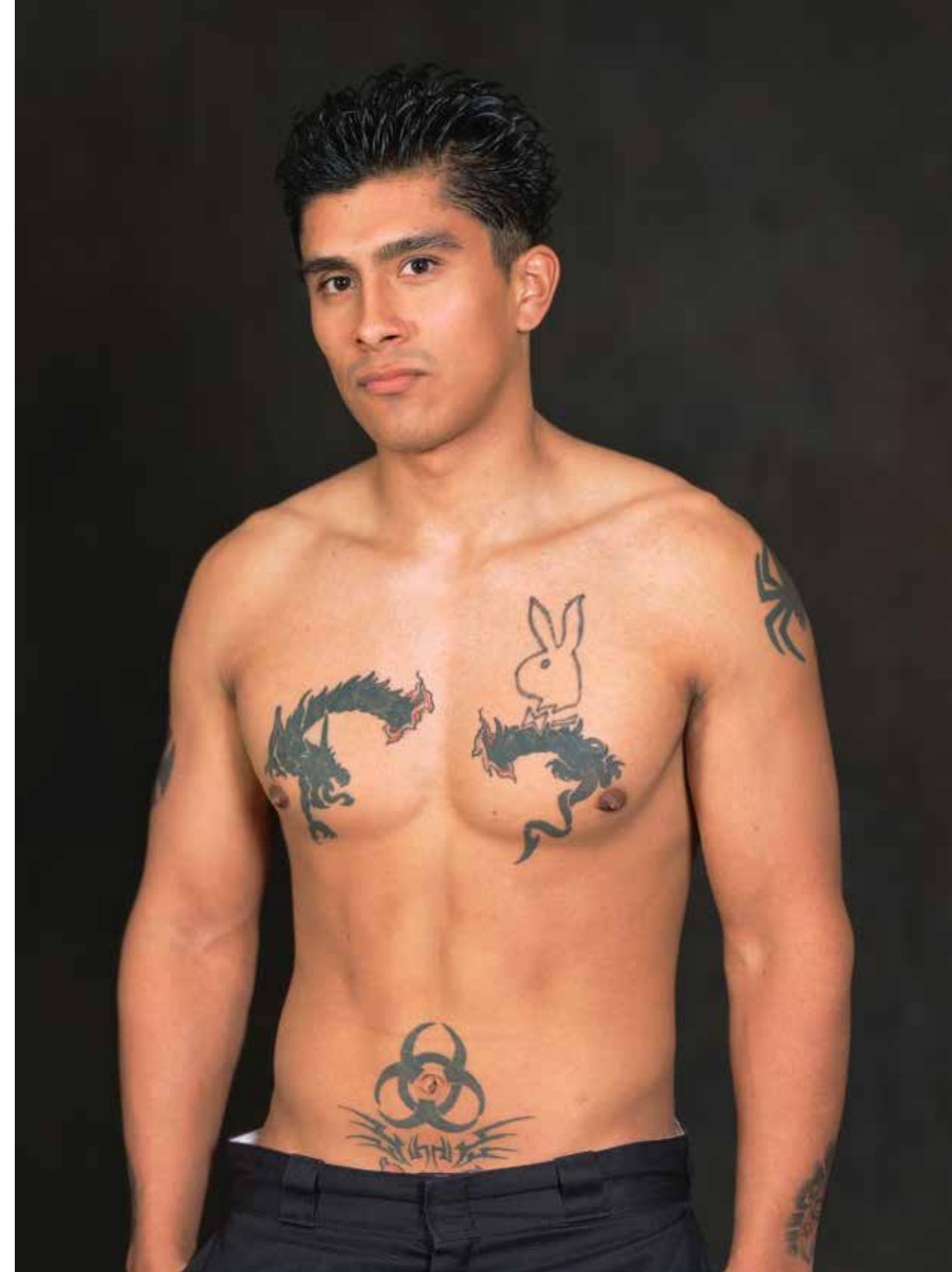
Emigdio and Higgy Vasquez, *Access and Education*, 2006. California State University, Fullerton.

IDENTIFIED MURALS ASSISTED OR RESTORED BY EMIGDIO VASQUEZ

Sergio O'Cadiz, assisted by Doris Baker, Emigdio Vasquez and Jennifer Winn, and 33 students, *History and Evolution of the Chicano in the United States (MEChA Mural)*, 1974. Santa Ana College, CA.

David Whalen, *Lemon Park Murals*, 1978. Restored by Emigdio Vasquez, 1998. Lemon Park, Fullerton, CA. Sponsored by the City of Fullerton.

KEN GONZALES-DAY
***MEMENTO MORI (ANTHONY)*, 2005**
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist and Luis de Jesus Los Angeles



KEN GONZALES-DAY
MEMENTO MORI (GORDON), 2005
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist and Luis de Jesus Los Angeles



KEN GONZALES-DAY
CHRISTOS, 2003

Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist and Luis de Jesus Los Angeles





RAMIRO GOMEZ
DESPUÉS DEL TRABAJO (AFTER WORK), 2016

Mixed Media on cardboard
Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art
Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment
2017.10.1
Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles.
Photograph by Michael Underwood.



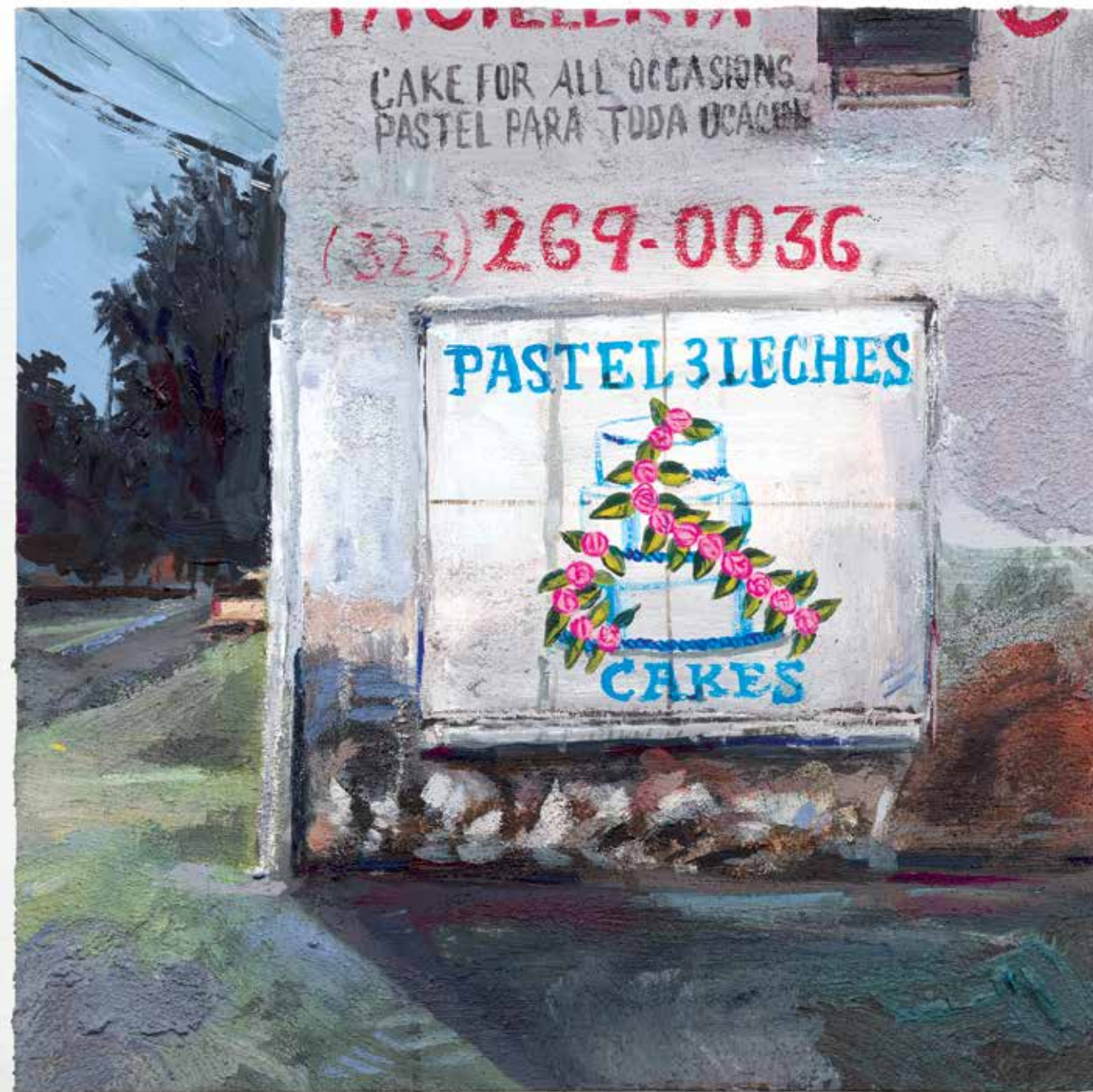
DULCE SOLEDAD IBARRA
PIÑATAS Y PREGUNTAS: SEEKING ANSWERS IN INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CONFLICTS, 2017
Installation with tissue paper and cardboard piñata, rope, wooden stick, pen, paper, and participants
Photos by Christopher Vélez



My Barrio:
Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County

PATRICK MARTINEZ
BOYLE HEIGHTS CAKE SPOT, 2016

Acrylic and stucco on panel
Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art
Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment
2017.4.6
Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles.
Photograph by Michael Underwood.



PATRICK MARTINEZ
RISE AND SHINE, 2017

Neon
Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art
Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment
2017.4.5
Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles.
Photograph by Michael Underwood.



PATRICK MARTINEZ
ELECTORAL COLLEGE, 2016

Neon
Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles.
Photograph by Michael Underwood.



My Barrio:
Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County

SHIZU SALDAMANDO
HUNTINGTON PARK BBQ, 2005

Colored pencil, mixed media on paper
Collection of Ricardo P. Reyes
Courtesy of the artist



SHIZU SALDAMANDO
LA MARTHA, 2013

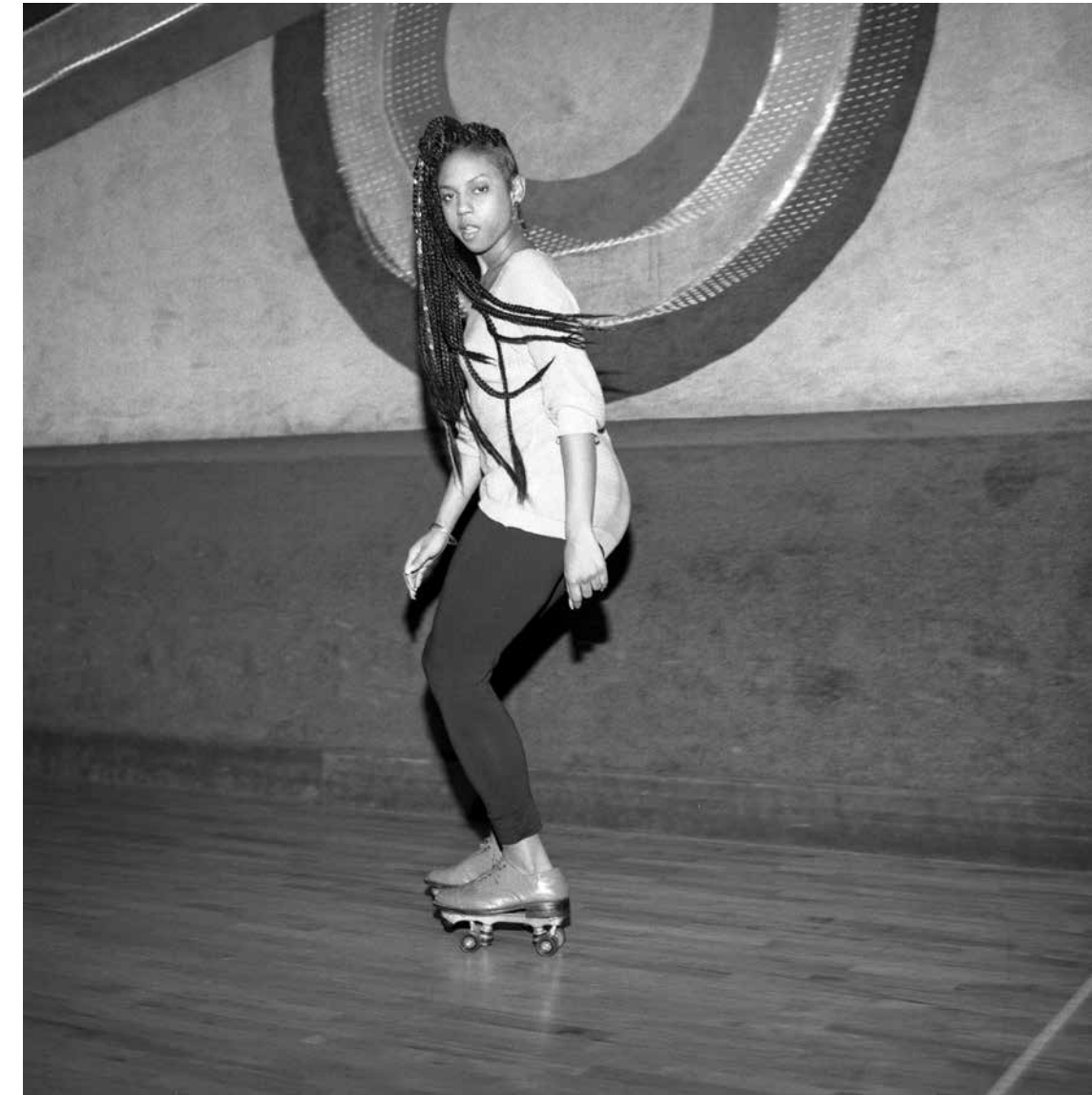
Oil on wood
Courtesy of the artist



My Barrio:
Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County

ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ
UNTITLED, 2014-2017

Silver gelatin print
Courtesy of the artist



ANA SERRANO
MUSTARD HOUSE, 2012

Cardboard, inkjet print copies on paper, glue, string, and acrylic
Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art
Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment
2017.7.1
Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles.
Photo by Julie Klima.



ANA SERRANO
IGLESIA LA LUZ DEL MUNDO, 2012

Cardboard, inkjet print copies on paper, glue, and acrylic
Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art
Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment
2017.7.2
Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles.
Photo by Julie Klima.



ANA SERRANO
LEAVES IN HP, 2012

Cardboard, inkjet print copies on paper, glue, and acrylic
Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art
Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment
2017.7.3
Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles.
Photo by Julie Klima.



ANA SERRANO
SARITA'S #1, 2012

Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art
Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment
2017.7.4
Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles.
Photo by Julie Klima.



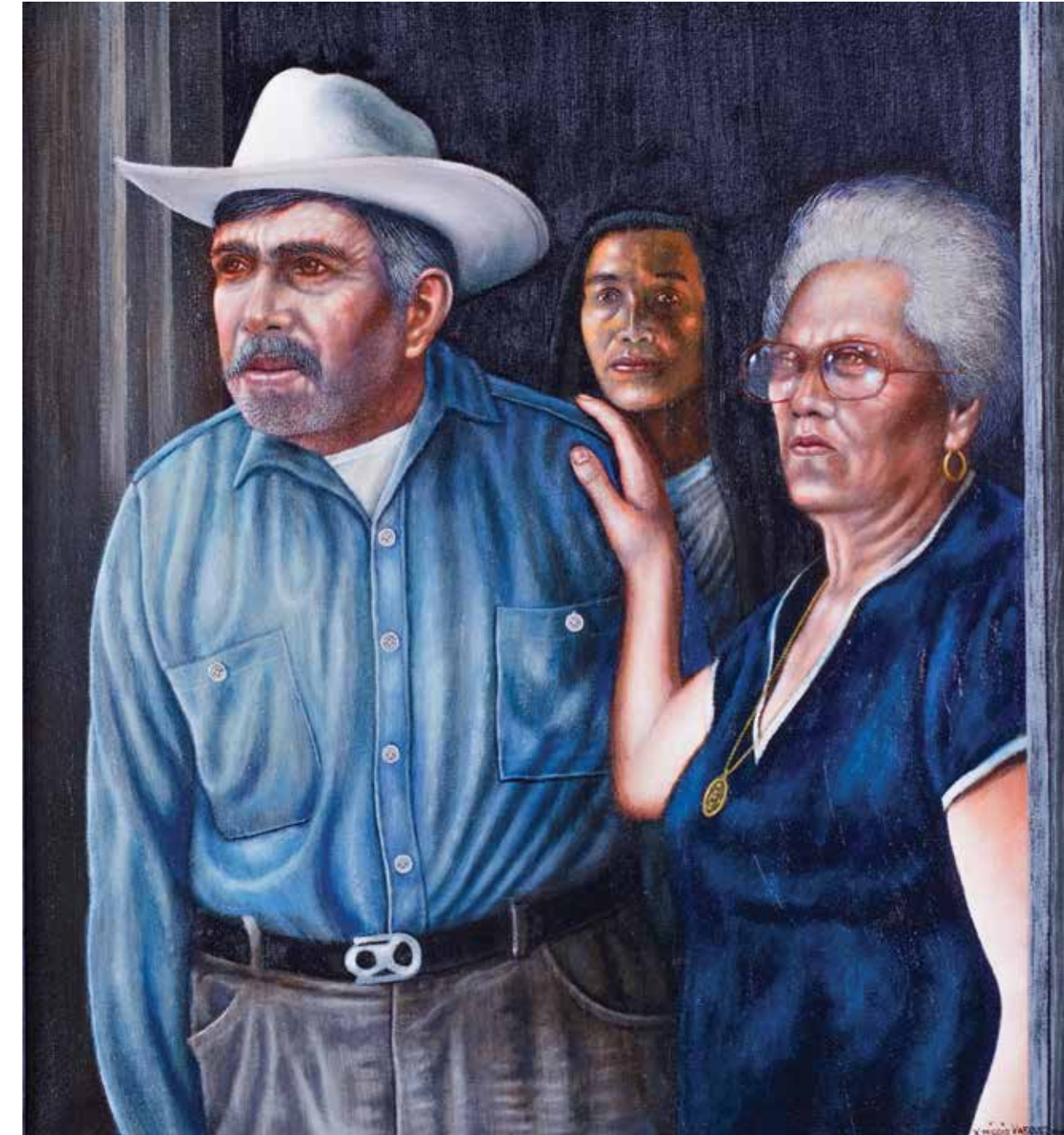
ANA SERRANO
NEVERIA, 2012

Cardboard, inkjet print copies on paper, glue, and acrylic
Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art
Purchased with funds from the Escalette Endowment
2017.7.5
Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles.
Photo by Julie Klima.



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
SALT OF THE EARTH, 2003

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
A SUNDAY MORNING IN OVC, 1980

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



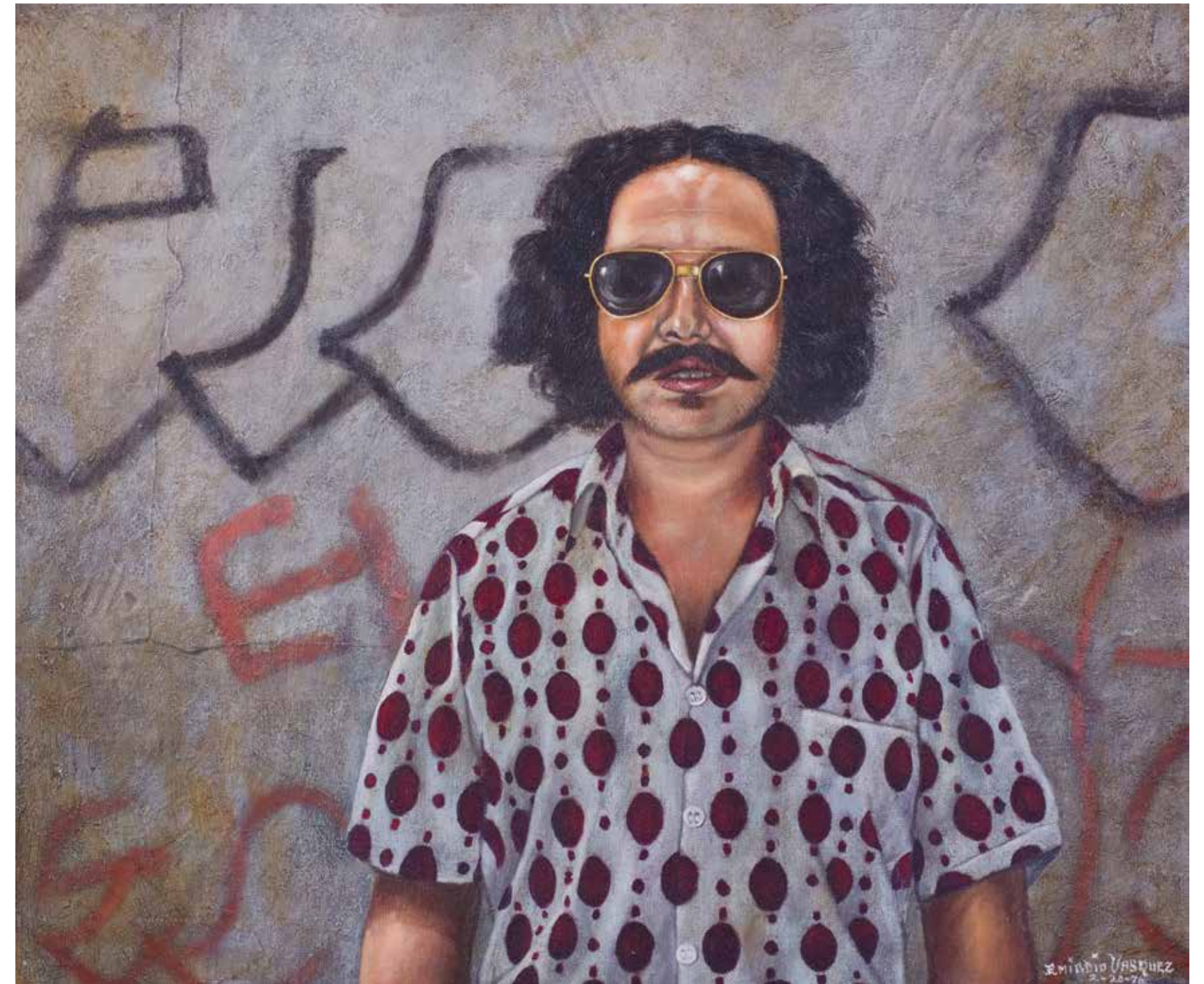
EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
A SUNDAY NIGHT IN HARMONY PARK, 1999

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Emigdio "Higgy" Vasquez Jr.
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
CHEAP DICKIE, 1976

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Emigdio "Higgy" Vasquez Jr.
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
CYPRESS STREET PACHUCOS, 1998

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Emigdio "Higgy" Vasquez Jr.
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
EL BARRIO DE ORANGE, 1965

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



My Barrio:
Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County

EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
HOMEBOYS CIRCA 1936, 1994

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON FOURTH STREET, 1982

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



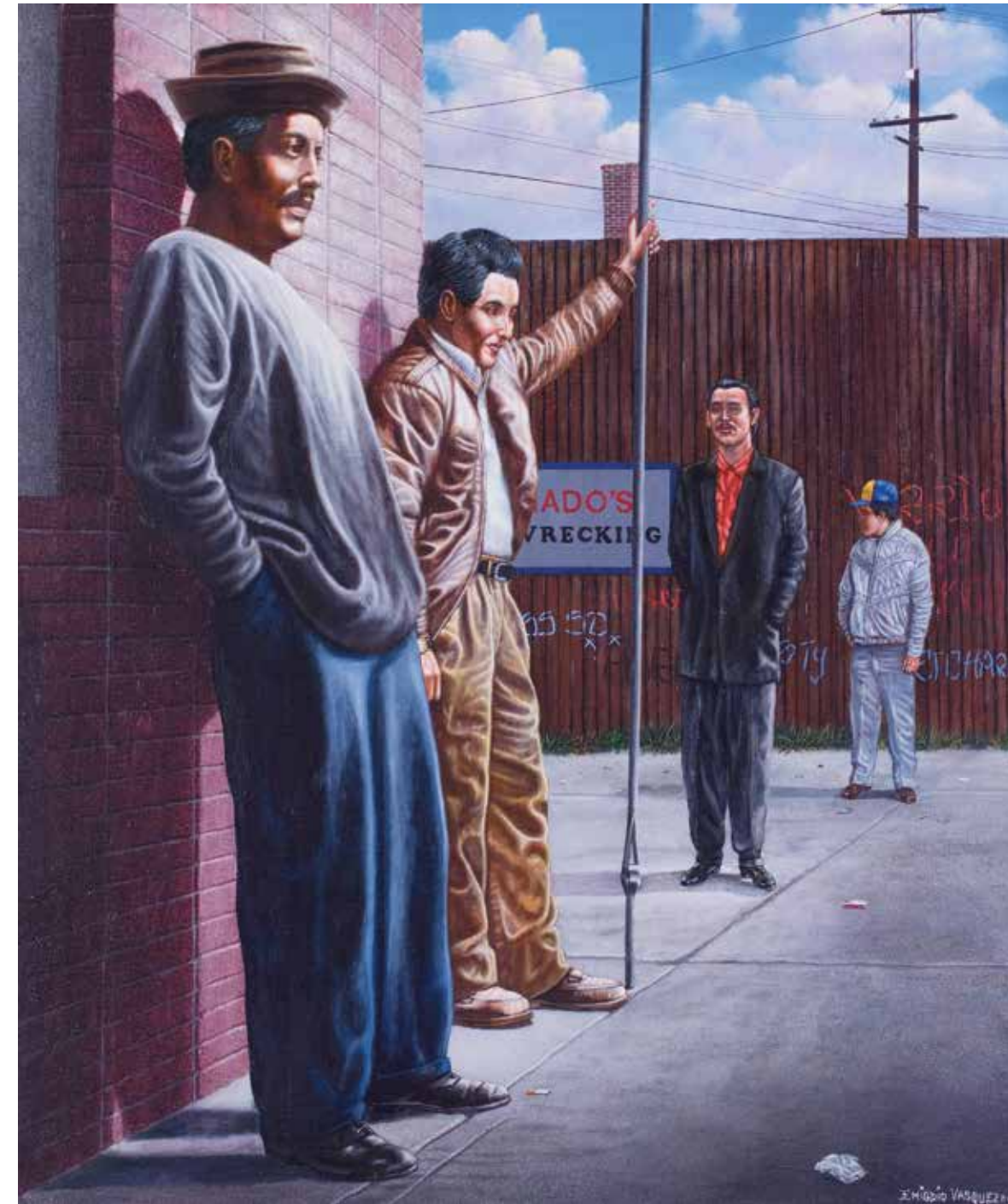
EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
JUNQUE DEL BARRIO, 1978

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
***OBREROS*, 1995**

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
LA CALLE CUATRO, 2001

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
PLEDGE YOUR ALLEGIANCE, 1979

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



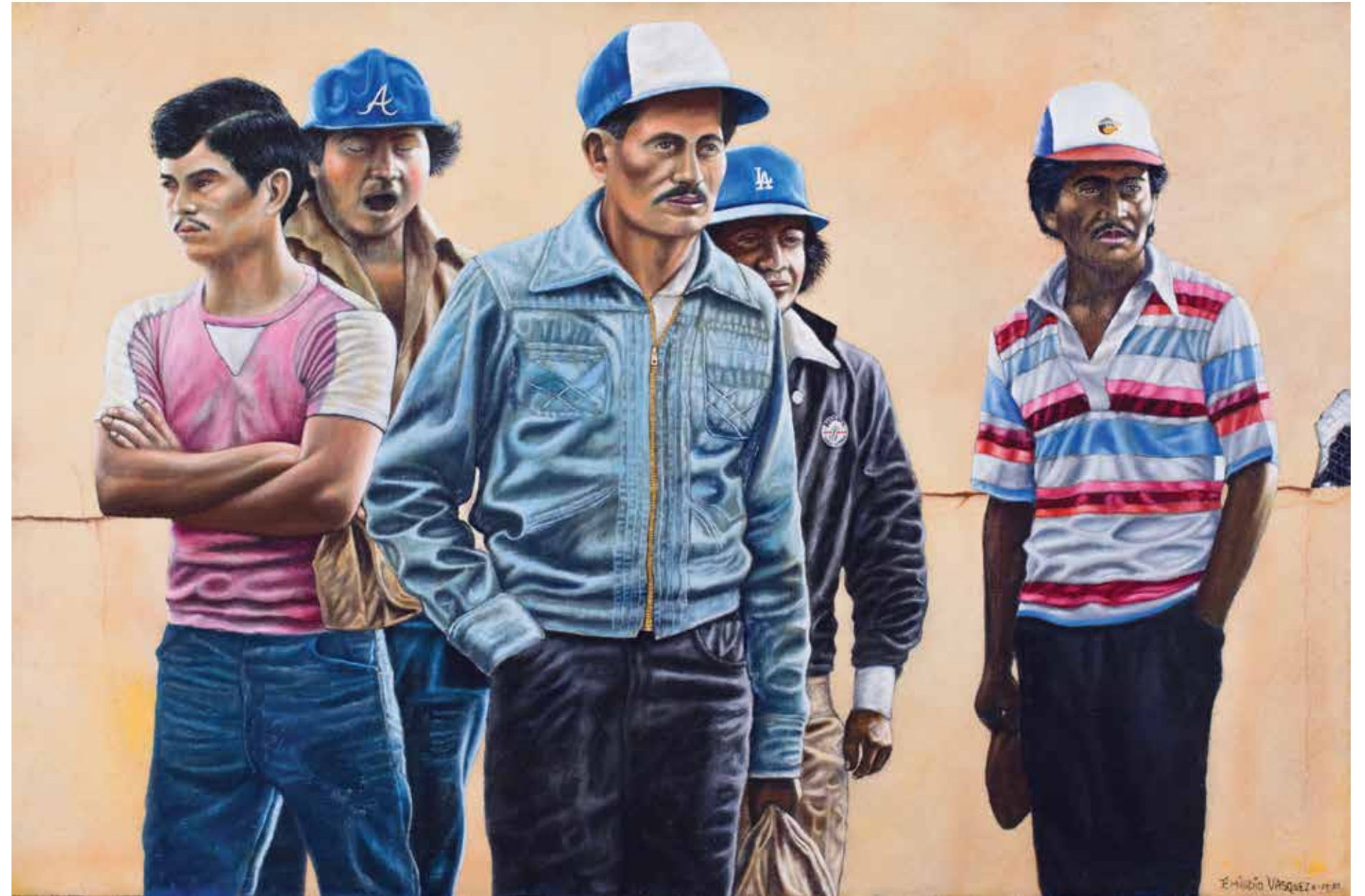
EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
PROLETARIAN FAMILY, 1983

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
DAY LABORERS, 1985

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



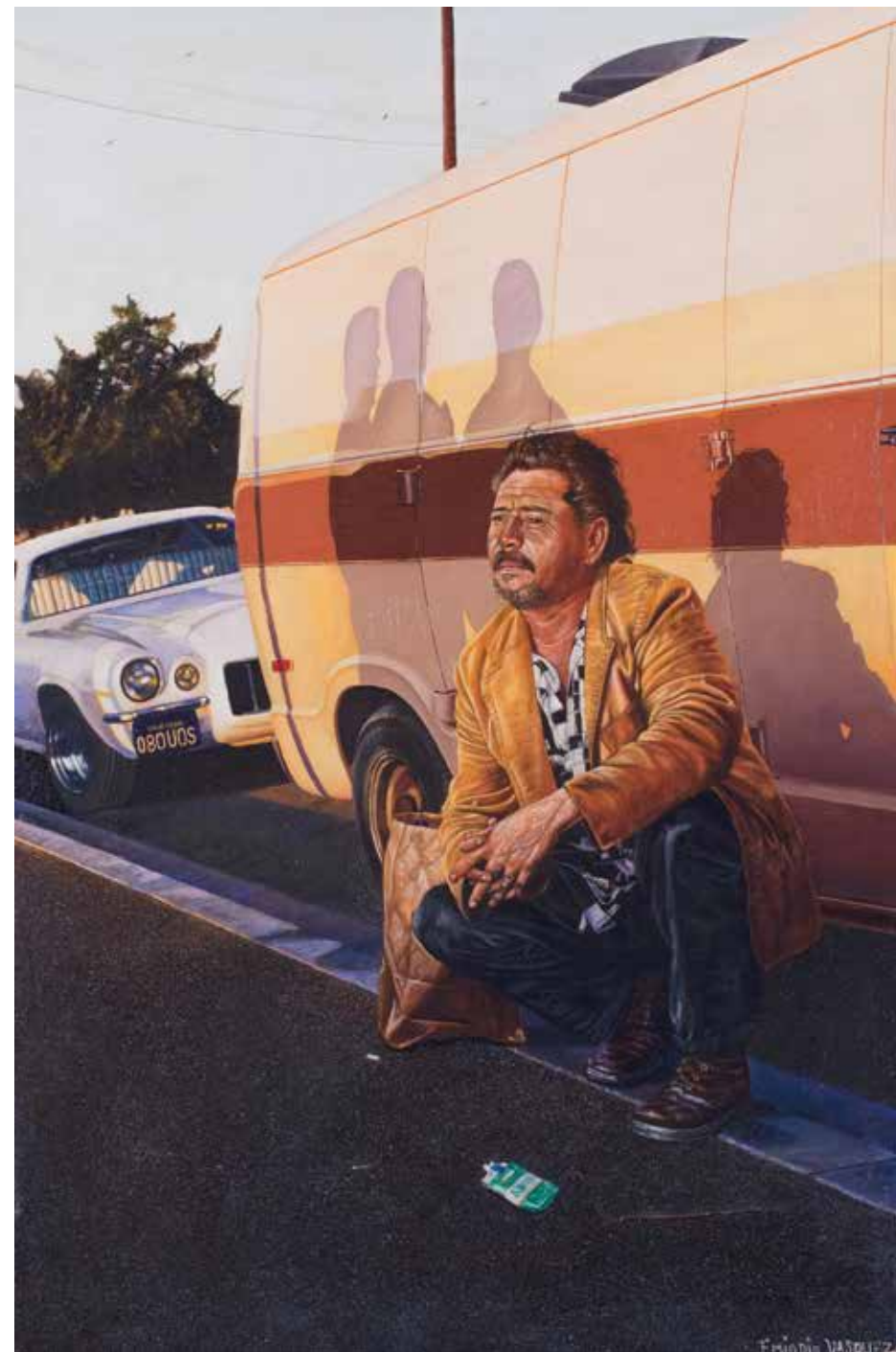
EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
JACKIE, FRANCES Y CHAVELO, 1977

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
JOHN THE PROPHET, 1985

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
LA JAMAICA, 1988

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
LOS PISCADORES, 1998

Oil on canvas
From the collection of Emigdio "Higgy" Vasquez Jr.
Photograph by Garret Hill



EMIGDIO VASQUEZ
ORANGE DELI, 1982

Oil on canvas

From the collection of Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill

Photograph by Garret Hill



- 1 Emigdio Vasquez in Kinney Littlefield, “Art for the Street: Painter creates skillful, gritty scenes of OC life” *The Orange County Register*, April 6, 1993, F4.
- 2 T.V. Reed, “Revolutionary Walls,” in *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 104.
- 3 An indigenous Aztec person
- 4 Orange Barrio Historical Society member, Paul Guzman tells the story of his uncle, Fabian Cornejo purchasing the triplex which was originally built along the Santa Ana Freeway in *The Cypress Street Mural, El Proletariado de Aztlan*, directed by Katherine Bowers, Youtube video, 27:45, posted May 4, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOPZ23Ev4F>. Slated for demolition to make way for an expansion of the freeway, Cornejo moved the apartments to the former site of the enement houses on Cypress Street. These tenements were painted in several easel work by Emigdio Vasquez.
- 5 “About,” Friendly Center, accessed July 11, 2017, <https://friendlycenter.org/about/>.
- 6 City of Orange Public Library Local History Photo Database, “Barrio Life and Festivities,” *City of Orange Public Library Local History Photo Database*, accessed January 5, 2017, <http://www.cityoforange.org/760/Barrio-Life-and-Festivities>.
- 7 A mine worker representing Emigdio’s parent’s journey from Mexico to Jerome, AZ for work in copper mining modeled after an image found in Eugene Nelson, HUELGA: THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS OF THE GREAT DELANO GRAPE STRIKE (Farm Workers Press, 1966); and women harvesting produce who reflect the Vasquez family’s move to Orange in the 50s, and their entry into the agricultural work force is modeled after an image found in Chicano Communications Center, *450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* (Chicano Communications Center, 1976), both as described in *The Cypress Street Mural, El Proletariado de Aztlan*, Ibid.
- 8 Modeled by Vasquez’s daughter, Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill, quoted in Ibid.
- 9 Modeled after Alberto Korda’s famous March 5, 1960 photograph. For more information on the Korda photo, see Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo, “The Story Behind Che’s Iconic Photo: Fashion

photographer Alberto Korda took Che Guevara’s pictures hundreds of times in the 1960s. One stuck,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 3, 2016, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/iconic-photography-che-guevara-alberto-korda-cultural-travel-180960615/>.

- 10 Reed, “Revolutionary Walls” in *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle*, 111.
- 11 Higgy Vasquez relates that this second mural is extant, protected by drywall installed when the original Friendly Center was converted to housing. Interview with the author, July 6, 2017.
- 12 University of California, Santa Barbara, CEMA brochure, https://www.library.ucsb.edu/special-collections/cema/vasquez_brochure.
- 13 Now the Sohan-American Market
- 14 Gustavo Arellano vividly describes the incident in an August 2, 2012 *OC Weekly* article, <http://www.ocweekly.com/news/the-little-peoples-park-riot-of-1978-6423524>.
- 15 Reed, Ibid., 108.
- 16 Ibid., 109.
- 17 Vasquez will also include representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe in *Raices del Pachuco* (1979), and *Towards the Twenty-First Century* (1985), *La Juventud* (1987), and *The Legacy of Cesar Chavez* (1987). The representation in *Towards the Twenty-First Century* continues to be repainted and honored with make-shift altars.
- 18 As T.V. Reed explains, “...another key element in that popularity-the prior existence in the barrio of a model of popular painted public art. This was pulqueria art, the painting of landscapes and other scenes on the exterior walls of taverns, restaurants, shops, and other public buildings in Mexico and the U.S. barrios. The tradition of pulqueria art lent a sense of familiarity to the murals that began to appear in the community with the rise of the Chicano movement,” 106.
- 19 *Mariachis de Jalisco* (1978), *A Peek at the Fifties* (1978), *Un Dia en el Mercado* (1983), *Mexico Lindo y Querido* (1985 - 1988), *Recuerdos de mi Pueblo (Memories of My Village)* (1990), and *Un Pueblito en Mexico and (A Small Village in Mexico)* (1993)
- 20 See <http://classes.sscnet.ucla.edu/O0W/>

chicano101-1/aztlan.htm.

- 21 For more, see Mario T. García and Sal Castro, *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014). <https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/east-la-blowouts-walking-out-for-justice-in-the-classrooms>.
- 22 Emigdio Vasquez in Kinney Littlefield, “Art for the Street: Painter creates skillful, gritty scenes of OC life” *The Orange County Register*, April 6, 1993, F4.
- 23 See <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/stay-woke>
- 24 For more, see Guisela Latorre, “The Chicano Movement and Indigenist Murals: The Formation of a Nationalist Canon and Identity” in *Walls of Empowerment* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).
- 25 Located on Broadway in Anaheim, CA, the popular dance and concert hall was demolished in 1991. See Lisa Mascaró, “Pepper Tree Faire Awaits Demolition,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-01-19/local/me-353_1_dance-hall.
- 26 Vasquez will similarly illustrate Chicana/o history in *Raices del Pachuco* (1979), *Towards the Solidarity of All Peoples* (1987), *Visions of Santa Ana* (1987), *La Juventud*, *Nuestras Raices y el Futuro* (1987), a temporary mural painted on canvas for the Orange County Fair Lowrider Car Show and Family Fiesta, *Spanish, Indians, and Today’s Hispanics* (1989), *Visions of Orange County* (1991), *The Legacy of Cesar Chavez at Santa Ana College* (1997), and *Access and Education at Cal State Fullerton* (2006) painted with his son, Higgy Vasquez.
- 27 “Interview,” *The Eye: An Arts Publication*, 1, issue 2 (1998).
- 28 Susan Stamberg, “Gardens Don’t Tend Themselves: Portraits Of The People Behind LA’s Luxury,” *NPR Morning Edition*, April 11, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/11/473384990/gardens-dont-tend-themselves-portraits-of-the-people-behind-las-luxury>.
- 29 Holly Myers, February 13, 2011 L.A. Times <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/feb/13/entertainment/la-ca-gonzales-day-20110213> and artist talk at Vincent Price Museum, February 11, 2012.
- 30 Sharon Mizota, “Ken Gonzales-Day Reexamines, Violence, Race, and Identity” KCET Artbound, November 28, 2012, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/>

artbound/ken-gonzales-day-re-examines-violence-race-and-identity.

- 31 artist’s website
- 32 Culminating in the publication of Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West: 1850 - 1935* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006).
- 33 Mizota, Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Interview with the artist, July 20, 2017.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 “One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity” October, Vol. 80 (MIT Press: Spring, 1997) in JSTOR, https://www.crcresearch.org/files-crcresearch/File/kwon97_315.pdf, 91.
- 38 Cynthia Herrera artist statement shared via email, July 20, 2017.
- 39 Caroline Miranda, “How graffiti, neon signs and Pee-Chee folders taught artist Patrick Martinez to see Los Angeles” *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 2017 <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-patrick-martinez-20170207-story.html>
- 40 Artist talk at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, December 18, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FhTFux9KH0>.
- 41 For more information, see Latorre, Ibid. 108.
- 42 Caroline Chamberlain, “Profiles” *KCRW Design & Architecture*, March 28, 2014, <http://blogs.kcrw.com/dna/l-a-designer-ana-serrano-creates-colorful-cardboard-worlds>
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Latorre, Ibid., 21.
- 45 Barbara Babcock-Abrahams, “A Tolerated Margin of Mess: The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 11, no. 3 (March 1975): 149.
- 46 The trickster figure is almost always considered male and is referred to with he/his/him pronouns in western mythology; however, gender ambiguity is one of the classic characteristics of the trickster. Female tricksters are less researched although they are popular in Middle Eastern folklore, for example. For the sake of clarity, I will resort to the standard of masculine pronouns. Margaret Mills, “The Gender

of the Trick: Female Tricksters and Male Narrators,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 60, no. 2 (2001): 237-58. doi:10.2307/1179056.

- 47 A liminal space, or liminality, refers to something that occupies both sides of a threshold. Throughout his career, Vasquez worked in the middle ground between his commissioners, his audience, and his own beliefs.
- 48 Some Mexican Americans in the United States also identify as Chicano or Chicana (also spelled Xicano or Xicana) and the terms that are sometimes used interchangeably. Both names are used to denote someone who identifies as having both Mexican and US heritage; however, each term has its unique connotations. The word “Chicano” was considered pejorative until it was appropriated by activists during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 70s. The more radical and political implications of the label “Chicano” likely caused members of the Orange community to identify as Mexican-American rather than Chicano.
- 49 Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment* (Austin: Texas University Press, 2008), 6.
- 50 Op cit., 7.
- 51 Emigdio Vasquez, “Scenes of the Working Class” (master’s thesis., California State University, Fullerton, 1979).
- 52 Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools with Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015), 25. Audre Lorde presented this address at the Second Sex Conference in New York in 1979. In her speech, she criticizes the feminist movement for discounting minority experiences, thereby adopting the same tactics of oppression as the patriarchy. Within this context, Lorde argues that feminism cannot defeat patriarchy, the master, by perpetuating the dominance structure of patriarchy, its tools. Only by learning “how to take our difference and make them strengths” can true equality be achieved.
- 53 Perhaps the most famous example of this is the whitewashing of David Alfaro Siqueiros’ *America Tropical* (1932) on Olvera Street in Los Angeles for its overt political and revolutionary symbolism. The most visible section of the mural was whitewashed just two years after its completion in 1934 before

it was completely painted over in 1938. The mural was conserved enough to be opened to the public in 2012.

54 Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 93.

55 Ibid.

56 Donald Lagerberg, e-mail message, June 6, 2017. I would like to thank the wonderful Professor Lagerberg for his detailed answers to my email interview. His responses were invaluable to the support and finessing of the arguments presented in this paper.

57 Ibid.

58 Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 256 and Liz Monroy, "Perserving a Cherished Legacy." *El Don*, October 19, 2014.

59 Only in the past few years has the influx of diverse populations in Orange County started to challenge its reputation as a highly conservative area. In June of 2010, the percentage of conservative voters in Orange County dropped to 43 percent, the lowest in over 70 years. Adam Nagourney, "Orange County Is No Longer Nixon Country," *The New York Times*, August 29, 2010.

60 Op. Cit., 96.

61 Thomas Vernon Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2009), 114.

62 Op. Cit., 93.

63 Op. Cit., 257.

64 Op. Cit., 96.

65 Ibid.

66 Op. Cit., 94.

67 Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 95.

68 Ibid.

69 "City pauses for 'Progress'," *Orange County Register*, August, 02, 2006, <http://www.ocregister.com/2006/08/02/city-pauses-for-progress/>.

70 Reed, *The Art of Protest*, 114.

71 Though the original context in which this quote was said remains unclear, it has become one of the most well-known quotes said by Huerta and one of the

most famous of the Chicano Movement.

72 Gustavo Arellano, "Enough's Enough: It's Time to Save Orange County's Chicano Murals." *OC Weekly*, November 1, 2016, <http://www.ocweekly.com/news/enoughs-enough-its-time-to-save-orange-countys-chicano-murals-6781611>.

73 "Vasquez Family of Artists from Orange County, California," Vasquez Fine Art, <http://www.vasquezart.com/artists>.

74 Social realism was an international movement of the 1920s and 1930s depicted the struggles of the lower and working classes in a figurative and realistic way. This style often includes social critiques and strong political statements.

75 *El Plan* was drafted by the attendees of the conference, with a preamble written by celebrated Chicano poet Alurista. As a manifesto, it gave the movement a distinct and political voice, while also introducing the concept of Aztlán to the masses.

76 *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, ed. Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco Lomeli (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 2.

77 Published in 1976, this book includes drawings and pictures depicting Chicano history beginning with Mexico before Spanish colonization and extending into the Chicano movement born in the 1960s. Vasquez's depiction of a woman harvesting lettuce in El Proletariado was based on a photograph in this book.

78 *The Cypress Street Mural, "El Proletariado de Aztlán,"* directed and produced by Katherine Bowers, (2015), YouTube Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0PZ23Ev4FI>.

79 Gustavo Arellano, "Law Enforcement Claims Historic Chicano Mural in Orange Sensationalizes Gangs 30 Years Later," *OC Weekly*, April 9, 2009, <http://www.ocweekly.com/news/law-enforcement-claims-historic-chicano-mural-in-orange-sensationalizes-gangs-30-years-later-6426492>.

80 Arellano, "Law Enforcement"

81 Aimee Murillo, "Orange PD Harass Son of Legendary Chicano Artist Emigdio Vasquez While He Restored His Father's Mural," *OC Weekly*, March 20, 2014, <http://www.ocweekly.com/news/orange-pd-harass-son-of-legendary-chicano-artist-emigdio-vasquez-while-he-restored-his-fathers-mural-6451337>.

82 Arellano, "Law Enforcement."

83 Diego Rivera, "The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art" in *Art in Theory*, 1900-2000, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 422.

PACIFIC STANDARD TIME: LA/LA

My Barrio: Emigdio Vasquez and Chicana/o Identity in Orange County is part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, a far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles, taking place from September 2017 through January 2018 at more than 70 cultural institutions across Southern California. Pacific Standard Time is an initiative of the Getty. The presenting sponsor is Bank of America.



ART COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT

The Chapman University Art Collections exist to inspire critical thinking, foster interdisciplinary discovery, enhance the University’s stature, and strengthen bonds with the community. We foster connections across campus to enhance intellectual and emotional experiences of art.

DEPARTMENT OF ART

The Mission of the Department of Art at Chapman University is to offer a comprehensive education that develops the technical, perceptual, theoretical, historical and critical expertise needed for successful careers in visual art, graphic design and art history. The department supports artists, designers, and scholars within a rigorous liberal arts environment that enriches the human mind and spirit. We foster the artistic and academic growth necessary to encourage lifelong study and practice of the arts through a curriculum that contains strong foundation and history components as a basis for continued innovations in contemporary practice and scholarship.

GUGGENHEIM GALLERY

The department of art will provide provocative exhibitions and educational programming that provide a local connection to the national and international dialogue about contemporary art and provide a framework for an interchange between artists, scholars, students and the community at large. While the exhibitions feature contemporary art, they often address other disciplines and societal issues in general. Integrated into the curriculum, these programs contribute significantly to the Chapman education.

PHYLLIS AND ROSS ESCALETTE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF ART

Dedicated in May 2010, the Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection of Art meets teaching and research needs on campus, reflects the multi-cultural nature of Southern California, promotes new artistic talent in the region, and participates in current global artistic discourse. The collection features modern and contemporary art by North American and international artists and is an important, vibrant part of a Chapman “Education of Distinction.” The Escalette Collection promotes scholarship, creativity, free expression and intellectual curiosity through permanent exhibitions throughout campus, curricular offerings, and a broad spectrum of cultural events for students, faculty, scholars and a broad regional community.





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