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Artists return to restore the faded glory of Boyle Heights murals

Monday, March 12, 2012



Ernesto de La Loza stands before "Organic Stimulus." Photo by Gil Ortiz



Mural before restoration. Photo by Gil Ortiz

It has been nearly 40 years since Ernesto de La Loza painted a lush, abstracted landscape on the side of a two-story building in a Boyle Heights housing project. He was one of several Chicano artists who turned [Estrada Courts](#) into an outdoor museum filled with vibrant murals reflecting social issues, political struggles and ethnic pride. While admirers from around the world traveled down Olympic Boulevard to see the [approximately 80 murals](#) that once filled the walls of Estrada Courts, the public artworks – including De La Loza’s “Organic Stimulus” – have over the decades been bleached by the sun and tagged by vandals. But on Sunday, De La Loza, a longtime Echo Park resident, was back at Estrada Courts to rededicate his mural, which was once again alive with bold colors and brush strokes after an approximately two-month long restoration. It is the most recent attempt to revive the Estrada Court murals and the first to be restored under a new program sponsored by the [Murals Conservancy of Los Angeles](#). The goal is to raise attention and money to restore the others.

“Our dream is to revive ... one mural at a time,” said Executive Director. Isabel Rojas-Williams.

Financed with money from the city's Cultural Affairs Department and other donations, De La Loza's approximately 30-foot-wide mural is one of 13 outdoor paintings that line a walkway dubbed "Nature Walk" at Estrada Courts. Restoration work began in January, with De La Loza working with Estrada Court youth and other residents, some of whom helped clean up and paint the mural under De La Loza's direction.

De La Loza and Rojas-Williams were joined at Sunday morning's ceremony by city officials, including Councilman Jose Huizar, and some of the other artists who painted some of the first Estrada Court murals, including Oscar "Eagle," who organized the effort during the early 1970s.

Rojas-Williams said the restoration of De La Loza's mural will serve as the prototype of the approach that will be used to restore many other nearby artworks. "This is an example of what can be done," she said. "We are hoping more people will come and donate money so that eventually we can paint more and more."



Oscar "Eagle," the man that organized the painting of the murals at Estrada Courts' open air museum in the 1970s, along with Whitey, Charles "Cat" Felix, and Norma Montoya. Photo by Isabel Rojas-Williams

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[Anthea Raymond](#) March 12, 2012 at 11:43 am

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