

## - Lxs AngelínXs -

This exhibition forms a bridge between Los Angeles and Madrid, two cities separated by some 9,400 km or 5,800 miles, representing two very different cultures united by the same language—Spanish is the mother tongue for about half the population of that major North American creative centre. The artistic contribution of the community of Latin-American origin goes back to Mexican muralist movement of the 1920s, and its socio-political approach in turn inspired the Chicano art of the 1970s. The strong radicalism of these movements, both so prolific, has continued to this day as a large group of artists carries on the fight to give visibility to an identity that is almost unknown and even ignored in Spain.

In recent years a new nucleus of artists, sharing background in suburban Los Angeles, has been developing quietly—or maybe it's just the respect appropriate to the founding of a new movement. Between Pomona and Inglewood you can take in the studios of all manner of Angelinx artists, who are dealing with topics as current and engaged as immigration, gender, history, the class struggle, drug trafficking, all without ever forgetting their ancestry and values, their identity. There is a discernible pattern in their work, the same for all of them: a kind of song to freedom—in the truly authentic style of the Chilean poet and singer Victor Jara—in works that recall how families have suffered in the attempt to attain a better future and gain the right to live in peace.

The questions that these works pose are dominated by the memories, stereotypes, and criticisms of a society that uses them to maintain a certain way of life, but without giving any real value to their experiences. Through their work, the artists sustain the memory that lives on in the unconscious of the community; community is also an important part of the way that Madrid works, although there may not yet be the historical points of reference here that can be discerned in any mural in downtown Los Angeles.

Self-portraits with hats, family gatherings, portraits of Latinx activists, the Virgin of Guadalupe, cockfights, chrome wheels with razor wire like that on the border walls, life between the freeways, bandanas, or the imaginary of Lowrider culture—all feature proudly in a society that has been given nothing on a plate. They are conscious of who and what they represent, what has marked them, influenced them, or led to rejection during their childhood and teenage years. This iconography is expressed, in some cases, through traditional techniques, such as adobe and ceramics, while others draw more on the urban environment they come from, as is the case of the aerosol.

The images presented will not leave any viewer unaffected, nor can any keen explorer of new trends in international contemporary art be unmoved, and through this group exhibition we are inviting you to keep an eye on this lively and exciting artistic hotspot. This exhibition seems particularly relevant in the current context, as winds of change blow across the United States, and where it appears that the country's politics in the coming years will hopefully find recognition for those who have been considered as minorities until now, respecting diversity and defending equality. In the longer term, this shift will also probably be felt beyond the USA's borders, as with so many others that start there, although, as these artists make clear, there is still a long way to go and it will not be easy.

**Mario Ayala** (b. 1991) uses an airbrush to create his acrylic paintings, employing a technique borrowed from car culture and the styles of the Californian Lowrider, advertising, the language and codes of tattoos, hand-painted signs, underground Chicano magazines—in other words, the cultural manifestations of Latin identity recontextualized, with the diverse elements combined in a unique visual language. He is currently taking part in the biennial *Made in L.A. 2020: a version* at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, following the exhibition's tour of galleries in San Francisco, New York, Brussels, and Stockholm.

In his most recent installations, **Rafa Esparza** (b. 1981) gives special prominence to the technique of adobe, producing adobe brick with his father, who used this method to build his first house in Mexico before emigrating to the United States. They follow a local and indigenous tradition, and Esparza uses the adobe as the painting surface for his recent work. A multi-disciplinary artist, his interests range from history to personal narratives, and in his performances he criticizes ideologies, power structures, and binary forms of identity. His recent shows include exhibitions at MASS MoCA (2019), the Whitney Museum's Biennial (2017), and the Hammer Museum (2016).

**Diana Yesenia Alvarado** (b. 1992) creates sculptures that represent the sounds, smells, people, and colors of her predominantly Latin neighborhood, which is revealed in her gestures and way of modeling clay or exploring the qualities of porcelain. They evoke the hand-painted figures that can be seen in the windows of the stores and streets around her, reflecting their culture and conveying the community's feelings. She has shown at various galleries in California and this spring she will be exhibiting at Dietch Projects, Los Angeles, in a show that also includes her studio colleagues Mario Ayala, Rafa Esparza, and Alfonso Gonzalez Jr.

The work of **Alfonso Gonzalez Jr.** (b. 1989) draws strongly on his close observation of his father's professional skill as a painter of commercial advertisements, hand-painted signs that still feature in the city, faded images telling family stories tied to work. By incorporating fragments from his immediate surroundings, mixed in turn with childhood experiences, he documents and reassesses the neighborhood. With exhibitions at galleries in California, he has also shown in Berlin and Tokyo.

The work of **Ramiro Gomez** (b. 1986) addresses the theme of immigration, giving visibility to the "invisible" workforce of nannies, gardeners, and cleaners who work in swanky neighborhoods like Beverly Hills and West Hollywood, where he lives. He uses photographs to capture the everyday scenes that usually go unnoticed, and these form the basis of his compositions, sometimes executed on cardboard as cut-outs and incorporated into installations that reflect on concepts of class and wealth. His work has been included in three of the Getty Foundation's exhibitions at Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA (2017) and he has exhibited at LACMA and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, among others.

**Patrick Martinez** (b. 1980) is known for his neons, fluorescent signs recalling those that light up the city's store fronts at night, but with social and political messages in place of advertising slogans. He also creates paintings that resemble pastels, commemorating leaders, activists, and thinkers such as the abolitionist reformer Frederick Douglass or the journalist Ruben Salazar, which feature in the show. At the moment he is taking part in the Triennial at El Museo del Barrio in New York, and his work was included in *Beyond the Streets*, which was exhibited in Los Angeles (2018) and New York (2019).

**Shizu Saldamando** (b. 1978) experiments with a wide range of surfaces—canvas, wood, paper, fabric—and materials in her drawings, paintings, sculptures and videos. Her portraits pay homage to and document subcultures in and around the Los Angeles metropolitan area, depicting her artist friends, activists, musicians, and colleagues such as the performer and designer Gabriela Ruiz (aka Leather Papi) on show here. Her work is part of the LACMA collection and has been shown at Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA and MACLA San Jose.

**Gabriella Sanchez** (b. 1988) has worked as a graphic designer and illustrator, experience that she integrates into her painting. She explores the space between Mexican and North American cultures, between center and margins, personal and socio-cultural. In her works she reformulates signs to reconsider how the meaning of words and images is created, conveyed, and interpreted in today's visual culture. The flag she creates tells us about her relationship with this symbol, made up of cloth from garments associated with her community and a photograph with social content. Her work is part of the collections at LACMA, the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, and the JP Morgan & Chase Collection, among others.

The graffiti and murals of his hometown, as well as the magazines, films, video games, and designs from the skateboarding world are all evident in the paintings of **Michael Alvarez** (b. 1983). He both takes photographs of his family environment and finds others, using them as starting points for his portraits and scenes that reflect the bustling streets of Los Angeles neighborhoods in a prosaic style, with touches of magical realism and a touch of humor. He is in the Cheech Marin Collection at the Riverside Art Museum (California), where he had a solo exhibition in 2019.

Rooted in modern European painting, with echoes of German Neo-Expressionism, the work of **Alex Becerra** (b. 1989) encompasses the traditional genres of self-portrait, the female nude, still life, and genre scenes, into which he introduces context-specific objects. His compositions are characterized by their saturation, the layers of paint vibrating on the surface in a physical way, pure energy and vitality, excess and provocation. His work has been included in the Venice Beach Biennial at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and the Pacific Standard Time project.

**Aaron Douglas Estrada** (b. 1994) in his body of work examines the systemic racism and colonial turmoil experienced in various areas of the city where he grew up. These are places full of multifaceted cultural signifiers such as territorial symbols, shrines, murals and other esoteric residue that contain a layered history, repositories of memory, through which he questions archetypes/stereotypes and identity coming out of unequal education and immigration. He has exhibited in Mexico City, at the Getty's Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA in Inglewood, MACLA San Jose, REDCAT Los Angeles, and has created murals in public spaces in his city, as well as in Guadalajara and Virginia.

The visual language of **Jaime Muñoz** (b. 1987) focuses on aspects such as identity, the commodification of labor, religion, the critique of Latin American colonialism and the myth of Modernism's progress, and the relationship of ancestors to the experiences of the present. His most recent paintings combine various techniques and influences ranging from the Latin in California, to pre-Columbian religious iconography and mythology, including symbols of capitalist modernity, such as car culture, design in everyday objects. Recent highlights have been his participation in the Pacific Standard Time project in 2017 and his solo show in the Focus LA section of Frieze Los Angeles 2020.

In his *Narcomantas* series, **Eduardo Sarabia** (b. 1976) has explored different faces of the Mexican imaginary—narcoculture, identity, the border—using traditional materials and techniques. Following the style and aesthetics of the drug gangs and cartels, using the power of fascination of the narco phenomenon, he subverts their message of terror. He collaborates with local artisans who weave the tapestries by hand. He has exhibited at the Museo Tamayo in Mexico City, LACMA in Los Angeles, the Whitney Museum Biennial and the New Museum in New York, the Santa Monica Museum of Art, and will participate in the coming Desert X Biennial in the Coachella Valley planned for this year.

For further information or for images, please contact us.