

## La vieja y la nueva generación: Ernesto de la Loza in Estrada Courts, new mural in Venice, Os Gemeos, and Fabian Debora at Homegirl Cafe

Posted on [April 9, 2012](#), by [Carlyn Aguilar](#)



The mural community welcomes back "Organic Stimulus"; Photo by Daniel Lara

A few weeks ago in Boyle Heights, [Ernesto de la Loza](#) unveiled his restored mural *Organic Stimulus* on one of the lucky buildings of [Estrada Courts](#). In the audience were artists, iconic muralists, activists, historians, journalists, residents and community members. Everyone was mesmerized by de la Loza's flowing landscape of organic forms and colors, once again bright and energetic after withering away for 37 years. Two months ago de la Loza started the restoration process sponsored by [Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles](#) (MCLA) and Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).



Ernesto de la Loza "Organic Stimulus"; Photo by Daniel Lara

Ernesto's sister, artist Sandra de la Loza (who you might remember from the PST show [Mural Remix at LACMA](#)), presented her older brother at the unveiling. She reminisced and reminded the crowd that she was only seven years old when this mural was painted. She said that her brother painted *Organic Stimulus* because he wanted to give balance to the neighborhood. During his speech, de la Loza revealed that he felt like his career was just beginning when he was working on this mural and exclaimed, "Everyone should follow their dreams because dreams do come true."



"Organic Stimulus" before the restoration process

Estrada Courts is not just a low-income housing project but also “an open-air museum with approximately 54 surviving murals, many of them reflecting the culture and traditions of the area. This is the place that gave birth to the 1970s Chicano Mural Art Movement”, said MCLA’s executive director Isabel Rojas-Williams. It is amazing to walk around and look at all of these murals while listening to them speak out to the residents of the neighborhood.

Many of these murals are trying to survive and I’m thankful MCLA is doing all it can to restore some of them. The next mural, which has already started the restoration process, is “Outer Space” (1977) by Richard Haro.





Beginning of the restoration process for Richard Haro's "Outer Space"; Photo courtesy of MCLA

Also on the scene was [Mobile Mural Lab](#) (MML), a mobile art studio that serves as a space for mural education and production. Since mural production on private property is still considered illegal, founders Roberto Del Hoyo and David Russell have used their truck as a place for the community to interact and paint. Many residents of Estrada Courts were there to paint their own version of de la Loza's *Organic Stimulus*.



Mobile Mural Lab at Estrada Courts

From East LA I drove to the Westside in search of a younger generation of muralists (also from Boyle Heights)

painting a new mural off of Rose in Venice. [Juan Carlos Muñoz Hernandez](#) (whose art work I have written about in a [previous post](#)) and his friends, which included [Defer](#), [Mr. Big Sleeps](#), [Kopye](#), Luke, Laura, Vox and Nanibah Chacon, were doing exactly what Ernesto de la Loza was talking about earlier at Estrada Courts. The sun was shining, the music was playing and all these artists were busily creating “Chumash” Orozco in Venice, a homage to iconic Mexican muralist José Clemente Orozco and to the Chumash people, the Native Americans who historically inhabited the central and southern coastal regions of California.



"Chumash" Orozco in Venice; Photo by Daniel Lara

The central figure, painted by Kopye, is from Orozco's fresco in Guadalajara "The Spanish Conquest of Mexico-The Mechanical Horse", which revealed Orozco's ambivalent somber vision of the ideas of progress during the 30s. The image still works today, which to me seemed as an incisive commentary and a deliberately powerful rebuttal of the Mural Moratorium.



Photo by Daniel Lara



The mural's letters were painted by masterful *plaqueros* Defer and Big Sleeps. When I was at the mural, Big Sleeps showed me [Neighborhood Offering](#), a 67-page lettering book by him and another handstyle master, Jose Prime Reza, which has recently been incorporated in the research library at the Getty. This spiral book is a methodical effort by these artists to organize their own medium, which includes a collection of custom urban LA street typography including alphabets, script samples, real street and rare handstyles, and Chicano block-style lettering influenced by the gang writing of the Downtown LA neighborhoods these artists grew up in.



Defer and Big Sleeps; Photo by Daniel Lara



Big Sleeps; Photo by Daniel Lara

Over in West Hollywood at [Prism Gallery](#) was a show that has recently ended but received a lot of recognition.

[Os Gemeos](#) are Brazilian twin brothers Gustavo and Otavio Pandolfo from Sao Paolo who received a lot of attention from MOCA's *Art in the Streets* exhibition last summer. *Miss You* was the brothers first solo show at this gallery. As I entered into the large space covered in red paint, I was pulled into a world of fantasy and magical realism. The exhibition consisted of large-scale paintings and sculptures, giant murals on the walls of the stairway, yellow light bulbs with faces painted on them bulging out of the floors and an interactive projection room that takes you into a surreal dream.



Os Gemeos "Miss You" at Prism



Os Gemeos "Miss You" at Prism

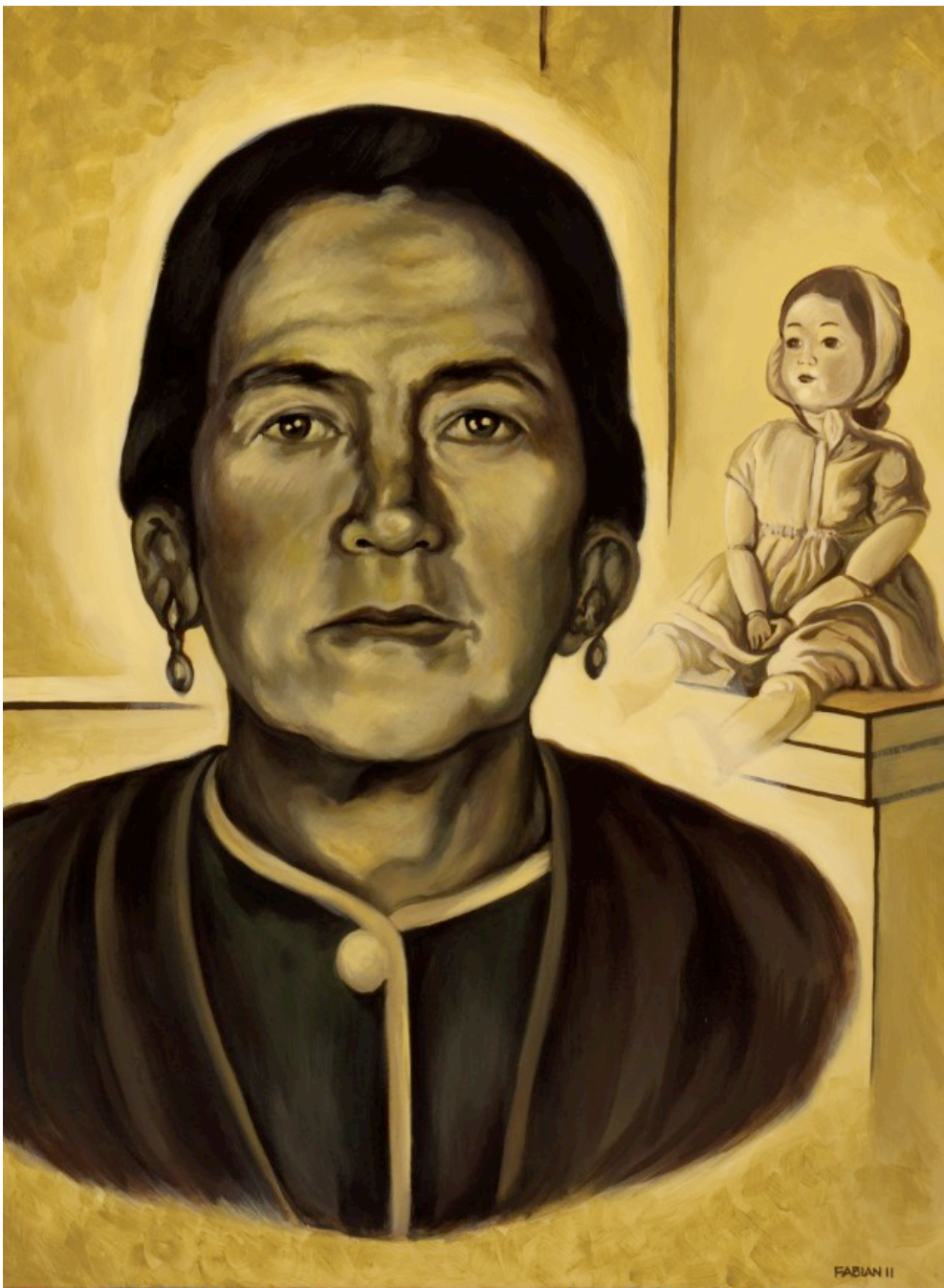


A piece that made me excited but also gave me a headache was an enormous cube floating from above with one of their character's faces painted on it. A glowing blue hole invites viewers to poke their heads in one at a time. Once inside you are transported into a musical and mirrored world of illusion. This piece helped me to imagine what the creative minds of these twins must be like.



I finally was able to make it to [Homegirl Café](#) to see the five large paintings by [Fabian Debora](#). Both Geoff and I have written about Debora on Notes several times because he is one of those artists who is able to transcend on so many levels. During a walkthrough of his show, Debora explained that all five of the paintings are portraits of women who have made an impact on him. These women also show strength and determination to overcome the obstacles that they face in life. *Wisdom* is of Debora's grandmother, who is painted next to a doll, something she never had as a child.





Fabian Debora "Wisdom"; Photo courtesy of the artist

*Strength* is of his mother in her early 20s. *Innocence over destruction* is of Debora's daughter, protected by the petals of a flower from the violence and temptations surrounding her.



Fabian DeBora "Innocence over destruction"; Photo courtesy of the artist

*Calm over chaos* is of a therapist who used to work at Homeboy Industries. Behind her is the chaos, but she is able to help others overcome it.





Fabian Debora "Calm over chaos"; Photo courtesy of the artist

My favorite painting is *Peace over violence*, which is of Alicia who currently works at the café. In the background is a poem in graffiti style about the suffering of the streets. According to Debora, this woman is now living a peaceful life after all that she's gone through, and she is also an inspiration for the other women around her.



Fabian Debora "Peace over violence"; Photo courtesy of the artist

Back in his studio at the Alexandria Hotel in downtown LA, Debora talked about how he is exploring new styles of painting and some ideas for his next series. He also told me about some upcoming projects, such as a mural he is going to paint at LAX in Terminal 4/American Airlines and another one on Melrose in collaboration with Juan Carlos Muñoz Hernandez and Alex “Defer” Kizu. It’s quite exciting to watch these artists grow and inspire others around them... including me.

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**Rebekah** says:

April 9, 2012, at 9:08 pm

How great that there are restoration projects happening..I want to visit the outdoor museum of murals! And I would love to see the book of lettering!