Reclaiming Aztlán: The Visual Rhetoric of Pre-Columbian Imagery in Chicano Murals

Kelsey Mahler
kmahler@pugetsound.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/summer_research
Part of the American Art and Architecture Commons, and the Contemporary Art Commons

Recommended Citation
http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/summer_research/119

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Sound Ideas. It has been accepted for inclusion in Summer Research by an authorized administrator of Sound Ideas. For more information, please contact soundideas@pugetsound.edu.
Reclaiming Aztlán: The Visual Rhetoric of Pre-Columbian Imagery in Chicano Murals

As the Chicano movement took shape in the 1960s, Chicano artists quickly began to articulate the attitudes and goals of the movement in the form of murals that decorated businesses, freeway underpasses, and low-income housing developments. It did not take long for a distinct aesthetic to emerge. Many of the same visual symbols repeatedly appear in these murals, especially those produced during the first two decades of the movement. These included images of historical Mexican or Chicano figures such as Cesar Chavez, Pancho Villa, and Dolores Huerta, cultural icons like the Virgin of Guadalupe, and emblems of political consciousness like the flag of the United Farm Workers. But one of the most important visual themes that emerged was the use of pre-Columbian imagery, which could include images of Aztec or Mayan warriors, gods like Coatlicue or Quetzacoatl, the Aztec calendar stone, depictions of ancient Mesoamerican pyramid architecture, or the Olmec head sculptures found at San Lorenzo and La Venta. These images are nearly ubiquitous in Chicano murals, and serve many symbolic purposes. At the most basic level, visual references to the Pre-Columbian period convey a message of cultural pride, paying homage to the ancient civilizations from which modern Mexicans and Chicanos descended and differentiating Chicano culture from dominant Anglo society, but the implications are even more complex than that.

The term “Chicano,” rather than being synonymous with “Mexican American,” describes an identity that is not racially-based, but is a product of political consciousness, connoting a particular ideology. Historian Ignacio Garcia, for example, has described a Chicana or Chicano as “a ‘new’ Mexican American, one who understood his or her roots and shunned assimilation or
integration.”¹ This was a self-defined identity, rather than a culturally-assigned label, based on ethnicity. For this reason, not all art created by people of Mexican ancestry should be called “Chicano art.” In fact, film scholar Rosa Linda Fregoso argues that to define Chicano art (or cinema) strictly on the basis of race is to “incorporate racist tendencies into an ideology that fights against racism.”² The “Chicano” label can be applied to art that demonstrates the politicized consciousness by which Chicanas/os themselves are defined, that is, the ideas of equality, self-determination, human rights and social justice; framed, but not defined, by ethnic identity.

One of the ways this identity was expressed most clearly in art was through the use of pre-Columbian imagery. Pre-Columbian in Chicano art is closely tied with the concept of Aztlán, the mythical homeland of the Aztecs. According to legend, the Aztecs migrated to what would eventually become Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) from land in the north that they called Aztlán, commonly believed to be located in what is now the Southwestern part of the United States, stretching from California to Texas.³ This concept was significant to ethnic Mexicans living in the United States because it was both their mythical homeland, as well as a territory usurped by the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.⁴ It also fundamentally opposed the perception of Chicanos as an immigrant population. A sense of cultural nationalism was central to the Chicano movement in its formative years (the late 1960s and early 1970s)⁵, and for many activists, community members, and artists, “Aztlán” quickly became a metaphor for the Chicano nation that resided within the United States. Pre-Columbian imagery in murals reinforced this idea, lending a mythical, spiritual quality to the movement’s political struggles.

---

¹ Jackson, Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte. 2
² Jackson, Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte. 3
³ Benavidez, “Chicano Art: Culture, Myth, and Sensibility,” 12
⁴ Leal, “In Search of Aztlan,” 11
⁵ Goldman/Ybarra-Frausto, “The Political and Social Contexts of Chicano Art,” 84
The images in the murals, which filled the barrios of Southern California, also helped transform the spaces that Chicanos now occupied into a kind of new, regenerated Aztlán. By using these indigenist themes in their murals, Chicano artists communicated a sense of belonging to the American continent, while at the same time distinguishing themselves and their community from dominant Anglo culture.

In this paper, I will analyze how pre-Columbian imagery was used in specific instances and discuss what its implications were for the Chicano movement. These murals are primarily located in Southern California and include Chicano Time Trip by Los Dos Streetscapers (Wayne Healey and David Botello), To Ace Out a Homeboy by Manuel Cruz, Sacrifice Mural by Charles Felix, Dreams of Flight by David Botello, La Ofrenda by Yreina Cervantez, Quetzacoatl by Toltecas en Aztlán and El Congreso de Artistas Chicanos en Aztlán, Historical Mural by Toltecas en Aztlán, and The Great Wall of Los Angeles by Judith Baca. I chose these murals because they contain diverse examples of pre-Columbian imagery and were all produced between 1970 and 1990. I will also discuss the ways in which similar Indigenist imagery was handled in areas outside the American Southwest, specifically referring to two murals: Somos Aztlán by Emilio Aguayo and Explosion of Chicano Creativity by Daniel Desiga, both located in Seattle, WA, and created during the same period. I argue that the Chicano identity remains tied to the concept of Aztlán, even when removed from the physical space, because the nationalist identity associated with it transcended regional divisions. Chicanas/os all over the United States were united by the reclamation of their shared indigenous heritage.

The examination of these murals reveals how pre-Columbian imagery became a complex aesthetic language. Chicano artists did not merely appropriate images from their ethnic heritage to decorate the walls in their community. They used symbols very deliberately to communicate a
political consciousness that was just becoming fully realized. Images of ancient Mesoamerican peoples helped visually reconfigure the self-image (and public image) of modern Chicanos, often by drawing direct relationships between the Chicanos and their ancestors; representations of the cities, practices, and deities of these ancient cultures, as well as the destruction they faced with the arrival of Europeans, provide a counterhistory that is essential to understanding the Chicano struggle; The dramatic implications of these images contested the marginalization and negative perception of ethnic Mexicans in the United States, and their insertion into public life via murals gave them great capacity for social change.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Though ethnic Mexicans had been struggling against Anglo-American racism since the mid-nineteenth century when Northern Mexico became part of the United States, the collective resistance known as the Chicano Movement, or el movimiento, came about in the mid-1960s. It was the result of a crystallization of forces, growing out of civil rights movement consciousness (which introduced ideas of cultural reclamation, social equity, and anti-imperialism), farmworkers alliances, and student groups all over the country seeking equitable treatment in their schools and communities and protesting the Vietnam War. At this time, many sections of the American population were engaged in self-examination, conflict, and struggle, leading to grass-roots organization and protest demonstrations in an attempt to positively reconstruct society. The early period of the Chicano movement, which produced most of the murals under discussion in this paper, was focused on self-definition and cultural nationalism. According to Rodolfo Acuña’s historical analysis in his 1972 book Occupied America, ethnic Mexicans living

---

6 Acuña, Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle Toward Liberation, 8
7 Cockcroft/Cockcroft/Weber, Toward a People’s Art, 13
8 Goldman/Ybarra-Frausto, “The Political and Social Contexts of Chicano Art,” 83
9 Cockcroft/Cockcroft/Weber, Toward a People’s Art, 13
on the North American continent had been colonized by the United States. Acuña argued that because the Mexican people had had their territory forcibly occupied by the United States and had been subject to cultural genocide and were in the end socially and politically powerless, they were not unlike any other colonized people.\textsuperscript{10} When the border was finally drawn in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (making more than half of Mexico new property of the U.S.), they then became a kind of “internal colony”, residents of the United States but without any of the same rights as their new countrymen.\textsuperscript{11} Many Chicano sociologists agreed with Acuña and this concept of the internal colony deeply influenced the Chicano Movement, as it sought to change this relationship. According to Chicano art specialist Guisela LaTorre, “…Chicana/o thinkers imagined a relationship on equal footing between indigenous peoples and their former colonizers…”.\textsuperscript{12} They sought to differentiate themselves from the culture that had been imposed upon them since they became American citizens and deconstruct the notion that assimilation was the only way for them to be accepted in the U.S.\textsuperscript{13} This had been the strategy of many ethnic Mexicans for years, but unfair treatment and stereotypes of their people remained. Chicana/o activists, Carlos Francisco Jackson argues, “believed that rather than turning Chicanos into Americans, assimilation produced confusion and insecurity and stunted the growth of the Chicano community”.\textsuperscript{14} Many rejected the term “Mexican American” because it implied second-class citizenship, and instead began using the term “Chicano” (once a derogatory epithet used to describe poor Mexican immigrants) to identify themselves.\textsuperscript{15} Chicano radicalism transformed the

\textsuperscript{10} Acuña, \textit{Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle Toward Liberation}. 3
\textsuperscript{11} Acuña, \textit{Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle Toward Liberation}. 3
\textsuperscript{12} LaTorre, \textit{Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California}, 21
\textsuperscript{13} Jackson, \textit{Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte}. 88
\textsuperscript{14} Jackson, \textit{Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte}. 88
\textsuperscript{15} Jackson, \textit{Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte}. 2
internal colony into an internal nation, which was appropriately dubbed “Aztlán”. This cultural nationalist philosophy was most clearly defined in “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán”, drafted in 1969 at the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver. It was at this conference that the concept of Aztlan first arose in Chicano discourse, introduced by Chicano poet Alurista, and it was quickly embraced in the following years. “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” proclaimed that the Chicanas/o people were culturally autonomous and that they constituted not just a social group, or even a race, but a nation. It stipulated that nationalism was the key to uniting all Chicanos because “nationalism as the key to organization transcends all religious, political, class and economic factions or boundaries”, and that they were the rightful occupants of the American Southwest. This, however, did not mean that they sought to separate from the United States, but that they wanted legitimate participation in the country’s government. As LaTorre points out, “most of the challenges that the Chicano Movement posed to the U.S. nation-state – such as critiques of the educational, labor, and legal systems and subsequent calls for reform within these – were articulated within the purview of the law and in keeping with this country’s democratic tradition of protest and free speech”. This was a nation that was defined by shared experiences and ethnic heritage, and sought political equality, not sovereignty.

One of the major elements of Chicano cultural nationalism that is important to consider when addressing art, is that it demanded a return to the indigenous past. Reclaiming their heritage meant asserting their role as generators of cultural rather than just as receptors of

---

16 Chicano writer Rudolfo Anaya calls the naming of the Chicano nation the most important activity of the Chicano movement. “The naming of the homeland,” he writes, “created a Chicano spiritual awareness which reverberated throughout the Southwest, and the naming ceremony was reenacted wherever Chicanas met to discuss their common destiny.” (Anaya, 232)
17 Leal, “In Search of Aztlán,” 11
18 Jackson, *Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte*. 17
19 Chicano National Conference of 1969 “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán”, 2
20 LaTorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California*, 67
dominant cultural expression, as they had been for so long. They sought to undermine the idea that European or Western ideals represented a “universal” culture, remanding everything else to the status of “exotic” or “primitive”. Difference, rather than being a marker of inequality, was becoming a point of pride. It should also be noted that the Chicano community was an extremely heterogeneous one, but, despite their differences, most people found resonance with their shared pre-Columbian past. Embracing indigeneity gave artists, scholars and activists a way to make their message relatable for the entire community, cutting across generational and regional lines. It comes as no surprise, then, that Chicano Murals would be filled with visual references to the Aztec and Maya cultures.

**MURALS AS A MEDIUM**

Before discussing the Indigenist imagery within Chicano murals, it is important to explain why so many Chicano artists chose that form. Murals themselves were the perfect medium for the artists of the Chicano movement, for many reasons. First, they were in line with the earlier precedent set by the “Tres Grandes”, Mexican muralists Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949), Diego Rivera (1886-1957), and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974), who were primarily active in the 1920s and 30s. Their murals were created shortly following the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and served to express the ideals of the new society, celebrating the worker and demonizing the former ruling class: capitalists, clergy, and foreign interests. They favored representational images over formal experimentation in order to better communicate social messages and educate the public, many of whom were illiterate. This informed the perception of

---

22 Barnet-Sanchez/Cockcroft, Introduction to *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, 9
23 Ybarra-Frausto “Arte Chicano: Images of a Community,” 55
24 Barnet-Sanchez/Cockcroft, Introduction to *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, 6
the muralist as a kind of “cultural worker”\textsuperscript{25}, whose responsibility it was to disseminate ideas and raise social consciousness, a role which Chicano artists would come to take very seriously. Their work was especially significant because it often celebrated Mexico’s pre-Columbian past. They also used references to that past to make statements about the present. Siqueiros’ \textit{America Tropical}, for example, depicted an indigenous Mexican man as the prey of a bald eagle, making a clear allusion to the oppression of the Mexican working class in Los Angeles\textsuperscript{26}. Chicano muralists were therefore not the first to use indigenist imagery toward a political end and many of them credit the Tres Grandes with inspiring their work\textsuperscript{27}. Creating art in the style of the Mexican greats fit into the larger effort to reclaim their cultural patrimony and identity\textsuperscript{28}. Some even include visual allusions to these artists in their murals, demonstrating a strong awareness of muralism’s historical significance. \textit{Historical Mural}, by Toltecas en Aztlan (figure 8), located in San Diego’s Chicano Park, is one such mural. The uppermost portion of the mural is occupied by numerous portraits of historical figures important to the Chicano movement. Among these are the faces of Orozco, Siqueiros and Rivera, as well as American-born muralist Pablo O’Higgins, Frida Kahlo, and even Pablo Picasso\textsuperscript{29} (see figure 10).

It is important to note that, though Chicano artists were undeniably influenced by the Mexican Mural Renaissance and its use of indigenist imagery, the same images served a slightly different purpose in their Chicano context. In the case of the Mexican muralists, their use of Indigenism was often endorsed by public institutions and supported by official ideologies. For

\textsuperscript{25} Ybarra-Frausto, “Arte Chicano: Images of a Community” 56  
\textsuperscript{26} Benavidez, “Chicano Art: Culture, Myth, and Sensibility,” 15  
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{America Tropical} was quickly painted over due to its controversial subject matter, but, according to Judith Baca, the mural began to show through the whitewash in the 1970s. “We saw this as a symbol”, she writes, “an aparicion (religious apparition) coinciding with the growth of Los Angeles’s Mexican population and strength of the Chicano movement.” (Baca, 1)  
\textsuperscript{28} Jackson, \textit{Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte}. 75  
\textsuperscript{29} Kahlo, though not a muralist, is said to have contributed to the aesthetic of the Chicano movement because of her frequent references to indigenous Mexican culture (Benavidez, 16). The reason for Picasso’s inclusion is less clear.
Chicanas/os, instead, Indigernism was “a more introspective, self-affirming, and radical discourse occurring at the margins of the mainstream and one that sought to decenter hegemonic notions of nation and sovereignty”, according to LaTorre. While the Mexican Mural Renaissance was supported by the government and often executed in prominent public buildings, Chicano murals were painted in working-class communities and sponsored by community centers, local merchants, or sometimes the artists themselves. For the Tres Grandes as well as Chicano muralists, pre-Columbian imagery celebrated shared heritage and opposed colonialism. However, for Chicanos, there was an added level of meaning because these images also helped legitimize their place in North America, contesting their categorization as immigrants. However, they certainly used some of the models for incorporating such imagery provided by their Mexican predecessors.

The concept of site specificity was another aspect of muralism that lent itself well to the Indigenist rhetoric of the Chicano movement. As one might guess, the placement of a mural is based upon more than simply the availability of wall space on which to paint. Murals are given their meaning not only by their content but also by their location, scale, and intended audience. Judith Baca, the artist behind many Chicano murals – most notably the Great Wall of Los Angeles – has been quoted saying that she always carefully studies a site before deciding that it will support a mural. She argues that “knowledge about the physical and metaphysical contained within a particular space leads to the creation of a mural that has a more organic and sensitive relationship to its environment”. Because Chicano murals were intended to be tools of education and empowerment for their community, their locations are reflective of that. This is important when considering any mural in isolation, but especially when murals are found in

---

30 LaTorre, Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California, 35
31 Jackson, Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte. 75
32 LaTorre, Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California, 140
close proximity to one another. The barrios of Southern California often display a dense concentration of murals, most of which were created during the early years of *el movimiento*. This saturation of muralism is apparent in Estrada Courts, a low-income housing project located in East Los Angeles. Two of the murals on which this paper focuses are located here (*Dreams of Flight* by David Botello and *Sacrifice Wall* by Charles Felix), but they are by no means the only murals within the complex. Seemingly every wall features a different mural and, perfectly exemplifying the concept of site specificity, there is a marked difference between the murals that face the interior of the complex and those that face the street. The interpretation of the murals in locations like this is dependent upon the content, style, and placement of each mural as well as upon their relationships to one another. The same could be said for sites like Chicano Park in San Diego, which is similarly filled with murals.

The use of a site-specific medium was perfect for Chicano artists because, according to Steven Leuthold, “indigenist aesthetics are deeply rooted in space consciousness.” The creation of Chicano murals was done so with an understanding that the space in which art exists is not neutral, but is laden with meaning, just as the Southwestern region of the United States has special meaning for those who associate it with Aztlán. Every site has its own significance that may be determined by the social and political environment and history. The choice of location for Chicano murals also had a great impact on their meaning and reception because of their transformative effect on the urban environment, as mentioned above in the example of Estrada Courts. The murals executed in barrios like Estrada Courts sought to beautify these areas and counter the graffiti that often covered them. According to LaTorre, “muralism celebrated the urban spaces prescribed to the Chicana/o nation and often transformed the barrio environment

---

33 LaTorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California*. 146
34 LaTorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California*. 15
into an Indigenist realm"35. The physical spaces to which ethnic Mexicans had been relegated now became canvases on which to express their social consciousness and cultural identity. The creation of murals allowed for visual markers that designated these spaces as a new, reclaimed Aztlán. This effect can be seen not only in housing complexes but in community meeting places like ethnic cultural centers and neighborhood parks. Chicano Park in San Diego is an especially striking example. In 1970, after the construction of a freeway had displaced approximately five thousand families, the neighborhood of Logan Heights, also known as Barrio Logan, came together to demand a space for community gatherings. When negotiations with the city to build a park fell through, residents and community members began occupying the site under Coronado Bridge and rented bulldozers to begin creating the park themselves36. The city finally agreed to purchase the land and create a park, but the location under the bridge still left something to be desired, so artists began coming together to create murals on the concrete freeway pylons, completely altering the feeling of the space. It is now a vibrant community park, and the location of Historical Mural and Quetzalcoatl (both of which are among very few murals not painted on the T-shaped pylons).

Muralism was also perfect for the community-oriented nature of Chicano art because it was typically a collaborative medium. Though several of the murals I address were executed by singular artists, the majority of them were created by groups, and even those working alone did so only after conferring with community members about the themes and content they wanted to see. Charles Felix, for example, created his Sacrifice Wall mural in Estrada Courts with the help of the Varrio Nuevo Estrada gang, who selected the mural’s subject matter – a scene taken from a relief found at a Huastec site in Veracruz, Mexico. While Felix might have selected different

35 LaTorre, Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California. 14
iconography himself, the members of VNE felt that the sacrifice scene was something they could identify with.\textsuperscript{37} Community involvement like this directly and indirectly informed the creation of most murals in this early period of the Chicano movement. The \textit{Great Wall of Los Angeles} is another example of the mural as a collaborative effort. Designed by Judith Baca, the mural was produced by the joint-effort of over four hundred young adults and teenagers, eventually leading to the creation of the Social and Public Art Resource center\textsuperscript{38}. Collaborative murals contest the elite concept of the genius outsider artist separate from his community\textsuperscript{39}, which constitutes another departure from the precedent set by the Mexican muralists. These collaborations can also become a tool for uniting the community, making it stronger and more visible, and becoming a vehicle for the redefinition of common values\textsuperscript{40}.

The nature of murals is in fundamental opposition to much of the elite art world, and especially the avant-garde art scene of the 60s, and for this reason they were well suited to art of protest like that of the Chicano movement. First, the murals cannot be sold. They cannot become a commodity in the same way as movable paintings. The Mexican Muralists were aware of this, condemning “easel painting as bourgeois and apolitical.”\textsuperscript{41} Muralists are not seeking to profit from their work, but instead often go to great effort to seek out funding so that they can communicate their message. Second, the art of the dominant Anglo culture in the United States in the sixties was characterized by formal elegance, abstraction, minimalism and elite appeal. Social content was taboo\textsuperscript{42}. In opposition to this, Chicano artists insisted upon representation, or often social realism. “The murals insisted on ‘messages’, on narrative, on history painting, in a

\textsuperscript{37} LaTorre, \textit{Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California}. 154
\textsuperscript{38} LaTorre, \textit{Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California}. 192
\textsuperscript{39} Ybarra-Frausto, “The Chicano Cultural Project, 1965-1994,” 129
\textsuperscript{40} Cockcroft/Cockcroft/Weber, \textit{Toward a People’s Art}, 73
\textsuperscript{41} LaTorre, \textit{Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California}. 70
\textsuperscript{42} Cockcroft/Cockcroft/Weber, \textit{Toward a People’s Art}, 21
period which derided these attributes in art” writes Shifra Goldman, “Chicano art students resisted their professors in art school, and ignored their lessons after they graduated”\textsuperscript{43}. They refused to accept the Hollywood notion that art’s purpose was to be an escape from reality\textsuperscript{44}. Instead, they wanted to use art to reflect and transform their reality, reflecting the social, rather than the perceptual, nature of art\textsuperscript{45}.

The push toward muralism for these artists also stemmed from the fact that museums and galleries would not show their work\textsuperscript{46}. By executing their designs on walls, they were creating art on their own terms that could be seen by anyone at any time. The rejection of the formal qualities and expectations of the art world reflected the oppositional nature of the whole movement which sought to undermine the idea that Anglo culture was somehow universal or “right”. In many ways they reimagined what art could mean within society. Tomas Ybarra-Frausto expresses the view of many Chicano artists when he writes that art “was necessary, but not privileged or special… Art was to stimulate the viewer to a fuller comprehension of the human environment and the social needs of human beings”\textsuperscript{47}. Rather than creating “art for art’s sake” muralism allowed Chicana/o artists to create art of the people. For these many reasons, Indigenist imagery and the mural represent the perfect coupling of content and form.

TYPES AND FUNCTIONS OF PRE-COLUMBIAN IMAGERY

Many different pre-Columbian images make up the Indigenist visual language that characterizes Chicano murals. Taken together, they represent a message of cultural pride and Chicano nationalism, but the individual images and motifs have very specific iconographical functions.

\textsuperscript{43} Goldman, “How, Why, and When It All Happened: Chicano Murals of California,” 25
\textsuperscript{44} Sanchez-Tranquilino, “Murales del Movimiento: Chicano Murals and Discourses of Art and Americanization,” 88
\textsuperscript{45} Brookman, “Looking for Alternatives: Notes on Chicano Art 1960-90,” 184
\textsuperscript{46} Jackson, Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte. 61
One of the simplest, and most common, images I found among these murals was the depiction of the “Indian”, or indigenous man. Recognizable even in simple profile by the slanted forehead shared by many pre-Columbian peoples, these depictions appear in many murals, sometimes as the subject and sometimes just another emblem among many of the Indigenous identity. In fact, LaTorre argues that “by the early 1970s, the figure of the Aztec warrior was so highly coded with Chicano nationalist thinking that it had become synonymous with the politicized consciousness associated with el movimiento”.

These images are almost exclusively male – at least in the early years of the movement – and are commonly shown as warriors or ballplayers. In many cases, these representations serve as a visual link between modern Chicanos and their indigenous heritage. This is especially notable in Chicano Time Trip (figure 11) by Los Dos Streetscapers (David Botello and Wayne Healey). The mural occupies the side of East West Bank in the Lincoln Heights area of East Los Angeles, and is composed of five panels of images representing different moments or periods critical to Chicano history, beginning with a Pre-Columbian scene and culminating with a contemporary portrait of a Chicano family. The Pre-Columbian panel, titled Indígeno (figure 12), depicts not a ballplayer or a warrior, but a Mayan priest. The priest is a very powerful figure, both symbolically and visually. He is shown on an enormous scale, dominating the whole panel as he reaches toward the sky, holding a human heart in his hand, and the other elements of the mural – maize farmers tilling a field, an aerial view of Tenochtitlan, a Mayan or Aztec pyramid – are dwarfed by his figure. The mural was intended to stress the importance of Indigenist history to Chicano culture, and this panel appears to be a glorification of their earliest ancestors. As LaTorre points out, “If places like East Los Angeles were reclaimed as significant parts of Aztlan, every working-class Chicano who labored

---

48 LaTorre, Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California. 152
endlessly to provide for his family was the reincarnation of a Mesoamerican king or warrior. This was a powerful message for the Chicano community, which often was subject to negative stereotypes. Many other murals made similar visual links between the modern Chicano people and their pre-Columbian ancestors, though they were not always as clearly demonstrated. Sometimes only the faces of pre-Columbian figures are shown, as in Quetzacoatl by Guillermo Aranda and others (figure 6), and Historical Mural by Toltecas en Aztlan (figure 8), both located in Chicano Park.

The intention behind the depiction of the Indigenous warrior or ballplayer does appear to vary slightly from mural to mural. For example, in To Ace Out a Homeboy by Manuel Cruz (figure 4), located in the Ramona Gardens Housing Project, the Pre-Columbian warrior seems to take on a role of guardianship. The mural, which was intended to discourage gang violence in the barrios, shows a slain gangster being carried by a man in full warrior dress through the streets of Los Angeles. The slogan across the top of the mural reads – or once read, as the slogan has since been painted over – “To ace out a homeboy from another barrio is to kill la raza”. “La raza” or, literally, “the race” was a commonly used term, usually referring to the Chicano people, or sometimes to all people of color. This mural seems to suggest that all of the barrios, despite their conflicts, should be united by their belonging to “la raza”, and the image of the pre-Columbian warrior was a visual symbol of this, representing the shared heritage of all Chicanos. In Dreams of Flight by David Botello (figure 1), the warrior appears again in a slightly different context. In this mural, Botello claimed that he was trying to get away from the Indigenist imagery that was so common in other works. At the center of the composition is a child swinging on a tire. Surrounding him are what appear to be his imaginary visions of flight, including a paper airplane, a jet, an eagle, and even a winged horse. According to LaTorre, the notion of flight in

---

49 LaTorre, Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California. 87
the mural “metaphorically stands for the aspirations and dreams that have traditionally been denied to Mexican and Chicana/o children from areas like East Los Angeles.” Among these figures is an image of a pre-Columbian warrior with enormous feathered wings, whose presence is particularly noteworthy because such a figure has no traditional association with flight. Instead the figure serves to ground the mural in its Chicano context, perhaps helping to identify the child as a Chicano. Also, because all of the images of flight could be seen as inspiration for the child, the warrior figure’s presence implies that the child is also inspired by his ancient heritage just as he is by technological innovations in flight. The images that surround the child constitute possibilities, and these possibilities are directly associated with his people’s ethnicity and history, rather than being reliant on assimilation into the dominant culture. This mural illustrates the concept that the future of the Chicano people was dependent on their capacity to reclaim their indigenous past. Here, even though the pre-Columbian imagery is not the focus of the work, it still emphasizes the importance of the Indigenous past in modern Chicana/o life.

One of the most direct ways to visually communicate the heritage of ethnic Mexicans was by using the symbol of the Mestizo or tripartite head (figure 15). This symbol is found in many Chicano murals. It is composed of three faces: one face in frontal-view is in the center, and two in profile frame it on either side. The central face represents either a Meztizo (half Indian, half Spanish) or a modern Chicano man. The face on the left, usually shown with a goatee, represents the Spaniard, and the face on the right, with the pre-Columbian flattened forehead, represents the Indigenous man. This figure was created by Chicano muralist Manuel Martínez who appropriated a similar image from a mural on the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM) School of Medicine (figure 14). The symbol became an emblem of Chicana/o cultural

50 LaTorre, Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California. 152
51 LaTorre, Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California. 74
identity and political consciousness\textsuperscript{52}. Its use in murals visually opposed the oversimplified notion of the American “melting pot”, which had historically deprived Chicanos of their history and ethnicity\textsuperscript{53}, and instead glorified the complexity of their heritage. This symbol is found in many murals, especially those located in Chicano Park in San Diego. It is rarely the focus of any one mural, but instead appears in miniature, often on flags or worked into larger designs. It was a way to visually recognize the fact that Chicano identity was dependent upon the historical interactions between European and indigenous people.

Another, more specific theme that appears in some Chicano murals is the depiction of sacrifice. Of the murals I investigated, sacrifice images appeared in two of them: the formerly mentioned \textit{Sacrifice Wall} and \textit{Chicano Time Trip} (figures 2 and 11, respectively). Images such as these are not especially common in Chicano murals, in spite of their importance within indigenous Mesoamerican cultures, likely because it could contribute to a perception of these pre-Columbian civilizations as primitive or savage. However, despite its association with violence, there are values associated with the practice of sacrifice that certain artists decided to utilize in their murals. As mentioned above, the subject matter for Charles Felix’s \textit{Sacrifice Wall} was chosen by the Varrios Nuevos Estrada Gang, who collaborated with Felix on the work. It depicts the sacrifice of a ball-game participant following a ritual ballgame. He is restrained by another player as a priest-like figure stands poised above him, holding a flint knife. LaTorre’s analysis of the mural accounts for the choice of imagery in a several ways. First, she points out that the purpose of human sacrifice in Mesoamerican civilizations was to perpetuate human existence by appeasing the gods, so it was not associated with violence and death so much as with the continuation of life, a more positive message than one might initially assume. Also, the

\textsuperscript{52} LaTorre, \textit{Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California}. 75
\textsuperscript{53} Jackson, \textit{Chicano and Chicana Art: ProtestArte}. 89
concept of sacrifice may have resonated with the gang members because of “the importance placed by gangs on dying for familia or for allegiance to a particular neighborhood”\(^{54}\). Lastly, it is significant that the mural is not just any depiction of sacrifice, but a replication of a relief found in a ballcourt at El Tajin (figure 3). Its presence on the wall in the Estrada Courts complex, then, served to associate this contemporary setting with the ancient ruins, marking it as an Indigenous – or even sacred – space.

*Chicano Time Trip* also depicts a sacrifice scene, likely with similar iconographic implications. The priest in the center of the composition is holding a human heart, reaching toward the sky. This may, in a way, indicate the agency and power of the Chicano people, as Mayan rulers often adorned their palaces with images of sacrifice to legitimize their power. It could also be alluding, again, to the concept of sacrificing for one’s family, as it is the image of the modern Chicano family that concludes the sequence of panels. Notably, neither of these sacrifice scenes are at all graphic. They show no blood or dead bodies, denying the sensationalism commonly associated with human sacrifice in the media. It is clear that the symbolic meaning of the practice is the focus of these murals, not the act itself.

I would also like to suggest that the depiction of human sacrifice might have been an intentional refusal by the artists to deny any part of their heritage. While mainstream culture might have condemned these pre-Columbian practices, the purpose of much of the Chicano movement was to reclaim the culture that Anglo civilization had denied them, and to leave out elements of that culture for fear of the stigma would be counterproductive. Human sacrifice had been practiced by many cultures in all parts of the world, so utilizing sacrifice imagery for its spiritual and cultural symbolism need not be off-limits.

\(^{54}\) LaTorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California*. 155
Slightly more common – and strangely more violent – than images of human sacrifice in Chicano murals were images of the Spanish conquest. The Spanish arrival was crucial to Chicano political consciousness because it marked the beginning European colonialism in Mesoamerica and thus acted as a metaphor for the “internal colony” that they dealt with in the contemporary period. It also helped to historicize the struggles of the Chicano people by providing a different narrative than the one found in history books. While the Spanish arrival in the Americas was treated as a positive step in human progress by dominant historical narratives, the Chicano movement sought to reveal a different perspective of these events, emphasizing the genocidal aspect of the conquest. This was characteristic of the movement, which saw history as subjective, as it privileged the experience of the social elites. One of the most meaningful instances of conquest imagery can be found in Judith Baca’s *Great Wall of Los Angeles* which is nearly half a mile long and located in the Tujunga Wash drainage canal near Valley College, and whose purpose was to provide a kind of counterhistory that included the indigenous past and marginalized minorities whose stories were not often told. The mural illustrates the history of California, beginning not with the arrival of the Europeans, but with the indigenous communities that existed prior, namely the Chumash Native American tribe (figure 16). The depiction of the Spanish arrival is fairly tame in this instance, as the interaction that occurred in California was not as violent as the events in Mesoamerica, but it is also accompanied by an image of the San Fernando Mission (figure 17). The mission, founded in 1797, came to be known to the indigenous people as the “House of Death” due to the large numbers of them who were

---

55 LaTorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California*. 20
56 LaTorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California*. 195
destroyed by disease brought by the foreigners, giving some indication that colonialism was not a positive force in this narrative.

A more dramatic and violent view of the Spanish conquistadors can be found in *Chicano Time Trip*. It appears in the panel that immediately follows the aforementioned Pre-Columbian scene (figure 13). Though the scene is a small element of the panel, only occupying the bottom left corner, it makes a dramatic statement. It shows an Aztec pyramid, likely the Temple of the Sun in Teotihuacan, from the top of which come dark plumes of smoke. In front of this structure can be seen small figures: Spaniards atop horses, striking down Aztec men. In the foreground is a Spanish man in full armor and helmet pointed toward the pyramid, as if commanding an attack. This figure can tentatively be identified as Hernan Cortes. The way the scene is organized clearly denotes the Spanish as the aggressors.

A similar scene is found in *Historical Mural* by Toltecas en Aztlan, coincidentally also located in the bottom left corner of the mural (see figure 9). Here, however, the Spanish conquistadors have been personified by *calaveras* or skeletons, in the style of Mexican printmaker Jose Guadalupe Posada, who is often credited as an influence of Chicano artists nearly as much so as the Tres Grandes. These skeletons can be identified as Spanish soldiers by their iconic metal helmets. The stand surrounded by flames, holding various swords and spears as well as a cross, indicating their religious motivations as well as their future cultural domination. The choice to represent them as skeleton may well have been an homage to Posada, who was well known for his use of the *calaveras* to create social satire, often depicting the upper class. This gives the image an underlying tone of social critique while also illustrating an important historical event. While most of the images in *Historical Mural* are positive,

---

57 The Social and Public Art Resource Center, “About the Great Wall of Los Angeles”, 1
highlighting indigenous consciousness and inspirational figures, the image of the conquistadors grounds the work firmly in a narrative of struggle against oppression.

Another theme in Pre-Columbian imagery was the depiction of Aztec or Mayan deities. The most common among these was likely Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent. The feathered serpent varied in name and appearance, but among Chicano artists he is almost exclusively called by his Nahuatl name, Quetzalcoatl, and most depictions of this Mesoamerican god in Chicano murals resemble the stone heads that decorate the Temple of the Feathered Serpent at Teotihuacan. Besides merely being emblematic of pre-Columbian cultures, Quetzalcoatl had specific associations that account for his frequent use in Chicano murals. First, he played a critical role in the Aztec creation myth. It seems logical that the creation of a new “nation”, or new nationalist consciousness, would embrace an image that connoted creation. Even more specifically, Quetzacoatl was associated in Mesoamerican mythology with city-building. Much of the Chicano movement, and especially the creation of murals, took place within an urban setting, so this made the image even more fitting. Quetzalcoatl appears in *Chicano Time Trip* underneath the foot of the Mayan priest, and is also, unsurprisingly, a central element in *Quetzalcoatl* located in Chicano Park, where he has been given a long, serpent body (figure 6).

Representations of ancient Mesoamerican architecture are also found in many Chicano murals, and have a very important symbolic function. More than just providing a backdrop for other pre-Columbian forms, like warriors or deities, images of ancient pyramids and cities can do two very important things: first, they help designate their environment as an indigenous zone, contrasting against the modern buildings whose walls they occupy, helping to create a new Aztlan. Second, they serve as a reminder of the sophistication of the ancient civilizations from which Chicanas/os descended. While Indigenous cultures are often considered primitive and
associated with nomadic lifestyles and temporary shelters, the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica had complex urban centers, like Tenochtitlan, Teotihuacan, and Palenque. While this is not to devalue nomadic cultures, images of the great pre-Columbian cities were an appropriate contestation of the “savage” image of the Indian, as they were not unlike the classic urban centers in Europe like Rome and Constantinople. This kind of imagery can be seen in the Indigeno panel of Chicano Time Trip, and in the center of Historical Mural. Also, though this is not an instance of muralism, I would also like to mention that there is a structure in Chicano Park that is built to resemble pre-Columbian architecture. This structure, in conjunction with the many murals that surround it, gives an indigenous quality to the park as a whole, and provide contrast to its modern, urban location underneath a freeway overpass. A representation of the park, highlighting the pre-Columbian-style monument as well as the freeway, is pictured in Quetzalcoatl alongside other indigenist imagery (see figure 7), suggesting an almost spiritual significance to the space.

Sometimes, instead of adopting the content of pre-Columbian art, Chicano artists would instead adopt the visual style of Mesoamerican reliefs. Some of the implications of this were seen in the examination of Charles Felix’s Sacrifice Wall, but other artists used the graphic style of the reliefs and glyphs in even more innovative ways. This can be seen, for example, in Yreina Cervantez’s La Ofrenda, located in downtown Los Angeles under the 1st street bridge (figure 5). The mural is a tribute to United Farm Workers co-founder and Vice-president Dolores Huerta and deals mostly with issues of labor and immigration. However, Cervantez still utilizes a considerable amount of indigenist imagery to communicate her message. Behind the portrait of Huerta are several figures that present the appearance of pre-Columbian pictographs, but instead of representing mythical figures they depict modern Chicano workers. In this glyphic mode,

---

58 The park is located under the bridge to Coronado Island.
Cervantez represents some of the most common careers for lower class Chicanas/os: an orange vendor, a seamstress in a sweatshop, a maid, an ice cream man, and a farm laborer. By depicting these roles, Cervantez calls attention to people who are often invisible in society, and not only calls attention to them but does so in an Indigenous context, memorializing them as if they were pre-Columbian deities or rulers. By invoking the visual style of pre-Columbian art, the mural becomes a tool that not only transforms the area around it, likening it to the ancient cities of the Aztec and Maya, but also transforms the viewer’s perception of the figures it portrays. *La Ofrenda* also features a poem by Chicana writer Gloria Enedina Alvarez, titled “Vende Futuro”, which discusses the plight of farmworkers, but is worded in a way so as to emulate the *Popol Vuh*, the ancient Mayan text that tells their creation story. The text and image together serve to “trace the current migrations of undocumented workers and immigrants to mythical beginnings”\(^ {59} \).

**AZTLAN OUTSIDE THE SOUTHWEST**

Despite Aztlan’s location in the Southwestern region of the United States, the nationalist identity that adopted its name was not limited to the Southwest and indeed is found in all parts of the United States. Luis Leal writes that “as a Chicano symbol, Aztlan has two meanings: first, it represents the geographic region known as the Southwestern United States… second, and more important, Aztlan symbolized the spiritual union of the Chicanos, something that is carried within the heart, no matter where they may live or where they may find themselves.”\(^ {60} \) This seems to be true not only of the concept of Aztlan but of artistic inclinations toward indigenism as well. There are Chicano murals in most major cities in the United States, and, like those in Los Angeles, many use pre-Columbian imagery to communicate the political consciousness of *el

---

\(^ {59} \) LaTorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/a Murals of California*. 198

\(^ {60} \) Leal, “In Search of Aztlan,” 8
This can be seen in two murals found in Seattle, Washington, far from the mythic cradle of Mexican civilization. Somos Aztlan by Emilio Aguayo (figure 18), was created in 1971, making it the first Chicano mural in the Northwest, and is located in the Ethnic Cultural Center at the University of Washington. The bottom left portion of the mural shows a map of the American Southwest, across which reads the mural’s title “SOMOS AZTLAN” or, literally, “We are Aztlan”. This is the message that was first articulated in “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan” in 1969. Though the map designates the geographical location of Aztlan in the Southwest, the slogan seems to imply that Chicanos of Washington State are no less a part of the Chicano nation. The mural also features the flag of the United Farm Workers, which, it should be mentioned, includes an emblem of an eagle because of Aztec mythology. It is also in this mural that I first encountered the tripartite head, which appears on the right side of the mural.

Daniel Desiga’s mural Explosion of Chicano Creativity (figure 19), located at El Centro de la Raza in Seattle, also uses pre-Columbian imagery, including the face of a pre-Columbian warrior and representations of Mesoamerican pyramids. The face of the warrior, recognizable by a decorated helmet, is the largest element of the mural. It uses the architecture of the building, turning two small windows near the ceiling into the eyes of the figure. The purpose of this is unclear, but may be made a little clearer by looking again to Aguayo’s work. In Somos Aztlan, there is a representation of the sun in the top right, labeled “LA CAUSA”, whose rays come down diagonally, illuminating the rest of the images. According to Aguayo himself, “The sun symbolizes the dawn of our self-awareness, the revolution in the mind we so desperately need.”

The window-eyes in “Explosion” may serve a similar purpose, as the image of the warrior effectively illuminates the space inside the building, possibly suggesting the power of the

---

Chicano movement, and the pre-Columbian past, to enlighten Washington’s Chicano population. The pyramids are smaller, but help to ground the mural in Chicano context by recalling the great civilizations of Mesoamerica. While using these emblems of nationalist consciousness, Desiga’s work is also visually specific to the Chicano experience in the Northwest. His own origin in rural Eastern Washington inspired his depiction of farmworkers in “Explosion”, and the background of the composition also features an image of Mount Rainier. While Chicano artists in the Northwest shared in the sense of belonging to Aztlan, they were still a distinct community with different experiences than Chicanos in, say, Los Angeles.

EFFICACY OF MURALS AS SOCIAL TOOLS

As with most cases of cultural appropriation, critics argue as to whether the reclamation of pre-Columbian culture and imagery creates a real connection to the past or merely a superficial, romanticized one. The use of Indigenous images was clearly a major preoccupation of most Chicano artists, but what purpose did it serve? Genaro Padilla grapples with these issues in his article “Myth and Comparative Cultural Nationalism”, where he asks

“What happens when political activists mandate the work of the “guardians of culture”? When does myth become shrill propaganda? At what point should the past be challenged for its lies and deceit rather than idealized and accorded heroic dimensions for political purposes?”

These are important issues to consider when looking at an instance of cultural nationalism that was so reliant on reclamation of the mythic past. However, I would like to argue that the manner in which the Chicano movement, and muralists in particular, used the past was, if not precisely representative of their history as it was, truly invaluable in accomplishing the movement’s goals. It is evident that the muralists made little effort to distinguish between the pre-Columbian cultures they appropriated imagery from, mixing images from Olmec, Aztec,
Mixtec and Mayan cultures. However, the more important function of these images was to make visible a set of images and values that were distinct from Anglo culture and forced assimilation. Even Padilla, in his article, writes that “these symbols of [the] relationship to Mexico as motherland, usually imagined in idealized rhetoric, provided a matrix of cultural identity that strengthened resistance against Anglo domination in this country”63. Like nationalism itself, the pre-Columbian past was a concept with the power to unite a heterogeneous population by evoking a shared heritage, if an idealized one, and the two most powerful evocations of that past were by the naming of the movement, specifically it’s identification as “Aztlan”, and the production of murals using pre-Columbian imagery. Rudolfo Anaya cites the importance of artistic expression to the movement as a whole, writing that “the release of creative energy in which the artists defined self and community was the hallmark of the movement…one cannot deny the benefits of reinvigorated pride, especially in artistic creativity, which swept across the land.”64

The value of these murals can be seen not only in their symbolic function, but also in the way that their production had a concrete impact on communities. Wayne Healey, one of the artists behind “Chicano Time Trip” said of the mural movement, “Some of us made wild claims that murals would be the cure-all for political impotence, the inability to sell Chicano in the mainstream, and gang violence. After celebrating our fifteenth anniversary in June 1990, we, the East Los Angeles Streetscapers, note that two Chicanos sit on the Los Angeles City Council (and both vying for Mayor), Westside and worldwide galleries seek our work…”65 While it is difficult to firmly attribute political changes to the work of the muralists, the Chicano muralist movement has certainly changed the art world for Chicanos, gaining them recognition in galleries and

63 Padilla, “Myth and Comparative Cultural Nationalism: The Ideological Uses of Aztlan,” 126
64 Anaya, “Aztlan: A Homeland Without Boundaries,” 240
65 Yarbro-Bejarano, Index of Artists in Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 350
museums, and has visibly changed the urban settings in which many Chicanos live. One of the most important functions performed by the murals is that they provide an image of the Chicano identity that is entirely different from negative images of ethnic Mexicans often found in the media. Young Chicanas/os growing up in the barrio are provided with images of their race that are affirmative and empowering and recall a history that goes beyond the European arrival in America.

In her essay “The Art of the Mural”, muralist Judith Baca writes:

The beginnings of muralism in Los Angeles are rooted in the need for public space and public expression. In a city where neighborhoods were uprooted through corporatization (as with the Chavez Ravine sports stadium) or the construction of freeways through low-income barrios or ghettos, or the destruction of rivers, the need to create sites of public memory became increasingly important.66

This concept of the mural as “site of memory” further articulates why pre-Columbian images were so common in Chicano murals. After years of having their heritage repressed (by both internal and external forces) it was crucial that Chicanas/os reclaim their past in a way that was both public and (theoretically) permanent. However, given the multiple levels on which many pre-Columbian images functioned, the murals were not just “sites of memory” because they reclaimed and preserved the distant past (though this was an important component of their use). The images were also used to convey the identity and concerns of modern Chicanas/os as they struggled for social change. The mark that murals allowed them to leave on their environment (which, as Baca points out, they often did not have control over) was representative not of indigenous Meso- and North American cultures, but of the indigenist consciousness of Chicano culture. Pre-Columbian imagery communicated both the past and the present of the

66 Baca, “The Art of the Mural”, 1
Chicano nation, and gave provided them with visible reminders that they could look to in the future.
Figure 1: *Dreams of Flight* by David Botello (1973-78)
Figure 2: *Sacrifice Wall* by Charles Felix (1973)
Figure 3: Wall relief from ballcourt at El Tajín, Veracruz, Mexico. 
image: Thomas Aleto
Figure 4: To Ace Out a Homeboy by Manuel Cruz (1974)
image: Judith Baca
Figure 5: *La Ofrenda* by Dolores Huerta (1988-89)
Figure 6: *Quetzalcoatl* by Guillermo Aranda, Salvador Barajas, José Cervantes, Sammy Llamas, Bebe Llamas, Victor Ochoa, Ernest Paul, Arturo Roman, Guillermo Rosete, Mario Torero, Salvador Torres (1973, renovated 1987)
Figure 7: Quetzalcoatl, detail of Chicano Park
Figure 8: Historical Mural by Toltecas en Aztlan (1973)
Figure 9: Historical Mural, detail

Figure 10: Historical Mural, detail
Figure 11: *Chicano Time Trip* by East Los Streetscapers (David Botello and Wayne Healey) (1977) image: http://www.flickr.com/photos/ikkoskinen/353335167/
Figure 12: Chicano Time Trip, Indigeno panel
Figure 13: *Chicano Time Trip*, detail
Figure 14: Mural de Medicina by Francisco Eppens
image: madaboutthemural.wordpress.com
Figure 15: example of Chicano tripartite head, from untitled mural in San Diego’s Chicano Park
Figure 16: *Great Wall of Los Angeles* by Judith Baca (Early California detail)
Figure 17: Great Wall of Los Angeles (Mission detail)
Figure 18: Somos Aztlan by Emilio Aguayo
image: University of Washington
Figure 19: Explosion of Chicano Creativity by Daniel Desiga
image: University of Washington
Bibliography


http://www.pbs.org/americanfamily/mural.html

Barnet-Sanchez, Holly and Eva Cockcroft. Introduction to *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*. (University of New Mexico Press, 1993) 5-21


Goldman, Shifra “How, Why, and When It All Happened: Chicano Murals of California” in Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals. (University of New Mexico Press, 1993) 22-53


LaWare, Margaret. “Encountering Visions of Aztlan: Arguments for Ethnic Pride, Community Activism and Cultural Revitalization in Chicano Murals” Argumentation and Advocacy, 1998. 140-153


Mesa-Bains, Amalia “Quest for Identity: Profile of Two Chicana Muralists based on Interviews with Judith F. Baca and Patricia Rodriguez” in Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals. (University of New Mexico Press, 1993) 68-83


Reed, T.V. The art of protest : culture and activism from the civil rights movement to the streets of Seattle. University of Minnesota Press, 2005


Sanchez-Tranquilino, Marcos. “Murales del Movimiento: Chicano Murals and Discourses of Art and Americanization” in Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals. (University of New Mexico Press, 1993) 84-101

Tartan, James. “Los Four” DVD. UCLA Chicano Studies Resource Center, 1974


Treguer, Annick. “Chicanos Paint Their Way Back” The Unesco Courier, March 1999: 14-16


Ybarra-Frausto, Tomas “Arte Chicano: Images of a Community” in Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals. (University of New Mexico Press, 1993) 54-67