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US/MEXICO BORDER-ARTS PROJECT AT UCSB AWARDED GRANT

Scholars studying U.S./Mexico border-related cultural arts will receive support from a new project at the University of California, Santa Barbara made possible with a grant from the University of California Institute for Mexico and the United States.

The $15,000 grant was awarded to the University Libraries at UCSB for "Border Arts Cultural Heritage," a one-year project that will organize, describe, and catalog three San Diego/Mexico border-related cultural arts archives in the California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives (CEMA).

According to CEMA Director Salvador Güereña, "These records elucidate the past and present history of Chicano cultural arts production in California and will provide an unprecedented visual record of Chicano/Latino art and cultural history."

The grant will help to process personal collections of two visual artists, Salvador Roberto Torres and Victor Ochoa, and the organizational records of an internationally renowned San Diego cultural arts center, the Centro Cultural de la Raza, which they helped found. The collections are currently in a variety of print and media formats, some of them unusable and inaccessible. Border Arts Cultural Heritage Project will help transfer the materials to a format that is readily accessible to the research community and the broader public. The project will create guides to each of the collections to be added to the UCSB Libraries web site and the Online Archive of California of the California Digital Library.

The Centro Cultural de la Raza is a Chicano Cultural Center founded in 1970 as an alternative program to encourage and facilitate artistic growth and cultural interchange in San Diego communities.

Centro Cultural has given birth to many artistic groups, such as the Mexican American Liberation Art Front and Teatro Mestizo.

It also provides art classes and drama, music, dance, and arts and crafts presentations, many of which have origins in Mexico and Aztlán, the latter a term used by Chicanos to indicate the American Southwest.

The Centro Cultural's circular building has offices and workrooms, studios, a theater, and much wall space for mural projects.

It is one of the largest Chicano cultural arts buildings in the Southwest.

Ochoa is a widely recognized Chicano painter/muralist long considered one of the pioneers of San Diego's Chicano art movement.

He is a co-founder of the Centro Cultural de la Raza. He served as its director from 1970-73, and again from 1988-90. Until recently, Ochoa had been a longtime artist-in-residence there. Ochoa was a co-initiator of the Chicano Park community murals, an internationally acclaimed public art project. He was also co-founder of the Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo arts collective (1984-93).

Torres is a Chicano artist and arts educator best known as the "architect of the dream" for his vital role in the creation of San Diego's Chicano Park, the largest collection of Chicano murals in the world. He is an important and influential figure in the Chicano art movement, owing both to his art and to his civic work as a cultural activist.

Torres's primary media are painting and mural painting. Torres has described his work as Chicano art that is "based upon the creative Chicano lifestyle, whose Mexican and American interrelationships and cultural influences form its ideologies and themes."

As a painter Torres is best known for his compelling 1969 "Viva La Raza," an oil on canvas that depicts the transformation of the eagle of the United Farm Workers of America into a rising phoenix.

According to UCSB's Güereña, the materials are unique, invaluable, and will attract seminal research and lead to new publications, especially in the field of Chicano art history.

Upon completion, the project will increase the university's research resources in an area where such primary materials are either very limited or not accessible, generating a wealth of primary source material on an historic Chicano cultural arts organization and the contributions of key individual artists.

Attention editors: CEMA Director Salvador Güereña can be reached at (805) 893-8563 and at guerena@library.ucsb.edu.

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Border Arts Cultural Heritage Project

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