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by [Adolfo Guzman-Lopez \(http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/aglopez\)](http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/aglopez)

on April 12, 2010 9:46 PM

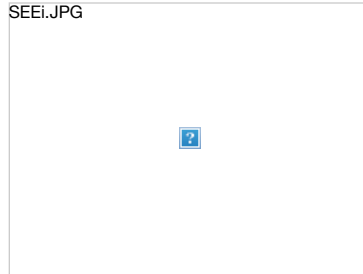


The first book in the Old Testament of contemporary Southern California art is being written under our noses. That's what 200 people experienced - whether they knew it or not - for nearly three hours on a recent sunny Saturday at "The Raza's Edge: The Chicano Presence in L.A. Art History," organized by UCLA Film and Television professor Chon Noriega. It was a quick-paced panel discussion on April 3 at the Bing Auditorium at the L.A. County Museum of Art. I stayed three hours, until the beginning of the Q&A.

The panel was an introduction to three Chicano-themed exhibits that will be part of Pacific Standard Time, the multi-museum, nine-month, contemporary Southern California art show scheduled in the fall of next year.

The history of Paris as an art capital at the turn of the 20th century is widely accepted: the salon des refuses, the Impressionists, Picasso, etc. New York City's turn as an art capital after World War Two is also well-known: DeKooning, Pollock, Rothko, etc. The 21st century is L.A.'s art century and the clay tablets with the history up to now are far from dry. Sure, there's Ferus Gallery, Ruscha, Hockney, etc. But there's a lot of filling-in to be done. There's the question of L.A. African American and Chicano artists. And what about the Mexican muralists who created works here? Does

Kent Twitchell owe them anything? There's a whole creation story of L.A. art that must still be written. That's what Pacific Standard Time appears to be about. The Getty jump started and is providing the seed money for the exhibits and here's their framing of the project.



SEE1.JPG

"Postwar art in Los Angeles has an exciting and dynamic history, distinct from that of New York and other centers of modernism. Yet the region's unique artistic trajectory has not been well known and has rarely been presented to a wide audience. To bring this rich history to light, the Getty launched the initiative in 2002 (then called On the Record: Art in L.A. 1945-1980), to fund surveys of archival holdings at 22 local museums, universities, and libraries, as well as those of key dealers, critics, and other individuals. Based on the findings, the Foundation then provided grants to local institutions to catalogue their historic records and make them accessible to scholars, staff, and the general public."

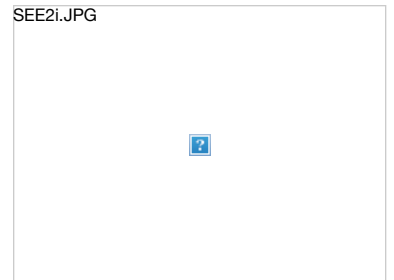
The participating institutions are led by well-trained and well-meaning professionals, right? Nevertheless, one of my mother's favorite dichos echoes between my ears, "El que parte y reparte, se queda con la mayor parte." He who cuts the slices and hands them out keeps the biggest slice. Artists will fall through the cracks. The institutions will tell the stories closest to them, right? The curators chosen to tell the various stories of L.A. art can't include everything. For example, who's going to tell the story of how Bill Pajaud assembled one of the greatest corporate collections of African American art at L.A.'s Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company?

After leaving Raza's Edge, I'd thought the panels were a penance of sorts for the criticism Noriega's Phantom Sightings received when it opened in L.A. two years ago. It's currently in New York City after stops in Mexico City and San Antonio, Texas. Several Chicano artists not in the show told me the show's subtitle, "Art After The Chicano Movement," assumed the art of the 40 year-old Chicano Movement was dead. So Raza's Edge, by including the old guard of Chicano political art like Wayne Healy, Frank Romero and Joe Rodriguez seemed to be atoning for the mostly 25 to 35 year old, mostly MFA-trained artists in the Phantom Sightings show.

An email received after the panel from a 50-something painter convinced me otherwise. He told me he cringed at his friends on the panel, "...that read from notes as if reading their life into the official record even if they had to go over the time limits or not." Were these artists' depositions for the art institutions that have largely ignored one of L.A.'s strongest home-grown art movements? Pacific Standard Time is about these institutions setting the record straight about L.A. contemporary art for the rest of the country and the world.

Unlike in Latin America where most artist and writer groups go at each other's throats in magazine essays and newspaper op-ed pages, the artist catfights here happen far from the novice artist and away from the general public. That's too bad because a good showdown forces each side to clearly state their positions. As a brief aside, that's what's so instructive about the DWP-L.A. City Council pedo, the power struggles are out in the open for all to see. Chatting on the phone, one Chicana muralist told me of a member of ASCO that day at the Raza's Edge panel. "There he is 40 years later and he still has nothing to say."

The only anger I heard on stage at LACMA were a few complaints that taggers weren't respecting murals. Nothing like the seething tone I'd heard the week before from graffiti artist Nuke at the unveiling of plans for a Siqueiros "America Tropical" visitor center in Olvera Street. Nuke told me young vatos from the East L.A. neighborhood where he paints murals are hassled by cops for



SEE2.JPG

standing and watching him paint. The justification, Nuke said, are the injunctions that prohibit gang members from congregating, in this case - he said - enforced to keep homeboys from seeing art going up in their back yards. Whatever Nuke paints in reaction to that harassment will be Chicano art.

Tags

- [ASCO \(javascript:void\(0\)\)](#)
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[Adolfo \(http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/\)](http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/) says :

From: Chon Noriega
Subject: Re: MM: Who's Chicano art?
To: "Adolfo Guzman"
Date: Tuesday, April 13, 2010, 9:07 AM

Hi Adolfo,

Sorry to miss your call. I was out of town last week, so I just heard your message yesterday afternoon. Thanks for sending your piece. In the interest of dialogue, here's some food for thought.

I remember early on hearing a few people note that they thought the subtitle for Phantom Sightings meant we were saying the Chicano Movement was "dead," but that seemed to be cleared up once they saw the exhibit. Armando Duron spoke to that quite eloquently from the audience during our artist panel after the opening. In any case, one can always find pedo, and I would hardly call the DWP fracas instructive.... What has been written about this early history of Chicano art seems to focus on the conflicts, sometimes in tabloid fashion -- that is, recording the sort of things some people will say privately and without attribution. I think the panel was very successful in having a large number of people speak to this history on stage at LACMA. There were differences, new stories, and some very instructive challenges from the audience. More than anything there was a strong sense of a shared history. That may be low on the pedo-meter, perhaps, but it is significant on all other fronts.

By the way, I've been wondering, what's wrong with Chicanos getting a graduate degree? The press seems to be harping on the fact that Phantom Sighting artists have MFAs. Y que? So do many of the Chicano movement artists, and the ones who came of age before the movement. A lot of artists do. The state budget and admissions policies are doing a good job of keeping more and more Chicanos out of higher education. I'm not sure the press needs to make it seem like a badge of honor.

Best wishes,
Chon

[April 13, 2010 3:59 PM \(http://www.kcet.org/socal/voices/movie-miento/see.html#comment-4718\)](http://www.kcet.org/socal/voices/movie-miento/see.html#comment-4718)



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[doreen minor \(http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/\)](http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/) says :

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<http://www.jhnartestudio.com>

[Judithe Hernandez \(http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/\)](http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/) says :

Adolfo,

It never ceases to amaze me....after twenty-five years away from Los Angeles, Raza's Edge reminded me about the "Chicano factor" in the politics of art. I, like all the panelists, was asked by the CSRC to make some opening remarks on the specific theme assigned to my panel. Some people brought notes. So what? As someone who worked in academia for 30 years, I think notes are a good thing. For anyone to suggest that these artists were there to "read their histories in to the record" missed the point, and probably also failed to read the program flyer that explain what would be discussed and by whom. The fact is, based upon our participation in Chicano Art's formative period; we were invited to share our personal recollections of that time. By and large, the panelists were artists whose history and accomplishments are already part of the historical record; histories that are well documented in books, exhibitions, archives, and websites. Critics are a given. But the value of what they say depends upon the objectivity of their analysis and their ability to frame their observations in such a way to foster useful discussion. Anything else is just grinding your ax.

If you are correct, and the "Pacific Standard" exhibitions are intended to fill in the gaps in the official art historical record of Los Angeles, then I for one am excited to see it happen at long last. However, I know that when history is written, there are always those who will feel that it does not reflect the entire story accurately. That may be true. But, until Chicanos prepare themselves to write our own history, we will always be left in the position of waiting for the mainstream to frame the context in which we are permitted to contribute.

Just for the record....I have an MFA; Otis Art Institute class of 1974. One of my classmates, who also earned an MFA, was Carlos Almaraz. I am not so sure that not having an MFA is what separates us from the younger generation...

Judithe Hernández

[April 13, 2010 10:34 PM \(http://www.kcet.org/socal/voices/movie-miento/see.html#comment-5074\)](http://www.kcet.org/socal/voices/movie-miento/see.html#comment-5074)



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[Adolfo \(http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/\)](http://www.kcet.org/user/profile/) says :

And Chicanos writing their own histories then raises the decades old dilemma, do you create parallel institutions and or do you leave the mainstream institutions unchallenged for not including Chicano art. What's very exciting is seeing the 20-something Chicano/Latino art curators learning the trade in universities and museums in the L.A. area.

[April 14, 2010 9:37 AM \(http://www.kcet.org/socal/voices/movie-miento/see.html#comment-4721\)](http://www.kcet.org/socal/voices/movie-miento/see.html#comment-4721)



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