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# Veteranas and Rucas: Documenting 1990s Chicano Youth Culture

**Raquel Gutiérrez** | February 5, 2016





Brown Sugar Crew, Orange County. | Courtesy of Guadalupe Rosales.

Guadalupe Rosales uses nostalgia as the creative engine driving the Instagram feed she manages, [Veteranas and Rucas](#). It's a digital archive on Instagram that "flashbacks" to photos from the Chicano underground of the 1990s, with a reach beyond Southern California. Sacramento, San Diego and Orange County all had elements of a residential underground during this period too.



Veteranas and I



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relatives had taken at the mall, and photos I had taken at backyard parties," says Rosales about the collection.

The unforeseen and overwhelming popularity of *Veteranas and Rucas* on Instagram gave way towards a recent event at UCLA's Chicano Studies Resource Center (CSRC) featuring Rosales and other practitioners of the Southern California party crew movement. This event, "Southern California Chicano Party Crews and Rave Scenes in the 1990s," Rosales said was intended as an invitation to others involved in the party underground movement of the 1990s to think about contributing their own ephemera and objects to be archived at the CSRC.

Rosales' event percolated with a feeling of familial familiarity -- a safe space -- in the packed house at Haines Hall 144. Here the assembly of UCLA students, former party crew members, current DJs and fans gathered not just to view images from *Veteranas and Rucas*, which shot into the zeitgeist in 2015, but to engage with the architects and relics of a recent history of residential subcultures known as the Chicano party underground of the 1990s.



Youth Culture

East L.A. Madness, c. 1993. |

Image: Courtesy of  
Guadalupe Rosales.

"Veteranas and Rucas serves as a digital archive where strangers, close friends and family share a virtual space that speaks a language many of us can relate to," Rosales said. "The attention that the Instagram has received has resurrected a part of history that hasn't been talked about or [is] well documented -- yet so many people were excited to see it come back. Working on Veteranas and Rucas made me realize how important this subculture is."

Event moderator Sandra Ruiz later explained to me via email what cultural studies scholar Richard T. Rodriguez has called the "homeboy aesthetic." "There



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indigenous populations that revolted against the conquest and colonization of the Spaniards to the Mexifornios battling against U.S.

expansionism/Manifest Destiny in the 19th century to pachuco and pachuca culture of the 1940s and 1950s, whose clothing/textile served as visual and symbolic resistance against racial segregation and discrimination. Homegirl/homeboy culture and its aesthetics does not exist in a vacuum, but rather it comes from a long historical practice of resiliency, working and negotiating within systems of oppression."

In the presentation, Rosales further explored the misrepresentation of youth "homeboy" culture by showing a video compilation of footage from hyperbolic Fox News segments decrying the ills of "ditching parties," which took place during the day when youth should be in school and while parents are out at work. In the video we see an evidently-high young man named Homey, from a Lynwood area party crew, and meet Diana, from the party crew "Ladies of Sexual Desire." Alongside Rialto homeboys and girls, they grind to The Cure's "Boys Don't Cry." Rosales says she's interested in contemplating that misrepresentation and finding means to reframe the history through these types of open conversations with cultural producers and participants.





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The panel offered a decentralized narrative of party crews in Southern California with few panelists at the helm. Through their stories, they offered a kind of oral history of parties and raves of their youth.

Michael A. Rodriguez, formerly of Maricón Collective and collector of party crew ephemera and memorabilia of Montebello and Norwalk, says he used to attend "T-parties," backyard parties for the LGBT under-21 set and spoke to the queer presence in party crew history. Rodriguez spoke of the pre-Escándalo club days with a West Hollywood party thrown called *Que Pasa, Papi*. He came into the party crew culture by way of his aunts who were part of a crew called the Casanova Strippers, who would bring him along to cruise Whittier Boulevard in the late 1980s.



"Chicanas of the Month"  
featured in the August 1993  
issue of Street Beat  
magazine. | Image: Courtesy  
of Guadalupe Rosales.

Also appearing was Rachel Ortiz, who once went by the moniker Flame in the party crew "Aztek Nation." She shared a personal narrative about she and her single mother encountering another 14 year-old girl and her mother on her first and last day of an overcrowded Garfield High School, when both girls were being transferred out to a smaller school. The other girl asked innocuously if Ortiz "partied" to which Ortiz, without

wrote for the free magazine Street Beat  
-- also remarked on not being interested  
in drinking or "partying" but the dance  
and competition element of party crews.



Aztek Nation, c. 1996-98. |

Image: Courtesy of  
Guadalupe Rosales.

Carlos Landeros of San Marcos spoke  
on the San Diego scene, and was a part





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about parties being sites for gathering when the local established nightclubs, particularly in areas such as Anaheim, enforced dress codes as a way to keep Latino youth out of their venues.

The panelists' invocations of Thomas Guides, pagers, and photography of the pre-Internet era, often elided hazy memories from this little documented moment of time. While the 2000s are overdocumented with social media oversharing, the 1990s were marked by poor representation with disposable cameras and low-rez images. Filmmaker Hito Steyerl defends the aesthetic in her work, "In Defense of the Poor Image:"

*"The poor image is a rag or a rip; an AVI or a JPEG, a lumpen proletariat in the class society of appearances, ranked and valued according to its resolution. The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends toward abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming."*



Brown Authority SGV c.  
1995-96 Rebel Bout BBQ. |  
Image: Courtesy of  
Guadalupe Rosales.

Rosales' imperfect Instagram photos have an air of nostalgia to them. But for her, they have a deeper meaning: they were a way to resolve her own familial trauma.

In 1996, Rosales, who grew up in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles, experienced the death of a male cousin. The grieving compelled her to move to New York in 2000, far from friends/families, and even farther away from the grisly details of where his body was found. These details coupled with the memories of L.A. locations, inspired



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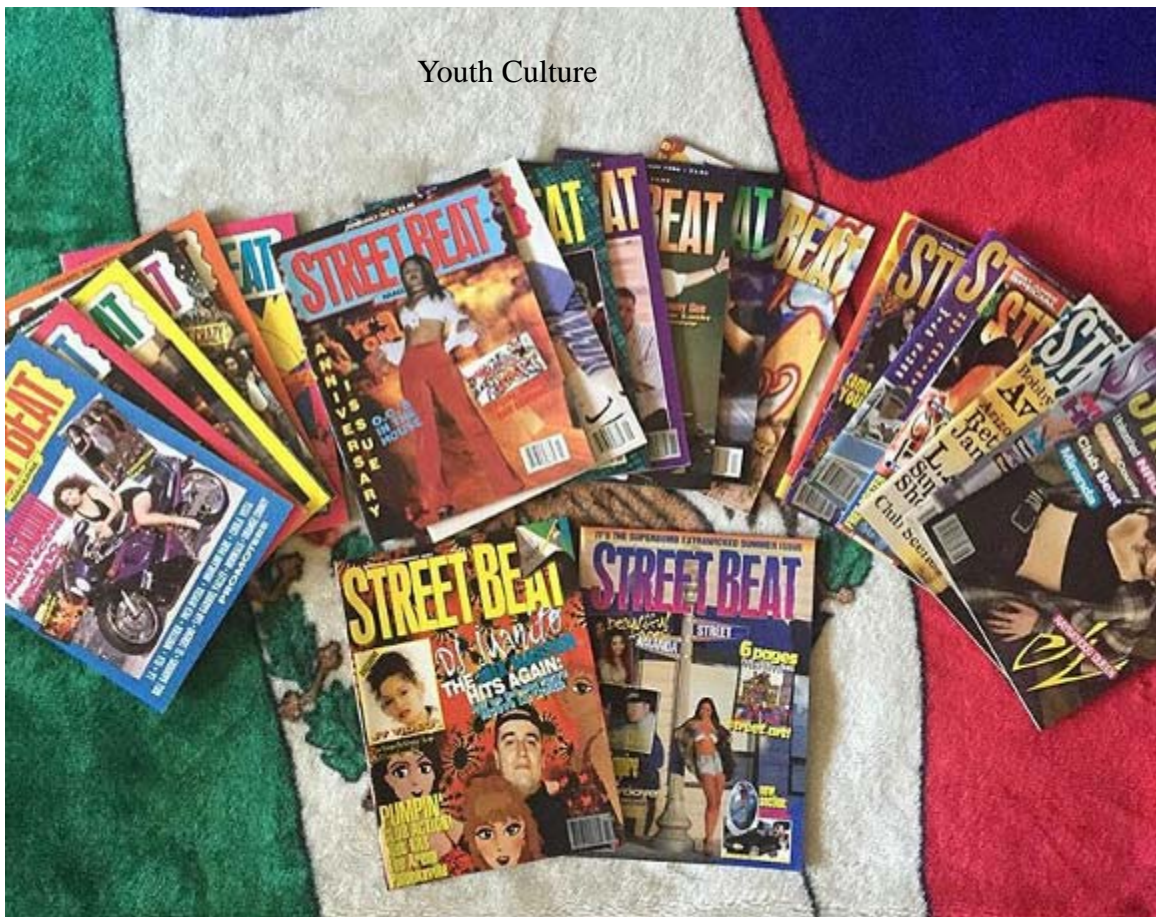
and the ways the erasing of space ultimately put the memories connected to space at risk. These questions reside in the parade of images she has been uploading onto the feed for the past year.

While the Instagram felt like a spontaneous project, it became clear how much of a necessity it has become to understand and process that period in Rosales' life, as well as a site to hold a series of different collective memories. The ephemera, collected throughout the 1990s, has allowed Rosales to materialize these certain experiences of her life in L.A.

She hopes others can feel that way too. She is currently conceptualizing Veteranas and Rucas in a way that reflects the open source platform of Instagram for an upcoming 2017 show coming to Los Angeles in 2017 with PSSST Gallery in Boyle Heights. But for now, she's showcasing an often overlooked cultural history, one Instagram at a time.

"The archive is not just photographs," Rosales said, "it's archiving language and the way we relate to a photograph."

Youth Culture



Street Beat magazines. | Image: Courtesy of Guadalupe Rosales.

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