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# Ramon Ramirez's Newest Works Look at Los Angeles from an Uncharacteristic Vantage Point

Written by Anise Stevens

***A City to Love* opened last weekend at Wallspace and features several new works by Ramon Ramirez that depict the City of Angels from a perspective that is as unique as it is contemplative.**



In an interview Ramirez did last year for the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, the LA-based artist described his work as a “back view [of LA’s skyline], from the east side looking west.” Hardly emblematic of the City of Stars, “Across the Freeway” is one of Ramirez’s paintings included in this exhibition that depicts an LA known only to those who inhabit the city’s “other side.” Devoid of the glitz and glamour that commonly characterize the city’s Westside communities, the painting features small, single-storied dwellings, huddled against the foot of a hillside that sits just steps away from a rumbling overpass.

“Where You and I Begin” is another painting that succinctly captures Ramirez’s point of view. The abstractly painted structures that occupy this piece are of old brick-and-mortars common to areas in Los Angeles that have yet to be gentrified. The semblance of a security gate pulled across one of the building’s storefront windows is just one clue that hints at the neighborhood’s economically compromised demographic. In fact, the only detail that suggests Ramirez’s subject is set in Los Angeles comes from two solitary palm trees positioned in the distance against an empty sky.

Trained as an architect, Ramirez is more than capable of rendering buildings with skilled precision. This is evident in his preliminary sketches, which are included in *A City to Love* and showcase Ramirez’s expertise as an accomplished draftsman. Interestingly, however, is the obvious distinction that exists between his paintings and drawings. Unlike his drawings, Ramirez’s paintings don’t just command attention from his city structures. Just as captivating are his bright blue skies and brilliant sunsets that fill more than half of each canvas.

There’s no denying that the vibrant skies that comprise a large portion of Ramirez’s paintings add an element of balance to his compositions. As much if not more intriguing is the definitive juxtaposition that they create, set against his angular skylines. Not only does this urge viewers to stop and consider Ramirez’s emphasis upon negative space, but it incites contemplative reflection upon the natural world that extends well beyond the city’s streets.

Throughout his youth, Ramirez displayed an active interest in both drawing and painting. His formal education in the arts began at the University of California, Berkeley, where he credits a class with Yolanda López for helping him realize “that painting could be both cultural and formal,” as offered by the Latino/a Art Community. Ramirez received a B.A. in Architecture in 1993, then a Master of Architecture in 1995 and a Master of Fine Art in Studio Painting in 1996. These degrees led to a dual career in which Ramirez pursued an ambitious path, working as both an architect and a studio painter until 2011 when he made the decision to paint full time. Ramirez also has taught and lectured at various colleges and



universities since 1995 and currently teaches freshman drawing.

Ramirez's work has been featured at numerous galleries and museums nationwide. Among them are Avenue 50 Studio in Highland Park, CA (2014); Jose Vera Gallery in Los Angeles, CA (2014); Walter Maciel Gallery in Los Angeles, CA (2014); dA Center for the Arts in Pomona, CA (2013), Jackson Gallery in Charlotte, NC (2013);



Muckenthaler Cultural Center in Fullerton, CA (2012); ChimMaya Gallery in Los Angeles, CA (2011); Swing Space Gallery in Columbus, OH (2011); Aedas LA Gallery in Venice, CA (2011); Gallery X-43 in Los Angeles, CA (2010); Rogue Gallery in Medford, OR (2010); American Institute of Architects in Los Angeles, CA (2010); Mills Pond Gallery in St. James, NY (2010); Latino Art Museum in Pomona, CA (2010); Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, CA (2009); and Fowler Museum at UCLA in Los Angeles, CA (2008).

*A City to Love* is scheduled to run at Wallspace through October 27th. Just one half-block south of Melrose, Wallspace is located at 607 North La Brea. The gallery is open seven days a week. For gallery hours or to schedule an appointment, please call 323.930.0471 or visit the gallery online at [www.wallspacela.com](http://www.wallspacela.com).

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