

## VISUAL ARTS

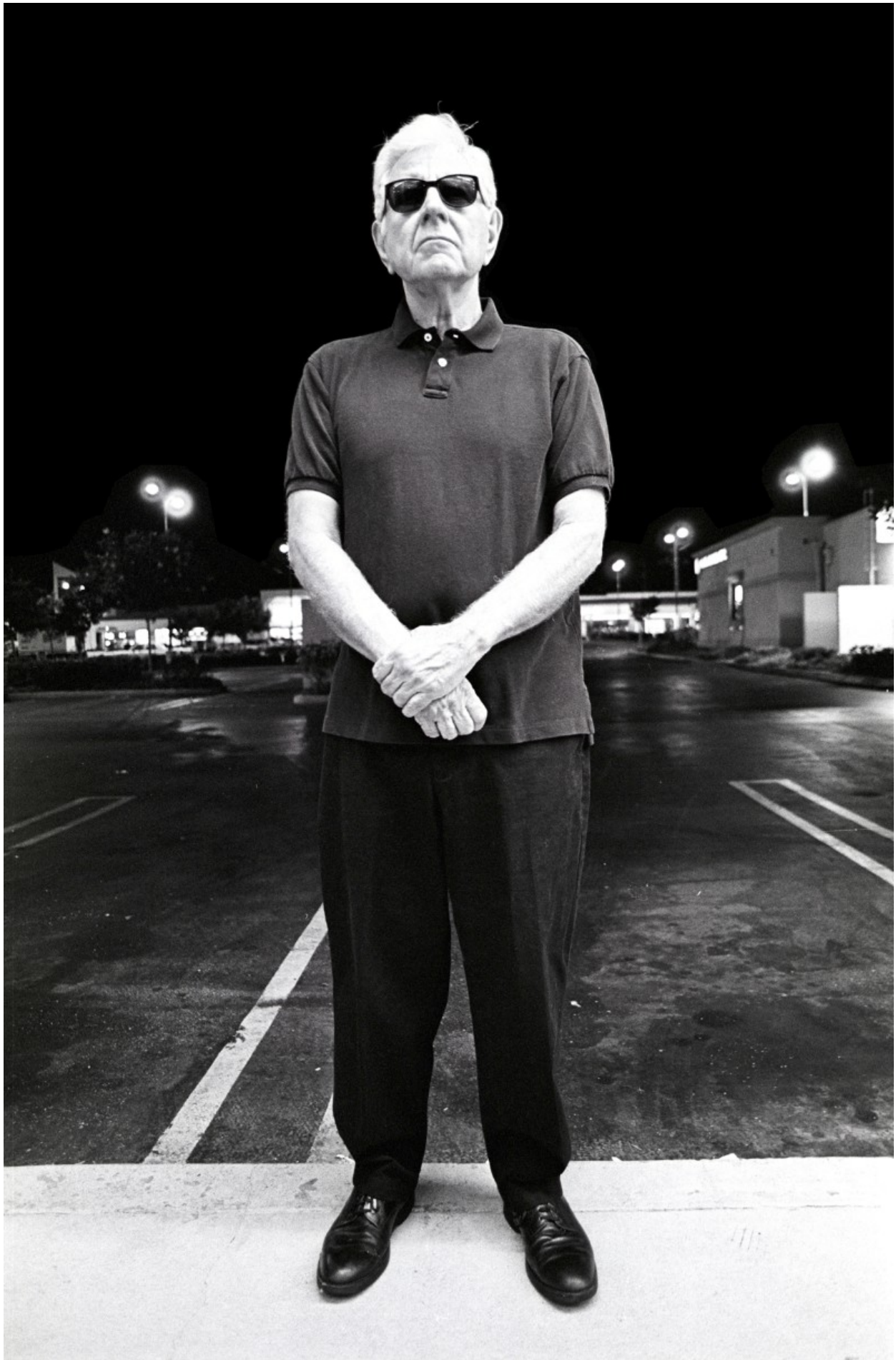
# Harry Gamboa Jr.'s Portrait Series Expands the Meaning of 'Chicano'

Carren Jao | September 14, 2017

When photographer Harry Gamboa Jr. began his portrait series, “Chicano Male Unbonded” in 1991, the word “Chicano” implied guns, drugs and all manner of dangerous things. “I started the car, turned on the radio and the first thing that went on was an announcement from the news that says to be on the lookout for a Chicano male; he’s dangerous,” recalls Gamboa Jr. in a video with KCET, which is also on view at the Autry Museum of the American West, alongside an exhibition of his long-running project, starting September 16.

That initial statement inspired Gamboa Jr. to seek out Chicano males that went against this prevailing stereotype, men that were lauded in their fields. “What the series achieves is not to give you the correct definition of Chicano male, but to give you nearly one hundred answers to that,” says UCLA professor and curator Chon A. Noriega in the same short film.

Here’s a glimpse of what a Chicano male can be.



## Rodolfo Acuna

Dr. Acuña is the founding chair of Chicano Studies — the largest Chicano Studies Department in the United States — at California State University Northridge (then called San Fernando Valley State). Three of his 20 books have received the Gustavus Myers Award for the Outstanding Book on Race Relations in North America. Acuña was named one of the “100 Most Influential Educators of the 20th Century by Black Issues In Higher Education. One of his most famed titles is "Occupied America, A History of Chicanos," considered the definitive introduction to Chicano history.



## Willie Herrón III

Herrón is one of the founding members of Asco, an avant-garde Chicano art collective that also included Gamboa Jr. In a 2007 article, LA Weekly calls Asco the “the superheated core of the East L.A. art scene, an underground legend in the making” in the 80s. Herrón is well-known for his murals, especially “The Walls That Cracked Open,” which he painted at the site where his 15-year-old younger brother was stabbed by a local gang. This work is one of the best-known examples of early Los Angeles street art, “recognized immediately by scholars, art critics, historians and Chicano rights activists as a transcendent piece that spoke to the physical and psychic violence surrounding many disenfranchised youth,” according to the Los Angeles Times.

### MORE STORIES OF CHICANX ART



**Harry  
Gamboa  
Jr.'s  
'Chicano  
Male  
Unbonded'  
Highlights  
Diversity  
Of  
Chicano  
Male  
Identity**



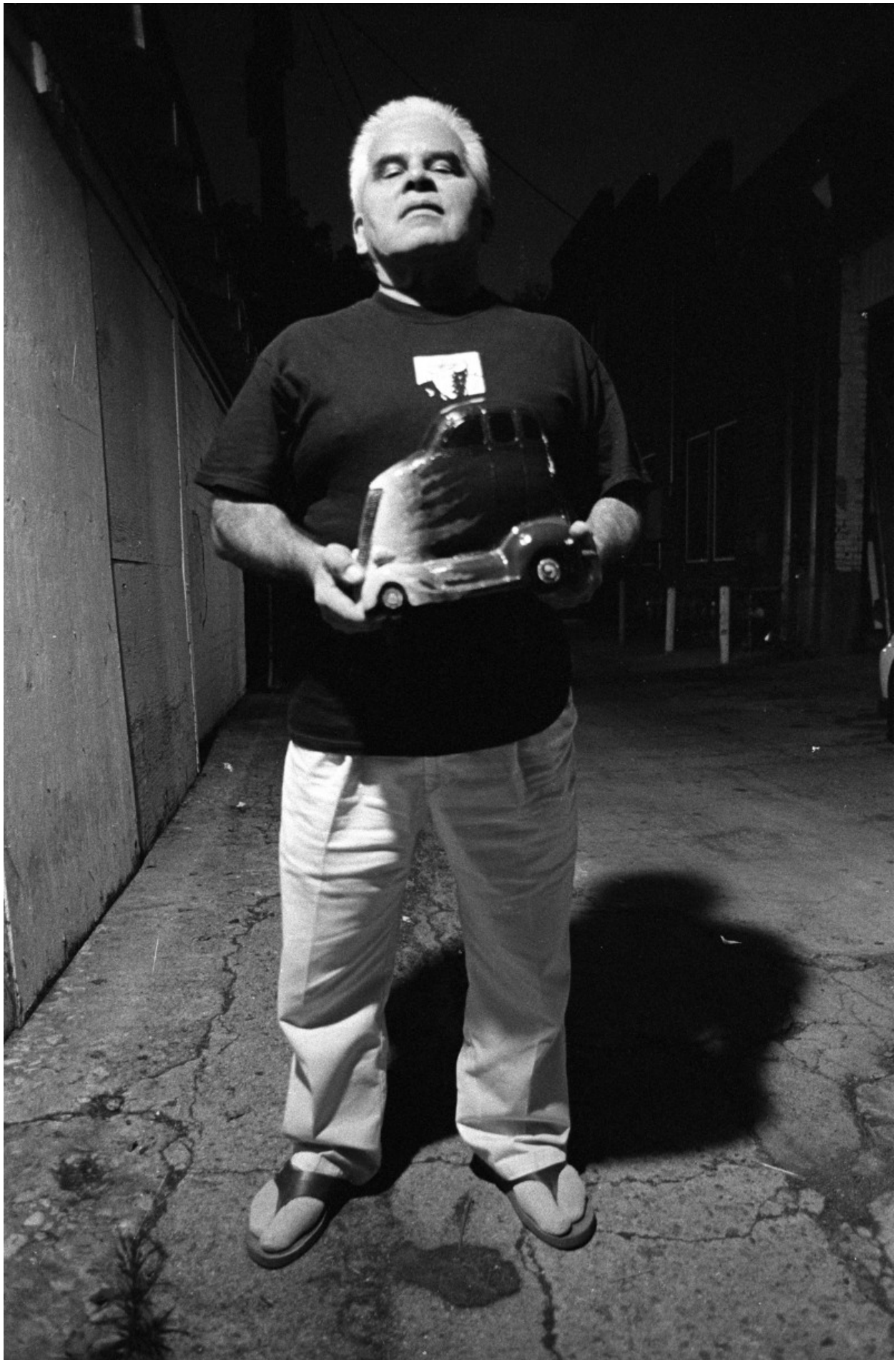
**Chicanx  
Tattoos:  
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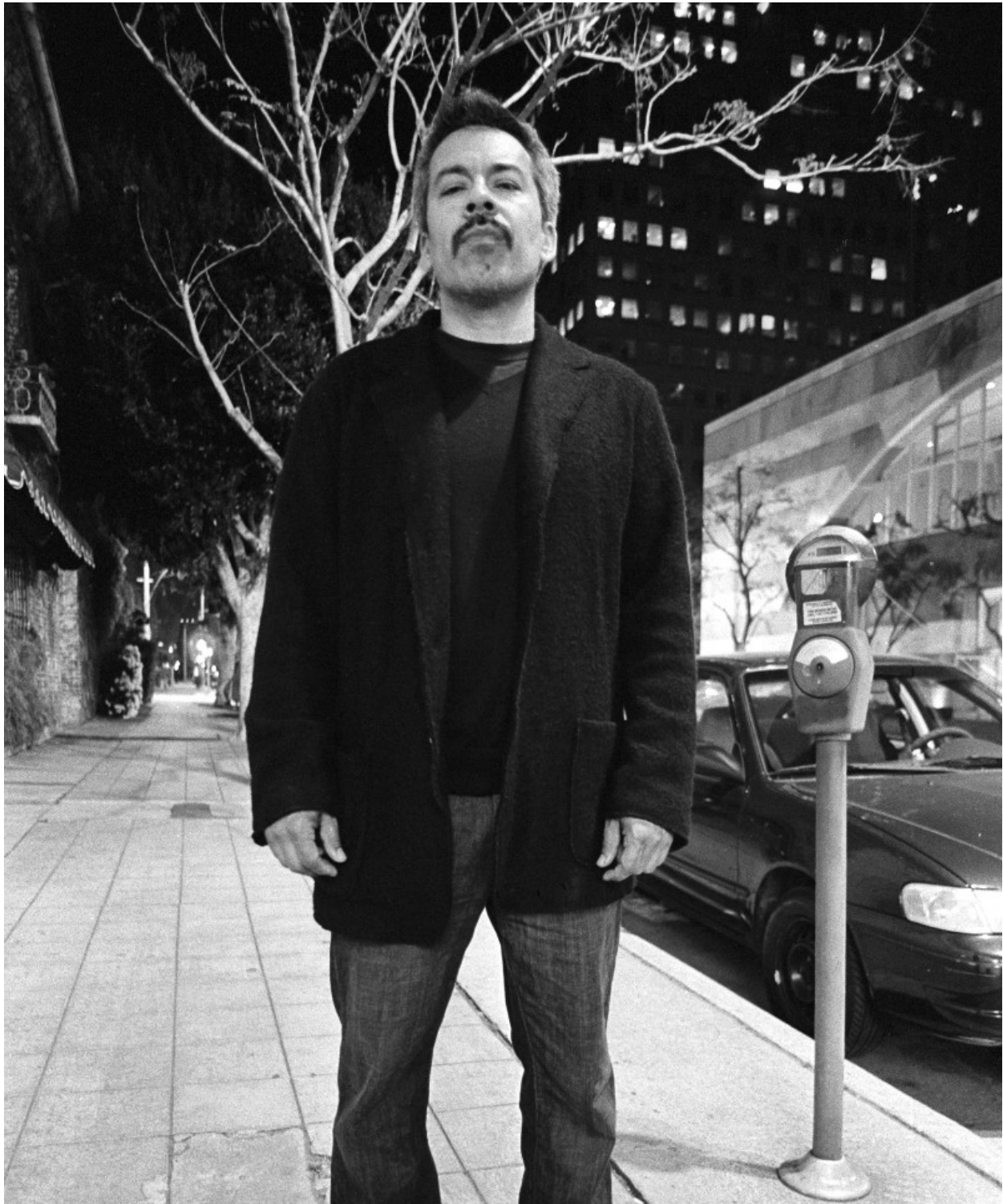






## Gilbert “Magu” Luján

Visual artist Gilbert “Magu” Luján’s work paved the way for emerging Chicano artists to show in more established art venues. He was one of four Chicano artists to ever exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Despite his role as one of the most iconic figures of the Chicano art movement, his work is not only found in large museums and galleries, but in everyday life; his whimsical style full surrounds commuters on the Hollywood and Vine metro stop.

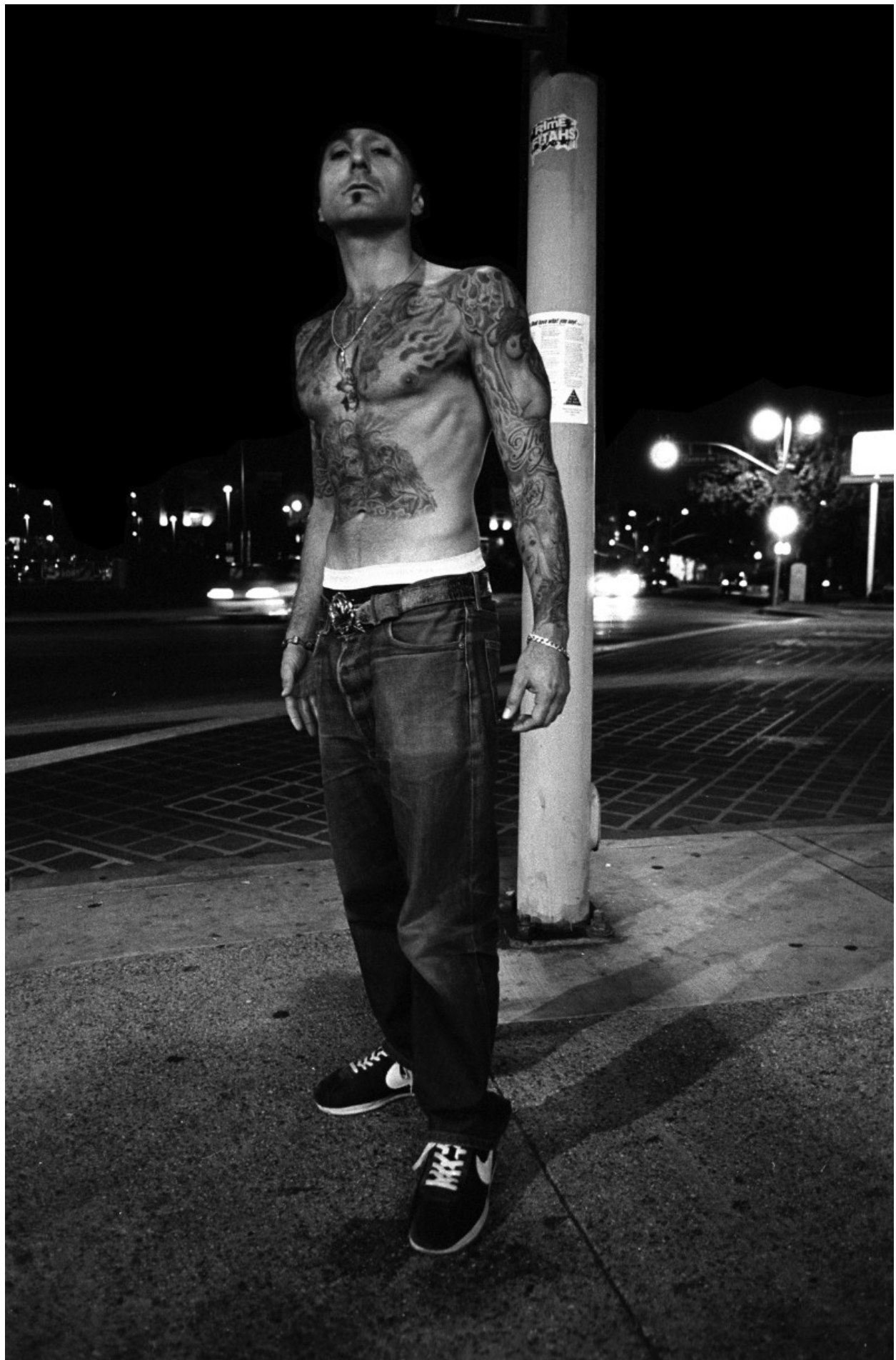




## Salomón Huerta

Born in Tijuana, Mexico, Salomón Huerta gained fame in the 90s for his crisp paintings of lower middle- class homes and the back of peoples' heads. His depictions, while seemingly innocent, questioned the value and worth of these subjects to its viewers. Since then, his work has been included in Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art and has been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian Institute, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego.





## Gregory Bojorquez

Bojorquez is not your average photographer. His work first gained attention when his photograph of a shooting on Sunset Boulevard made the front page of the Los Angeles Times. Unlike the staid, posed photographs one would expect of Hollywood, Bojorquez's images document street life in its wild, gritty and often sensual reality. His 2012 show at Hardhitta Gallery, ".45 Point Blank," was curated by Benedikt Taschen Jr., son of the luxury publishing magnate. The show and a pop-up gallery also debuted in Berlin and Cologne.

*Top Image: Framed "Chicano Male Unbonded" photographs for exhibition | Still from KCET video*

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Carren is the Arts & Culture editor for KCET. She is also an art, architecture and design writer. Her work has been spotted on Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Atlantic's CityLab and others. You can find her [online](#) and on [Twitter](#).