

Harry Gamboa Jr. at The Autry Museum

September 16, 2017–
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The photographic portraits of notable Chicano men in Harry Gamboa Jr.'s *Chicano Male Unbonded*, follow a clear formula: city street at night, body directly centered in the frame, concrete textures, low-angle, and glared lights in the background. Though the photographs are not overtly staged, the uniform recording of the subjects identifies the Chicano male as an archetype, defined by urban surroundings and the subjects' direct and confident gazes.

Throughout Gamboa's career he has adopted the role of director and trickster by arranging staged narratives that simultaneously simulate and puncture real life, such as *Decoy Gang War Victim* by ASCO (1974). While his portraits at the Autry can seem essentializing, they simultaneously provide the audience with expanded narratives of the subjects. Prompted to dress how they want to be remembered in 200 years, the men are outfitted in suits, double-breasted vests, or even a graduation gown—the distinguished fashion communicating a dignified importance and success. In addition, the image titles state each subject's name and profession: artist, writer, PhD, poet, librarian, film director, and art historian.

Chicano Male Unbonded is an ongoing almanac of critical artists and intellectuals; like an index, the catalog of portraits is meant to be searched. Power lies in recognition, in seeing personal influences legitimized—men such as Francisco X. Siqueiros, Chon A. Noriega, and C. Ondine Chavoya. In Spanish, unbonded translates to *sin lazo* (or without lasso). Here, we see a group of men un-lassoed by archetypal standards and, in a clever reversal, tied to the institutional archive, their contributions canonized.



Anna Garner