

Movimiento Art

Chicano Public Art in the 1970's



Frank Hinoja. *Chicanismo*, mural executed with student assistants, acrylic, auditorium, Northwest Rural Opportunities, Pasco, WA., 1975, 8 x 15 ft. Photographed by Bob Haft.

A visual dictionary of Chicano art, this mural presents a survey of Movimiento iconography through the inclusion of Chicano racial, political and cultural symbols. Produced with local high school students assisting the artist, it is an important public work rich in cultural content.

The largest proportion of Chicano murals in the Northwest are located in social services agencies which include Northwest Rural Opportunities, El Centro de la Raza and educational institutions. Major mural and poster production centers were El Centro de la Raza, and the University of Washington, in Seattle, and Colegio César Chávez, Mt. Angel, Oregon. All Chicano murals in the Pacific Northwest except three are indoors.

The art of the *Movimiento* has yet to become a recognized and visible part of Pacific Northwest art history. Addressed to the needs of a struggling minority community, rather than to the mainstream art world, Northwest Chicano art was shaped by goals and approaches that transcended regional boundaries. Ideas and stimulation came, directly or indirectly, from many sources: pre-Columbian art; vernacular art forms; the revolutionary art of Mexico, Cuba, and Latin America; the Third World art of the 1960's; the socially concerned art of Posada, Goya, Kollwitz, Shahn, and others.

The artists of the *Movimiento* saw themselves as cultural workers and partisans in the struggles of *la raza*. They produced public, community-based works which were addressed to immediate events or served as statements affirming the solidarity, cultural heritage, and shared aspirations of the community.

Northwest *Movimiento* art emerged and declined within a short period of time in response to far-reaching social and economic changes affecting Chicano artists and the communities they served. The social art of the 1970's was produced by artists with widely differing backgrounds—seasoned artists, self-trained artists, university students, and public school children working under the guidance of artist-teachers. This accounts for the variation in sophistication and technical skill reflected in Northwest *Movimiento* art. A shared commitment to communal art gave rise to vital and



Pedro Rodríguez, *El Saber Es La Libertad*, (detail), mural, lobby, Northwest Rural Opportunities, Granger, Wa., 1976, 8 x 11 ft. Commissioned by the Washington State Arts Commission and the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Photographed by Bob Haft.

Rodríguez's mural presents a symbol that appears frequently in movimiento art: the three-faced mestizo image symbolizes the fusion of the Spaniard and the Indian into the central figure of the Chicano.

Texas-born Pedro Rodríguez, came to the Pacific Northwest from New Mexico in 1973. He remained in the region for eight years, teaching in the art department and directing the Chicano studies program at Washington State University. He left Pullman in 1981, returning to Texas where he currently directs the Guadalupe Community Center in San Antonio. An influential teacher, Rodríguez' was successful in attracting a number of exceptional young Southwestern Chicano artists into the MFA program.

relevant expression of social art that documents an important epoch in the history of this region.

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Daniel Desiga, *Educate Sí Se Puede*, silkscreen poster, Colegio César Chávez, Mt. Angel, Oregon, 1976, 12 x 18 in.

Sí Se Puede! (It Can Be Done!) is derived from the famous rallying slogans of the farmworkers, led by César Chávez in the 1960's.

The hand-printed poster, rich in color, presents the educational philosophy of the Colegio Cesar chavez, an independent experimental Chicano college in Mt. Angel, Oregon. This is one of many silkscreen posters produced by Desiga and his students (later called the Tortuga Art Collective) produced at the Colegio in the 1970's.