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ARTIFACTS

Con Safo artists bring El Movimiento to canvas

By **Scott Andrews**

PUBLISHED: SEPTEMBER 14, 2011

corner of a mural or on street art: C/S.

equal measure of messing.

groups of *El Movimiento*.

You may have seen this emblem marked in the

It stands for “con safo,” often understood as “with respect.” But it also implies that should you mess with the art, you may find yourself subjected to an

Con Safo: The Chicano Art Group and the Politics of South Texas, by Ruben C. Cordova, recounts the history of one of the most significant Chicano art

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15

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B.Y.O.Vinyl with Plata

Adam Johnson

Rene Saenz Quartet

CON SAFO

The Chicano Art Group
and the Politics of South Texas



Ruben C. Cordova

Founded in 1968 by Felipe Reyes and five other San Antonio artists as El Grupo, the group evolved over a decade; among its members were Mel Casas, Jose Esquivel, Rudy Treviño, and Roberto Ríos. Con Safo dissolved in the mid-1970s, but their legacy is huge in SA. Art programs at the Guadalupe, Centro Cultural Aztlan, Esperanza, and the San Antonio community mural project were all made possible by their early days of activism, which included politically directed paintings and graphic design, exhibitions, and writings.

Mel Casas' 1971 "Brown Paper Report," a manifesto that set goals and methods for grassroots political action, is considered a foundational document in Chicano and Latino studies programs at universities across the country. How far we've come in the last few decades is revealed in many parts of Cordova's record of the group. He quotes a review of the group's "Farm Workers' Exhibition" that ran in the *Trinity Review* in 1972 — words that read as absurd today.

"Art and Politics are like water and oil, they never mix... Social awareness is best expressed through the word," and concluding: "Don't feel bad if after seeing the Con Safo Group Show you didn't become socially aware of the Chicano's plight. You won't unless you're Chicano."

Today, works by the Con Safo artists are in many important museum collections. Their dismissal at

the time by many in the mainstream was an extension of the culture wars.

This Friday, September 16, Centro Cultural Aztlan will celebrate Diez y Seis de Septiembre, with "An Evening with Con Safo and Dr. Ruben C. Cordova." The free event runs from 6 to 9 p.m. and will include a panel discussion and book signing. Signed copies by the author and artists will be available for \$15, with all proceeds going to Centro Cultural Aztlan. On view now in the gallery is "Loteria: Images of Our Culture — Imagenes De Nuestra Cultura," new paintings by David Blancas that reimagine the traditional Mexican game of chance to comment on current life among *la gente*.

Free, 6-9pm Fri, Sept 16, Centro Cultural Aztlan, 1800 Fredericksburg, (210) 432-1896, centroculturalaztlan.5omegs.com. "Loteria" is on view through September.

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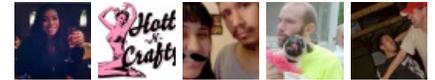
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