

PROGRESS IN PROCESS

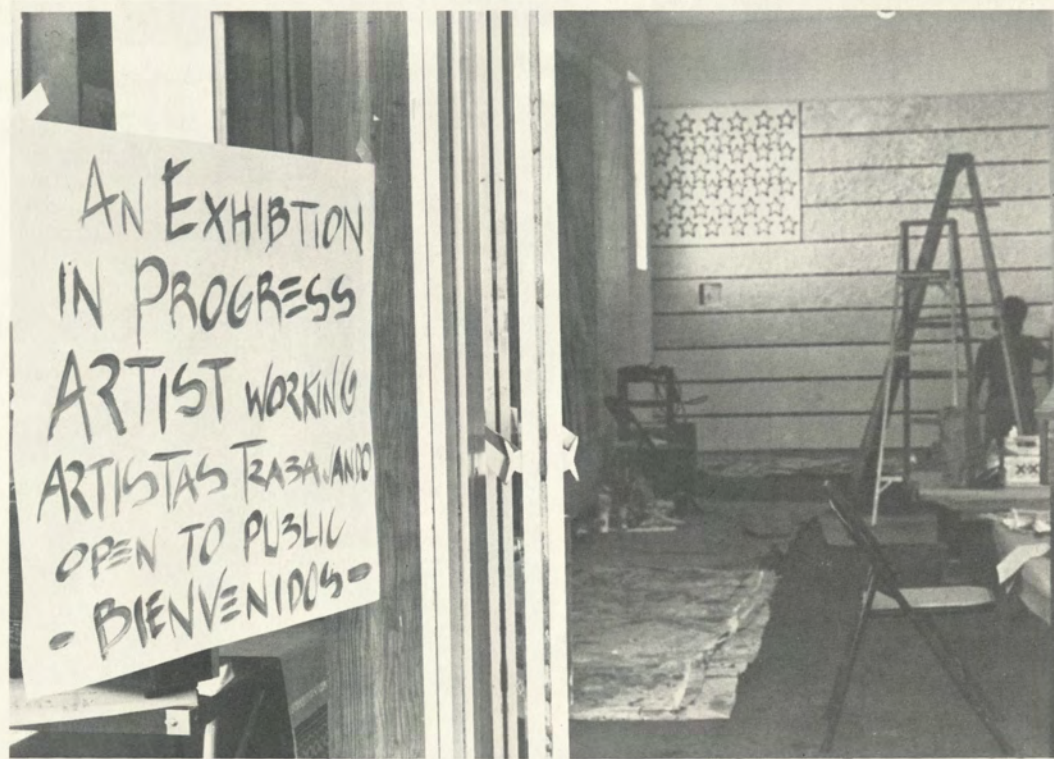
by Tim Drescher

A catalogue of the exhibition *In Progress*
Twenty artists creating artworks in an open studio setting on the walls of
THE GALERIA DE LA RAZA/STUDIO 24

May 4 through June 12, 1982



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Twenty artists creating artworks in an open studio setting on the walls of
THE GALERIA DE LA RAZA/STUDIO 24

May 4 through June 12, 1982

Miranda Bergman
Tony Chavez
Juan Fuentes
Daniel Galvez
Rayvan Gonzales
Nancy Hom
K.O.
Lisa Kokin
Yolanda Lopez
Raul Martinez
Regina Mouton
Emmanuel Montoya
Jane Norling
Ray Patlan
Michael Rios
Patricia Rodriguez
Spain Rodriguez
Herbert Siguenza
Xavier Viramontes
Rene Yañez



Yolanda M. Lopez

Working late at night.

Acknowledgements

This show could not have transpired without the dedicated efforts of many people. Among them are Kate Connell, María Pinedo and Ralph Maradiaga of the Galería de la Raza/Studio 24 staff.

The sound system and refreshments for the opening dedication ceremonies were provided by Angelo Padilla of the York Meat Market and Priciliano Galan of the Galan Bar and President of the 24th Street Merchants' Association.

Music was provided by "Alma del Barrio," a musical group made up of local musicians. One of the musicians is muralist/musician Mike Rios, a participant in the gallery show.

The exquisite hand-lettered signs listing the title and artist of each piece were done by Nancy Hom.

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T.W.D. June, 1982



Regina Mouton

Yolanda M. Lopez

The Process

Throughout the month of May, 1982, an extraordinary event happened at the Galería de la Raza in San Francisco. It was a show titled *In Progress* where the public had free access to some twenty artists as they created sixteen works in the Galería space. The Galería's doors were open from noon until six o'clock or later everyday, and passers by, friends, other artists; everyone was free to come in and look and talk with the artists as they worked. An opening was held on Saturday, May 29, to celebrate the completion of the first stage of the show, but people who visited only on that day saw but a small part of the show which had been designed to give community members a chance to experience the works while they were in progress.

The artists got a rare opportunity to talk with each other while they worked, to watch others' techniques and ask about the properties of unfamiliar paints, new problems with perspective and general concepts of their work. And while they learned from each other and continued their own works, people dropped in on a daily basis and listened and talked, and discussed, and made suggestions—in short got the even rarer chance to “be there” while artists were working.

Of the hundreds of people who visited the Galería during May, some were quiet and some talkative. Some made suggestions, asked questions, wanted explanations, while others made critical judgments or were tight lipped. The majority understood that the show's strength lies in its bringing diverse views together, a healthy example of mutual respect for different perceptions about art and about the several worlds surrounding it and always affecting it—from the Mission District in San Francisco to the furthest tip of South America.

Now that the creative part of the process has ended, what remains is for the finished works to be seen and responded to. Since the artworks represent a variety of viewpoints, an even wider variety of responses is to be expected. *In Progress* contains a remarkable combination of unity and diversity. To be sure, there are concerns that run through several of the works, but there is no single theme for the show. And even the works with similar ideas present differing articulations to us. Just as San Francisco embodies many different styles within a single city, so *In Progress* contains a variety of artistic expressions, and in this way it typifies the course of the city's vitality. Too often art galleries confuse sameness with unity. *In Progress* proclaims a true unity of social, cultural and artistic spirit embodied in sixteen separate expressions. *In Progress*, now in its final stage, draws to a close, but the process it celebrates continues.

The incorporation of process into *In Progress* sets this show apart from any other. When visitors talked, the artists listened, especially those who had experiences in painting community murals (ten of the twenty artists). When questions about what attracted them to

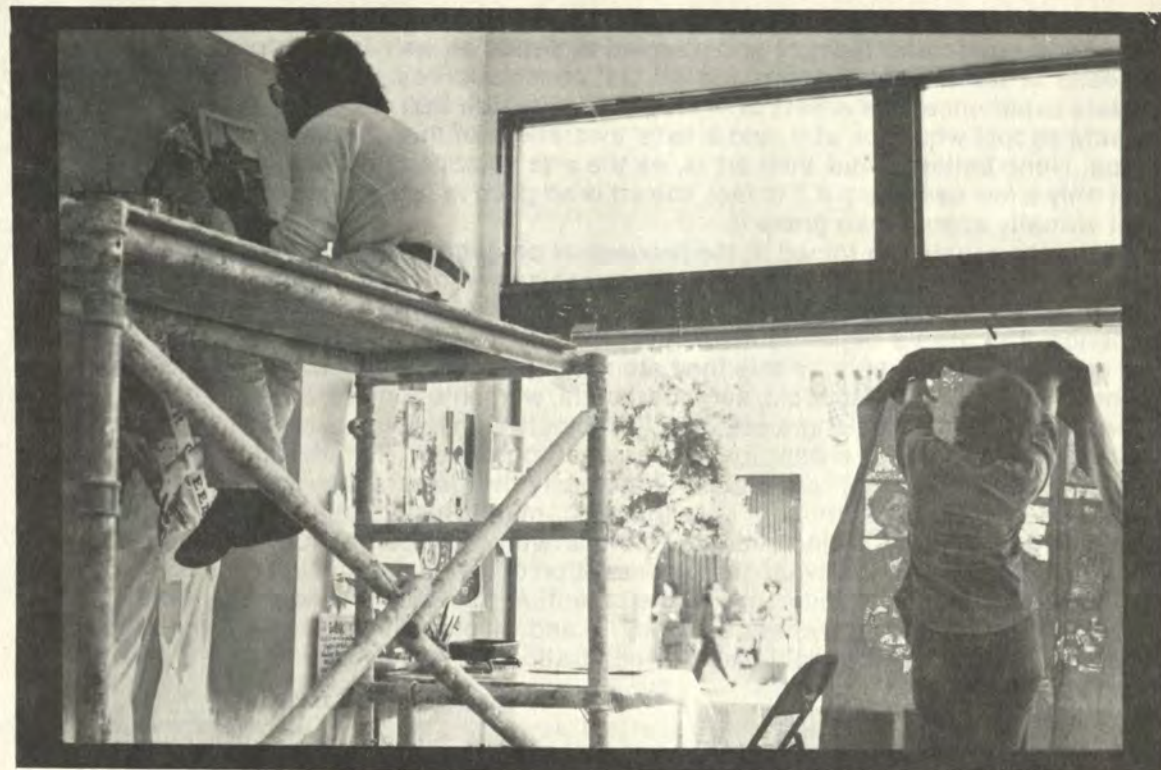
participate in the show, the artists agreed that the opportunities to watch each other work and to allow community access to the process were crucial. For some, such as Rayvan Gonzáles, the community presence generated a "high energy level." "Usually," he says, "I work alone." Lisa Kokin had a similar response, pointing out that as a batik artist she does not feel responsible to anyone but herself until a work is finished, and she was apprehensive about working in public. Her doubts, however, were quieted once the work began. In fact, by the end of the show all of the artists felt that the experience was so positive they hoped it would happen again. Ray Patlán even suggested that everyone involved with the show do a collective mural for their next piece.

The sort of spirit that characterized the show can be suggested by examples, but no one who was not there frequently over the month of its process can really appreciate the show's main event. For Miranda Bergman and Jane Norling, who had worked together previously as members of the Haight Ashbury Muralists, the show offered a chance to work together again after several years of working apart. They viewed the painting they did with Tony Chávez as an experiment at integrating styles and learning how to accomplish a joint expression where everyone is satisfied. Clearly, the experiment was successful, but at one point they ran into a problem with perspective in the upper portions of the painting, and Spain Rodríguez, working across the room, talked it over with them and made some suggestions. The suggestions worked. This is just one example of artists with particular expertise helping others, but to appreciate the full impact of each instance of support you had to be there. Such support included ideas about how to use paints some artists were unfamiliar with, but were using because they were provided for free by the Galería, technical details, and in other ways as well.

One Saturday early in May, Juan Fuentes, whose normal artistic medium is drawing, said, "I was ready to give up. I wasn't satisfied with the way it was coming out. I was trying to manipulate the painting medium. Then I took a break, talked with Mike Rios, who said to me 'get loose, put yourself into it.' Miranda and everyone, Emmanuel and people gave me a lot of ideas, to approach it the way I know how to work—bolder. So. The drawing was light. I went in with a black brush, 'drew' the drawing with a brush, which helped. Then I knew what I wanted to do, and what direction I needed to go with it." Interestingly, Juan and Mike had the most serious disagreement during the artists' critique before the show began, a debate which lasted nearly half an hour. But the spirit of the show, and of its artists, is that it allowed for differences and in fact encouraged diversity and support because of the respect the artists have for one another. This respect was nowhere better demonstrated than in the artists' critique.

The artists' critique was held during a planning meeting on April 21, and for some was the most important single event during the show because it offered a chance to discuss the proposed sketches, to criticize and be criticized among peers. These artists, all professionals, had not had such an opportunity since art school, and the insights into the designs were several. It was at the critique, for example, that Emmanuel Montoya began seriously thinking about changing a white background to sepia, that Juan Fuentes began deciding not to put a soldier in the background, that K.O. began questioning whether her original idea, a San Francisco Giants baseball card with Fidel Castro pitching, should be used, and that everyone began to sense how special, indeed how extraordinary an experience this show was becoming.

The person most responsible for this show and for its wonderful process is René Yañéz, Director of the Galería/Studio 24 and a conceptual artist in his own right. Yañéz's piece captures the process superbly, and even became a part of the process. He shot Polaroid photographs during the entire process and then arranged them on a panel as part of the show. Thus, photographs of the process of the show became incorporated into the show.



Daniel Galvez and Lisa Kokin

This idea will someday be "borrowed" and proclaimed as new and original, but the point here is that as one part of a larger whole it attests to the complexity of *In Progress*. Yañéz's piece eliminates the artificial separation between Subject and Object, so cherished as a pillar of bourgeois art history. There is simply no separation here between the artist(s) and the product(s). *In Progress* replaces the expected distance between artworks and their creators and viewers with an integrated, energetic, positive and diverse group of expressions. The Polaroids making up Yañéz's piece capture the process: Nancy Hom's main figure is shown with and without head, Michael Rios is shown with hands covered with paints and chinks, a discussion among Jane, Miranda and Tony, different stages of dye used by Lisa Kokin in her batik, and so on. A roll of red borderline tape is left hanging at the bottom of Yañéz's piece to indicate that the process continues. The show *is* its process. The artworks are merely archaeological remnants.

A double interaction operated in the show in which artists worked with each other and the public at the same time. The process of creation was individual and social. Artists wrestled with their problems, struggled with how to bring their ideas to life on the panels. This they did both alone and together (socially). They could turn to one another and discuss whatever was on their minds. The conversations might last moments, minutes, or be prolonged through dinner or a late night beer. They could include a passerby who hap-

pened to be standing nearby when the painter turned from the work frowning. The artists worked in public and thought and planned in public as well as privately. In this way the process of the show proclaims the artists' consciousness that their art is not solely a private experience. The artists of *In Progress* all realize that once an artwork is finished, it affects people who look at it, and artists' awareness of this affects their execution of the piece. None believes that their art is, as the arts establishment would have it, "so good that only a few can grasp it." In fact, the art is so good in technical quality and conception that virtually anyone can grasp it.

Since the artists are joined in the process of production by their peers and neighbors, and in the rewards gained from altering a space and enjoying both the process of altering it and the final product itself, *In Progress*, captures a uniquely non-alienated artistic experience. The artists objectify themselves and their communities in the works, but they are not cut off from them. In this they are much like U.S. community muralists who have painted in union halls, schools, neighborhoods, women's centers, etc. for the past fifteen years. They are not seeking a profoundly subjective, individual expression in which content dissolves in direct proportion to the assertion of self. The artists of *In Progress* are Subjects controlling their art and simultaneously the Objects they paint. Admission that the process occurs in a group of determinate contexts, including a social one, unifies the Subjects and Objects, giving strength to the artworks and pertinence to their community. This unity challenges the avant-garde conception of the paramount importance of the subjective element and insignificance of the object. At the Galeria in May, the two were one: together they clashed and emitted sparks . . . and vision. *In Progress'* diversity appears to everyone, but its unity should also stir admiration, for in this rare case, the two are inseparable.



Yolanda M. Lopez



Emmanuel Montoya

Yolanda M. Lopez

Support

How was this show supported? The artists supported each other by sharing technical information and emotional encouragement, and by not being paid for their efforts (after two years the pieces revert to the individual artists). Cecilia Brunazzi and Dan Hubig were paid only minimally for their design of the show's poster which also became a part of the show's process and captures the spirit that kept it moving. The process was successful because of the enthusiasm of both participants and visitors. Emmanuel Montoya summed this up at the opening when he pointed out that the support demonstrated in the crowd at the opening was both the reason for the show and the basis of the continued existence of the Galería/Studio 24. He said that even though artists and curators had worked hard to put the show on, it was nevertheless the community interaction that made it rewarding and gave it its strength.

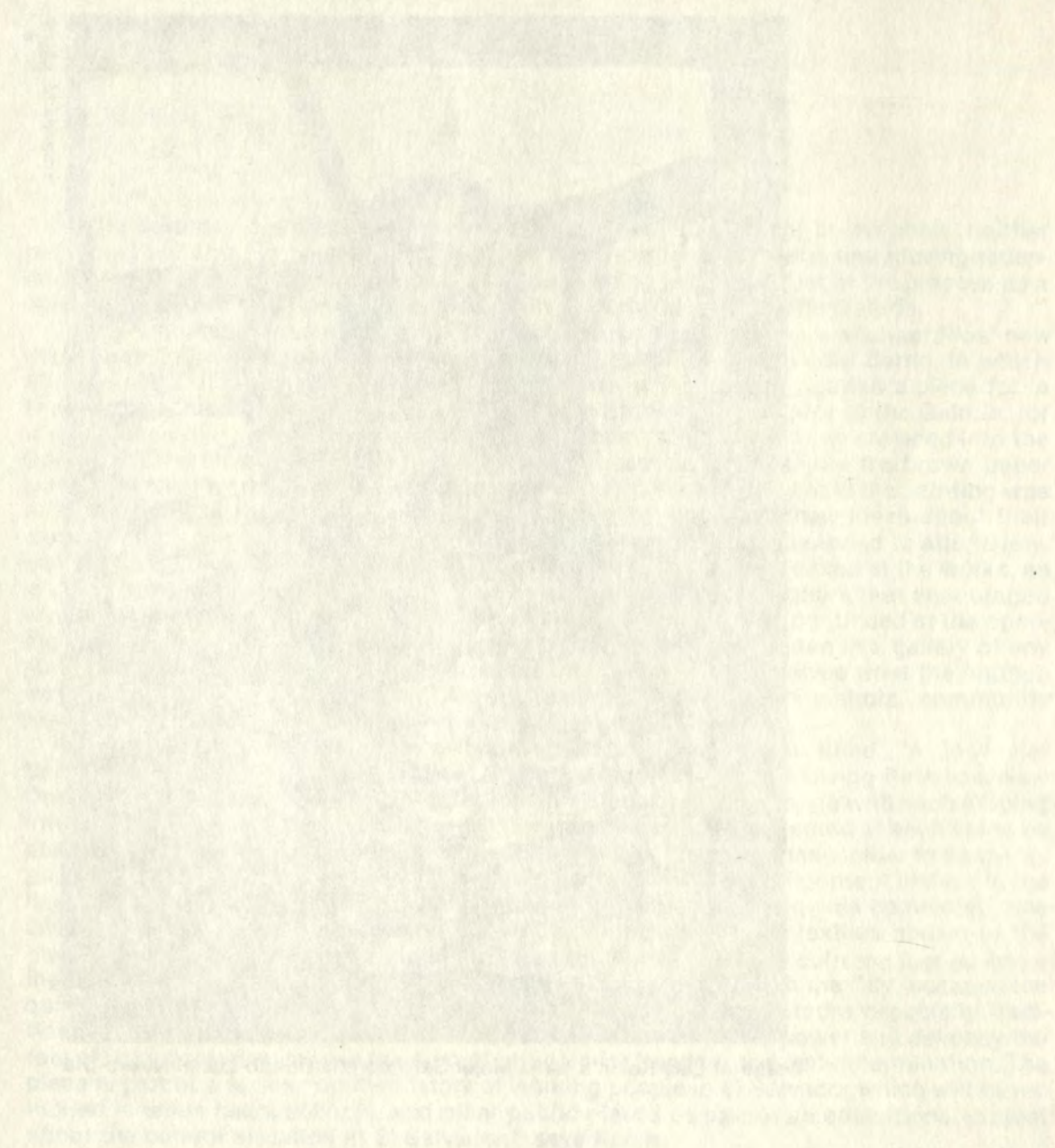
The atmosphere of mutual support that had grown through April's planning meetings and May's production culminated in the efforts expended at the opening. People who passed by the Galería late on the Friday night before the opening saw that after completing their works the artists stayed to vacuum and shampoo the Galería carpet. Early Saturday morning they returned for the dedication ceremonies bringing cookies and cakes baked for the occasion. These same artists cleaned up Saturday evening after the celebration. Even without funding, the two dozen people involved with the show were able to create something much more important and exciting than sixteen artworks. They created a closer bond between community and artists and a more complex artistic whole than any single work can hope to achieve. From conception to cleanup, everyone worked together and the impact extends far beyond the cloth and acrylic and oil and plaster in the artworks.

The \$1,000 spent for the show's materials, poster printing, and very little else, came out of people's pockets and two months' Xerox income-payments for the copier in Studio 24. Nor were other foundations supportive of this communal effort. Previously supportive foundations appeared to think of the project as "entertainment, not art," and others indicated that a purer individualism was back "in" now, not a show where people work together and are open to the public's learning processes of artistic production. A change in foundation policy would certainly benefit the population of San Francisco. Still, those who saw the project grow and take shape at the Galería were not defeated by such problems. In fact, when asked who would be most affected by the show, one artist, tongue only slightly in cheek, answered "The foundations—when this idea gets stolen and they realize they blew a chance to recognize an historic moment in world art."

To cite one recent magazine discussion of this issue, Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, in the April 1982 issue of *Art in America*, refer to critic Suzi Gablik's articulation of the accepted "wisdom" in today's establishment art world. The belief, they say, is "that a genuine avant-garde is a 'small, conscious elite' and that its strength lies in its alienation from everything else in society." *In Progress* belies that ethnocentrism by refusing to be cut off from the community's energy, respect, understanding and support.

Another problem in the same vein was closer to home. When the Galería, as a part of the opening celebration of *In Progress*, applied for a sound permit for the dedication ceremony of Michael Rios' new mural in the nearby Minipark, San Francisco's Park and Recreation Department said that the Galería would have to pay. Pay to dedicate a bright new mural for children and other park users, for a project funded by the Office of Community Development through the San Francisco Mural Resource Center? For a ceremony celebrating what makes the Minipark everything it is? "Well," they responded, "we can lower the fee." Finally, after days of tension, anger, and despair at not being able to raise the money, the issue was resolved and the fee waived after a personal visit by René Yañez to Park and Rec headquarters, but it seemed that at least one part of the City bureaucracy did not support the project, even though the Mayor's Office was presenting a plaque to muralist Rios in recognition of his work. This hassle cast a cloud over the process for a while, but everyone kept working.

In a summary discussion of the show someone pointed out that there is an important distinction to be made between what the Galería had accomplished and a bureaucratic approach to public art. The bureaucratic approach decides what can or cannot be done by opposing anything which might displease someone. The result, with occasional exceptions, is mediocrity and unending dullness. The Galería and other community-based organizations promote freedom of expression. Sometimes the images do not succeed, but more often both artwork and audience gain from the spirit the artworks embody and the interaction between them and the audiences.





Yolanda M. Lopez

Detail of Lisa Kokin's "A la Mujer Salvadoreña/Dando Luz al Nuevo Día

The Pieces

So the Saturday opening at the end of May was only a midpoint in the show, neither beginning nor end. Some said that it was the most exciting, energetic and moving reception in nearly half a decade. In its own way, the opening joined the rest of the process as a celebration of the creation spirit embodied in the artworks inside the Galería.

The ceremonies began at one o'clock in the nearby Minipark where Michael Rios' new mural was dedicated above the sounds of a local salsa band, Alma del Barrio, in which Michael plays. It was indeed a special day for Rios, who also had painted a piece for *In Progress*. At three o'clock, everyone adjourned to Studio 24, next door to the Galería, for wine, guacamole and chips provided by local merchants. Then everyone crowded into the Galería for the unveilings. Reñé Yañéz introduced each artist, who tore the brown paper away from their work and made a brief speech about it. Some simply said the painting was to be enjoyed, or that it "speaks for itself," but most explained their ideas about their works. The pieces were greeted enthusiastically and each speech listened to attentively. During the following hours, people walked around the Galería and looked at the works, as is usual at openings, but *In Progress* had created a special atmosphere that encouraged visitors to engage in discussions with the artists, and that process continued at the opening. Some truly down-and-out residents who obviously had never been in a gallery of any sort before felt compelled (and safe) to come in and see for themselves what the hubbub was about—and were welcomed. Artists talking at length with visitors, community members not feeling intimidation—it was a truly unusual opening.

The first work unveiled was a batik made by Lisa Kokin titled "A la Mujer Salvadoreña/Dando Luz al Nuevo Día" (To the Salvadorean Woman/Giving Birth to a New Day). Batik is a dye process where the colors in a piece of fabric change with each dipping into a new color dye, while colors the artist wants to retain are protected at each stage by precise painting with wax that is impervious to the dye. It is a process similar to tie-dyeing, popular for tee shirts in the 1960s, but which reaches new levels of content impact in the hands of an artist like Kokin. After the detailed and complex dying was completed, she added texture by embroidering portions of figures' clothing and textiles shown in the piece, then added batting and quilted it. The techniques combine cultures just as showing the piece in San Francisco brings something of El Salvador into the City, because the quilting process is both typically a United States form and even more especially traditionally a women's form of art. The piece shows with remarkable power and delicacy the role of Salvadorean women in the current struggle for freedom and self-determination. The piece is part of a series "on the history of working people in El Salvador which will be exhibited in union halls, schools, and other public places as part of an educational project about the current situation in El Salvador," says Kokin.



Daniel Galvez's "Low Rider Queen" in progress



Daniel Galvez. "Low Rider Queen, Union City, CA." Oil.

Yolanda M. Lopez

The next piece to be unveiled was Daniel Galvéz's oil painting, "Low Rider Queen, Union City, CA." The piece became a great favorite of local male youth and others because of the subject matter and also because it could be seen easily from the street, being near the window. Galvéz had set a wedding and honeymoon date before he agreed to be in the show, so he had to paint quickly. It was part of the challenge that attracted him to the project. Several other artists also wanted to watch him paint in photorealist style. Many learned much from watching and talking with Galvéz, and perhaps their response is best summed up by Michael Rios' comment that "Somehow, Daniel gets soul into his painting in this style. It's not just copying." Galvéz worked from a photograph, and his piece is part of a series on low rider life, a fact which lessens the apparent sexism of the image as seen here. Some observers felt that the piece was offensive since it portrays a beauty queen, but one woman pointed out that the "Queen" is holding wilted flowers suggesting contrapunctally that the artist has incorporated a commentary on the real meaning of beauty contests. In any case, by working quickly Galvéz was able to finish according to his schedule; the need to do so forced him into discovering new techniques, taking short-cuts and chances, that "actually made it a better painting," he said. On his last day of work everyone gathered together, presented him with a cake, drank champagne, and sang



Sketch for Xavier Viramontes's untitled piece



Xavier Viramontes. Untitled. Oil.

Yolanda M. Lopez

Next to Galvéz painting is another, very different female figure, an untitled acrylic painting by Yolanda M. López showing a combination of the pre-Conquest Aztec goddess Coatlicue and the post-Conquest Virgen de Guadalupe. López shows us the goddess standing before the sun-ray background traditionally associated with la Virgen, who was not merely a religious figure, but virtually the patron saint of some Latino political struggles here (UFW-Chicanos) and in México. An example of the process of the show occurred in the third week when a member of a religious group which worships the Virgin of Guadalupe expressed strong opposition to the painting. López was not present at the time, but when the women reappeared three days later and raised her objections with the artist herself, they discussed the problem at length. Once she understood the image more thoroughly, the woman thought it beautiful, but suggested that explanatory material might be appropriate for some of the works, and in a meeting the week of the opening the artists agreed. Statements about the works appeared beside the front door of the Galería at the Saturday opening.

López comments that the historically later Virgen shares many characteristics with the earlier goddess, and that indigenous Mexicans did not have to alter their beliefs much to make the transition. After the encounter described above, López said that people should not think she is unaffected by painting the image. "I am emotionally involved with it, too," 16

she said. Combining the ancient with the colonial in the Galería de la Raza indicates that this complex multi-religious cultural expression can affect many of us today.

Next to López's painting was a stylized realistic oil painting by Xavier Viramontes commemorating the wedding of his cousins thirty years ago in Richmond, California. The painting simply shows the standing couple and was done from a wedding photograph. At the unveiling, Viramontes said it had been a happy moment and he wanted to capture it in his painting. At this point a voice from the crowd called out, "Are they still married?" and everyone laughed. Viramontes, who normally works as a printmaker, said that one reason he wanted to join the show was because he hadn't painted in several years. Half way through the process he said that it was "as hard as I remember."

Ray Patlán and Raúl Martínez originally began with a conception designed to capture the process of *In Progress*. The original title was to have duplicated that of the show, but the design took on a sort of motion, much like the community which inspired it as they painted, and since this suggested growth and the design was based on motion picture frames, they retitled the piece "Movie Tree." The scenes they painted, each framed as if in a frame of movie film showing local residents, movie stars, cultural figures in the Raza community, etc. were lightly colored to suggest a hand washed coloring process. The large number of figures and their small size make this painting unusual in the *In Progress* show. Curiously enough, Patlán has painted murals prolifically, yet decided here, with Martínez, to work in an extremely small scale. The piece is popular and in a way similar to Yañez's piece captures the process of the show. Included are the visit of poet-painter José Montoya from Sacramento, and two other portraits taken from photographs of a local man, one a Polaroid snapshot taken during the show and the other one of the man's own photos taken in 1943 when he was a soldier on Guadalcanal Island. The location of this painting in the middle of the wall breaks up the wall and reminds viewers to pause and consider the process that was the heart of the show and the relationships of the artworks and people that made it.

Another local theme is Spain Rodríguez's "Big Girls Don't Cry," acrylic in underground comix style. It depicts a woman of some indeterminate future, complete with knife, combat regalia, and . . . wings. While some visitors have criticized the exaggerated sexuality of the figure, others have pointed out that the strength of the figure dominates the physical exaggerations. Spain's response, like his image, is enigmatic. When asked what this woman-angel-urban fighter image means standing on Mission Street (a local main thoroughfare), he says simply that it is about the struggle in Eritrea.

To take one work out of order, this is a reasonable place to mention K.O.'s acrylic painting, "Mr. Continental's Dream," which although on the opposite side of the gallery is the other work (in addition to those of Spain, Patlán and Martínez, and Yañez) focused on immediate local images. She is a photographer and signpainter, and for this piece has chosen a style taken from motion picture storyboards, the sort of sketches of film scenes directors use as guides. The scene she depicts is the new neighborhood park at Army and Potrero and the image offers a positive view of low riders displaying their rides in front of the park's bandstand, done in muted dreamlike, almost pastel colors. Taped to the bottom is a composite photograph of the scene as it actually is, but hand colored. The whole is a sort of dream vision of idyllic, urban, pastoral low riding.

Of the four large pieces in the show, Michael Rios' was the first to be unveiled. It is titled "The Death Celebrate Life," and was done in acrylic, chalk and charcoal. Rios was fascinating to watch because of his speed. In one massive day he put up the sketch, a drawing which might have remained by itself as the work, but when the colors were added

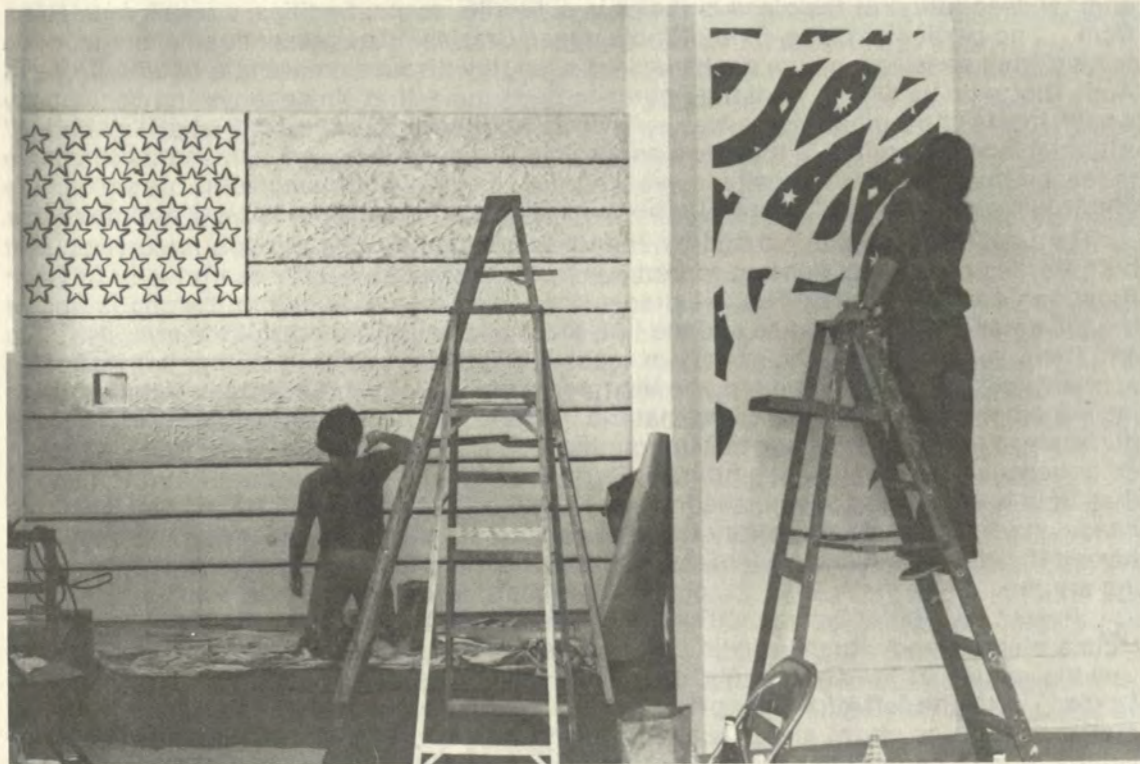
17 Rios' talent as a colorist emerged, and one was glad to have the image so bright. His

original description of the piece is that it is a "flotilla scene, families, clowns, musicians from . . . no particular place. Ship of fools, these Crazy's." The presence of a single, nude female lying passively on the deck inspired a lengthy discussion at the artists' critique in April. Rios said he did not want the figures to be all male, that "In art, anything goes . . . My whole trip is the human comedy . . . There's nothing political about what I'm doing." Although some disagree in their own assessments, nearly everyone agrees that the piece is fascinating, and that curiosity is even increased by the confusing word "death" where one would expect to read "dead" in the title. All agree the work has power and boldness.

"The Last Supper" was painted by Juan Fuentes and Regina Mouton in acrylics, and both its design and its content reproduce the extremes of wealth and poverty in Latin American countries today. These extreme conditions are contained in the opposition of the full-color children's bodies and the flat, black and white and grey of the military rulers and their wives enjoying their fancy excessive feast. There is also similar contradiction spatially with rulers being on top and the ruled, dead, being on the bottom. Fuentes' moving statement at the opening noted that the image portrays "the last supper for this class of people in Latin America and throughout the world. They represent *death*. The kids are in color because they represent a future culture, even though they are dead." Mouton added that "this is something people need to see because it is happening." It is an unforgettable image, stark to capture the terror of what it depicts, yet sensitive and loving in its attitude toward the children. All who heard the opening remarks were moved; all who see the painting are too.

Placed on a pillar between "The Last Supper" and Yañez's "In Progress" was Nancy Hom's elegant and vibrant acrylic "Celebration of the Spirit," although because of the viewing angles in the Galería, Yañez's piece cannot be seen and it appears that "The Border" is to the left of Hom's piece. It thus seems to stand between the two boldest statements in the show, and it is a testament to its own power that it retains its happy vitality. It was begun later than the other pieces, and this, Hom suggests, may be one reason why it seems to work so well in its space. She was aware of what the other works surrounding hers would look like and could alter her design accordingly. Her swirling, dancing, celebratory figure dazzles the eye, invites visitors into the room, and honors the spirit that can rejoice even in today's troubled world. That the dancer's expression and the painting share their joy with us is a curious result of the chemistry of the entire show, where Hom's piece focuses the positive energies on both sides of the room which seem to flow into it for a brief moment, capturing the visionary joy of people free to express themselves through art. Hom thought of this theme after this year's Carnival, a celebration similar to Brazil's Carnival and New Orleans' Mardi Gras which has been celebrated in San Francisco's Mission District for the past several years. "I wanted the spirit that I felt about people celebrating themselves to come across, it would be good balance here—struggle, culture, fun." It is more than a balance. It is a focus.

Around the corner from Hom's piece are two others. One is René Yañez's "In Progress," already discussed above as an example of process and the other is the "Goddess Tlazolteotl," painted in acrylics by Patricia Rodríguez. Although there are some similarities between Rodríguez's piece and Yolanda M. López's, the depiction here is more personal, even surrealistic. This is not accidental, since key elements of the image came to Rodríguez through dreams, a characteristic of European Surrealist painters earlier in the century. The piece evolved as she painted, and found its final shape only after the artist realized that a figure she had been dreaming about was in fact the Aztec earth goddess Tlazolteotl. Rodríguez has put into the image's stomach a collage of events happening in El Salvador and throughout Latin America, which is appropriate because this is the god-



Tim Drescher

Herbert Sigüenza and Nancy Hom

dess who cleanses by eating all evil and sin. The figure's presence over a polluted modern city also connects the image to us. The surrealistic aspects, manifested largely in stylistic conventions, are appropriate, she feels, because the goddess represents "a mythical image we all have in our subconscious." The painting does not suggest that evil or social problems will be solved by goddesses, but that traditionally such figures have embodied strong feelings of suffering and endurance and beauty together. We share those feelings and the painting.

Herbert Sigüenza's piece, "The Border" changed entirely from his original conception, which was to reproduce a wall from, say, El Salvador, and have the process of the show be the process of transformation of the wall—new graffiti, stains, posters, crumbling plaster, perhaps some bullet holes. But with April's Immigration Service raids, focused on Latinos and publicity, Sigüenza felt that the issue had to be addressed immediately, and altered his design. "Basically," he said, "I choose this design because Reagan and the others are coming down with some real racist stuff." What he did was create a large U.S. flag out of plaster with the white stripes yellowed and the plaster adding texture "to give some hardness." About four feet in front he placed a chain link fence with barbed wire on top and a sign saying "United States of America—No Trespassing: Immigration and Naturalization Service." The unveiling of Sigüenza's piece provided the afternoon's only theater, for when the paper was torn away from the fence it revealed Herbert standing with his back to the audience. Turning to the crowd as if embarrassed for being caught urinating, he fasten-



Tim Drescher

Xavier Viramontes, Yolanda Lopez and Daniel Galvez

ed his trousers, pointed to us and said, "Look at all the illegal aliens." The irony of his words and the meaning of the piece were made instantly clear when one read the inscription on Herbert Sigüenza's tee shirt: "A legal alien." the piece and the theatrical moment were thus extended from a tiny part of the border to a metaphor for all the divisive "fences" in our lives.

On the east wall of the Galería nearest the back wall supporting Sigüenza's flag was Rayvan Gonzáles' "Pre-Columbian World No. 2," a visually complex, mandala-like work dominated by a circle formed by three stylistically distinct serpents, one each for Asia, the Americas, and Africa. Fine line drawings inside the circle portray a Pre-Columbian world. Below, floating in the blue space of the background color, is an island showing a history of colonial wars, exploitation and destruction in the new world. Like Emmanuel Montoya's design further down the east wall, Gonzales' image changes according to viewing distance. Up close, the fine line drawings of historical details are emphasized (Gonzales is mainly a graphics artist). From a greater distance, the overall design is emphasized, and the historical details are thus extended to a more universal significance. The reason the piece is "No. 2" is that its previous incarnation lacked the three snakes. Their presence gives more specific geographical and historical meaning to the image and also greater mythological overtones.

"Lucha con corazon/Struggle with heart" painted in acrylics by Miranda Bergman, Jane Norling and Tony Chávez is one of the four large pieces in the show. The painting is 20

dominated by the spectacularly colorful vision of the unity of birth, love and political struggle which overwhelms the monochromatic hate-mongers in the lower left. The center of the painting depicts almost expressionistically the climactic unity symbolized by a paintbrush, wrench, rifle, book, drum, and a heart. Here, all six are tools for growth. The vision of the future is set against a background of fertile farmlands, flowers, and a maguey. The opposition of right-wing symbols painted in monochrome against progressive elements painted in color is similar to Fuentes and Mouton's "The Last Supper," but here the effect is somewhat different because of the wide palette and because the emphasis is a vision of a productive, peaceful future and not a particular set of current political relations. The process of painting this work was in some ways the most complex in the show because it involved three people at each stage. Every detail was subject to discussion and joint decision, and the result is an image in which the styles of the three artists fully merge into a truly integrated effort; their dynamic process is thus given permanent form in their painting, and is a microcosm of the show's process.

In Emmanuel Montoya's large sepia-toned acrylic "Reagan's Carcajada-Reagan's Sarcastic Laugh," conflicts are stark and sharply delineated by use of large flat areas, sepia tones, black and dark brown, and a mixture of different scale images. The title points to Reagan's insensitivity (if not viciousness) seen reflected in the soldier's dark glasses. The military presence of the large soldier, however, is contradicted by a nursing mother, a child's face, a woman's portrait and a smaller faceless soldier. The result is an impressionistic view of a nation torn asunder, fighting itself with an absentee President laughing contemptuously. Montoya's painting produces a strange optical effect in that it seems to grow larger as one moves away from it. This stems from the manipulation of the scale of the piece; the human figures are not arranged according to normal perspective, but rather give a subjective presentation of different forces in war-torn Latin America. Some of the images Montoya worked from were photographs by Miguel Blanco recently shown at the Galería de la Raza.



Yolanda M. Lopez

Final installation of "In Progress" at the Galería de la Raza

Implications

Is there a unifying theme to the show? The answer at the planning meetings was always, "No," although, as Nancy Hom said, "We all know where we are." Even though there is no overt theme, the artists tend to share a group of similar concerns which find their way into the artistic expressions of *In Progress*, a title which then takes on a double meaning. Not only does it refer to the fact that the show enabled visitors to watch works in progress, but there is a more subtle implication that the show celebrates people's progress, the progress of struggles for self-determination.

Some visitors have said that the show is definitely Latino, but others pointed out that just because the focus of the show's imagery is often Latino, that does not mean it lacks a broader significance. "Unfortunately," one visitor commented, "the problems some of these paintings are about also exist in several other parts of the world." Simply by virtue of being shown in the Galería de la Raza works take on a Latino relevance, but the breadth of reference in them belies any narrow constriction of their significance. Some are immediate in reference, such as "Mr. Continental's Dream," while others, such as "Low Rider Queen, Union City, CA," have relevance wherever there are low riders. Still others, such as "Pre-Columbian World No. 2" communicate more universal meanings. In short, like the Mission District and la Raza, the artworks of *In Progress* embody diverse meanings. And, also like the Mission District, San Francisco, and for that matter the United States, the artists come from several ethnic backgrounds.

What, then, is the political orientation of the show? Some of the works deal with overtly political issues, others do not. The show as a whole is unified. When pressed, Galvéz said that while he very much wants "to believe that politics, like religion, is personal and should not be done as public art," he said he also knows that art affects people's lives and is always political—the only question is whose interests are being served. Everyone understands that some images have more impact than others. The exciting thing, and ultimately the most "political" things about *In Progress* is that the artists and the show have decided clearly to demystify the notion that art is separate from non-artists in a community. *In Progress* proves that the strongest artistic works derive from and in turn contribute to a progressive social process.



Yolanda M. López

Yolanda M. López. Untitled. Liquitex Acrylic.



Gonzales

Patricia Rodríguez. "Goddess Tlazolteotl." Politec Acrylic.



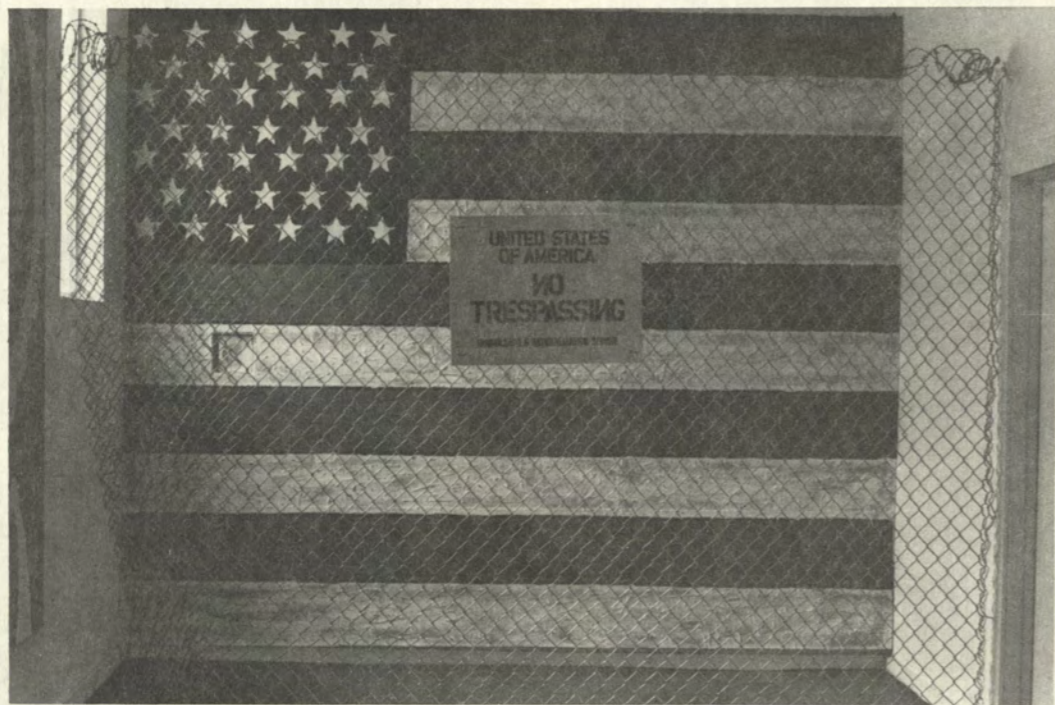
Yolanda M. López

Juan Fuentes and Regina Mouton. "The Last Supper." Politec Acrylic.



Yolanda M. López

Lisa Kokin "A la Mujer Salvadoreña/Dando Luz al Nuevo Día" (To the Salvadorean Woman/Giving Birth to a New Day). Batik



Herbert Sigüenza. "The Border." Mixed Media Construction.

Yolanda M. Lopez



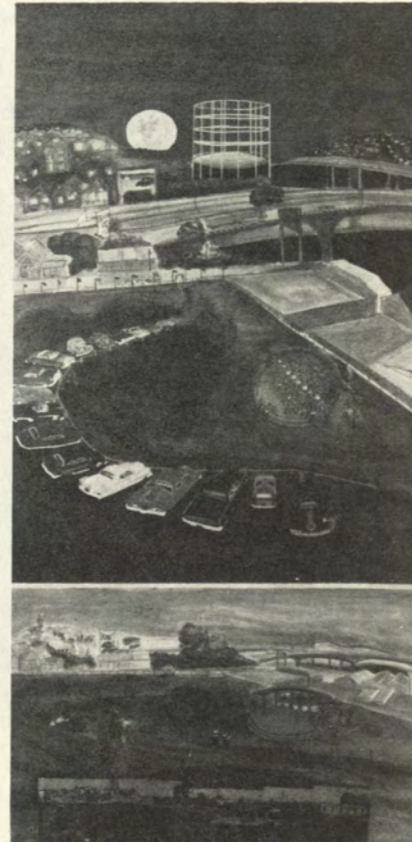
Michael Rios. "The Death Celebrate Life." Chalk, Charcoal and Politec Acrylic.

Gonzales



Nancy Hom.
"Celebration of the Spirit."
Politec Acrylic.

Yolanda M. Lopez



K.O. "Mr. Continental's Dream"
Politec Acrylic and Photography.

Yolanda M. Lopez



Ray Patlán and Raúl Martínez.
"Movie Tree." Politec Acrylic.

Yolanda M. Lopez



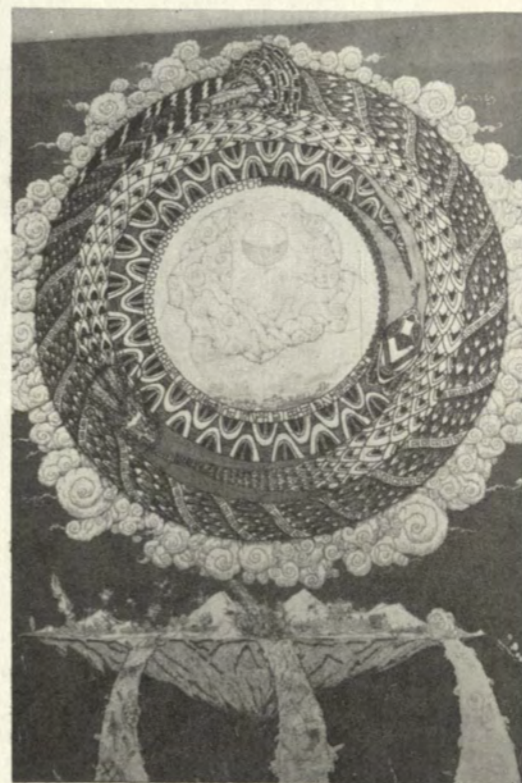
Spain Rodríguez. "Big Girls Don't Cry."
Politec Acrylic.

Gonzales



René Yañez. "In Progress." Mixed Media, Polaroid Photographs. (detail)

Yolanda M. Lopez



Rayvan Gonzáles.
"Pre-Columbian World No. 2" Politec Acrylic.

Yolanda M. Lopez



In Progress is a travelling show. In July and August, 1982, it appeared at the Galeria Posada in Sacramento, CA. For this show three Sacramento artists, Jose Montoya, Juanishi Orozco, and Esteban Villa contributed three panels in keeping with the show's spirit.

These and several of the "original" panels were displayed at the San Francisco 24th Street Fair in September.

In October and November, the show appeared at the SPARC gallery in Venice, CA, where three more works were added. The next stop is San Diego, Spring 1983.

We look forward to the show's travelling continuously for the next year. Inquiries/invitations about exhibiting it in your area should be directed to the Galeria de la Raza/Studio 24, 2851 24th St., San Francisco, CA, 94110.

Miranda Bergman
Tony Chavez
Juan Fuentes
Daniel Galvez
Rayvan Gonzales
Nancy Hom
K.O.
Lisa Kokin
Yolanda Lopez
Raul Martinez
Regina Mouton
Emmanuel Montoya
Jane Norling
Ray Patlan
Michael Rios
Patricia Rodriguez
Spain Rodriguez
Herbert Sigüenza
Xavier Viramontes
Rene Yañez

