

## *Taking to the Streets: Art In Public Space at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center*

November 17, 2016 – March 24, 2017  
 Opening reception: November 17, 4:00-7:00 p.m.  
 UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Library  
 144 Haines Hall



*Taking to the Streets* highlights diverse selections from the CSRC's archival holdings as well as previous projects that utilize public space as a site for artistic engagement and production. Artists represented in the show include the team of David Avalos, Louis Hock, and Elizabeth Sisco as well as Ramiro Gomez, Daniel J. Martinez, and Sandra de la Loza.

The impetus for this show is the recent donation of an important public artwork to the CSRC archive by Avalos, Hock and Sisco. "Welcome to America's Finest Tourist Plantation" is the name of a public art project launched by the three artists in 1988 in San Diego, CA. The team collaborated, designed and executed a public-art campaign that reverberated throughout the region, made national headlines, and received critical attention. Theirs was a strategic deployment of artwork that utilized the advertising space on the back of one hundred city buses to communicate a dire message: undocumented workers are being exploited by San Diego's tourist industry. The last remaining bus-mounted art poster was conserved at UCLA and is now on permanent public display at the CSRC.

This show's title *Taking to the Streets* connotes a sense of purpose, even of urgency, that compels artists to move beyond the confines of traditional spaces such as museums or galleries, to show their work in broader, unexpected contexts. Los Angeles-based Ramiro Gomez is an artist whose work is often deployed in public spaces to great effect. Several of Gomez's cut out and painted cardboard figures will be on display in the CSRC library. These life-size, two-dimensional figures depict day laborers, like tree trimmers or furniture handlers, whose hard work is essential but whose presence is rarely acknowledged in day-to-day life. Gomez's work challenges perceptions about immigrants as being undervalued and invisible and seeks to reframe our thinking about their worth in our society.

While the practice of art in the public realm often requires temporary, impermanent installations, the impact of such work can be unexpectedly powerful. In 1993, Los Angeles-based Daniel J. Martinez was invited to be part of a group exhibition at the campus museum at Cornell University, NY. Martinez erected a site-specific barrier-like installation on the arts quad called "The Castle is Burning." After the artwork was defaced with numerous racial slurs, students protested about the vandalism as well as the ongoing underrepresentation and underserving of Latinos at Cornell. Martinez's artwork served as a catalyst for student engagement and activism. Thankfully, Cornell did increase its commitment to existing Latino programs and vowed to create new ones. A document associated with Martinez's installation was donated to the CSRC this year.

Los Angeles-based artist Sandra de la Loza's *Action Portraits* was the centerpiece of a larger multimedia installation titled *Mural Remix* at Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2012 and co-sponsored by the CSRC. *Action Portraits* is presented as a video triptych of live portraits; each of the subjects is shown individually from the waist up, coating his or her naked torso with paint that reveals virtually-enhanced patterns sampled from historic murals. De la Loza's extensive research of 1970s Chicano murals in the archives at CSRC uncovered numerous images of murals that were long forgotten. The artist proactively recovered these murals and transmitted them anew in her work, projecting the past onto the present. The urban spaces the murals once inhabited are reclaimed and reactivated in this mesmerizing artwork.

*Taking to the Streets* is organized by Karen Rapp. Rapp previously was Director of the Vincent Price Art Museum at East Los Angeles College (2007-15); Civic Art Coordinator at the Los Angeles County Arts Commission (2005-07); and Curator and Director of Programs of Sweeney Art Gallery at UC Riverside (1998-05).