Young families join La Marcha de la Reconquista along a dusty highway through the farm land of Southern California. 1971. La Raza Newspaper & Magazine records. Para leer el contenido completo en prensa en español, por favor haga un clic aquí. Los Angeles, CA (August 10, 2017): Between 1967 and 1977, the Chicano newspaper-turned-magazine La Raza was witness to and participant in the struggle for social justice as it unfolded across Los Angeles and into the world beyond. Marking the 50th anniversary of the publication's founding, and drawing from a previously inaccessible archive of more than 25,000 images recently gifted by the photographers to UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center, the exhibition LA RAZA opens on September 16, 2017, at the Autry Museum of the American West in Griffith Park.

Within La Raza, photographs are more than illustration; they forge a persuasive visual argument for equal rights and an intimate, nuanced portrait of the Mexican American community as resilient and empowered. While they speak to the unique concerns of the Chicano Movement, or El Movimiento, they also transcend the historical context of the magazine. Considered broadly, the photographs of La Raza become a site where the stakes of injustice are exposed and the power of the camera as a social equalizer is revealed. The Auty's exhibition examines the role of photography in lending both vision and voice to Mexican American peoples in Los Angeles during this era, shaping a common identity while calling for empowerment and change.

As part of the Getty-led Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA initiative, LA RAZA contributes to the exploration of Latino art and identity in dialogue with the city of Los Angeles. The editors of La Raza adopted a groundbreaking format in which photojournalism combined with art, satire, poetry, and political commentary to organize and inspire the Chicano community to activism and to reimagine concepts of citizenry.

“We are proud to share this powerful, first-hand account of an important yet underrepresented movement in the Civil Rights era,” says W. Richard West Jr., President and CEO of the Autry. “It is especially momentous to present this photographic archive-one that continues to resonate today as part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, further underscoring the influence of the Chicano Movement and its artists on the cultural and societal fabric of the American West.”

Featuring more than 20% of the archive's most compelling and powerful images digitally printed, framed, and installed alongside graphics, text, and images drawn from the magazine, the collection invites visitors of the photographers' aesthetic strategies as well as the interdisciplinary format in which they are situated. As viewers travel through the major components of both archive and movement-moments of mass demonstration; sensitive portraits of individuals and communities; and an ever-present, watchful police state-they find themselves at a crossroads of multiple histories, including those of art in Los Angeles; photography in the American West; and the energy, activism, and ground-breaking visual language of the Chicano Movement. The immersive environment of the exhibition includes a central, interactive touch screen that encourages visitors to explore the archive in greater depth, emphasizing the artistic and social achievements represented in the archive through its major themes.

“It has been an honor to play a role in this exhibition, designed to give contemporary audiences access to the incredible artistic, cultural, and political force that was La Raza magazine,” says Amy Scott (Peoples/Amy Scott), the Autry’s Chief Curator and Marilyn B. and Calvin B. Gross Curator of Visual Arts. “My hope and expectation is that LA RAZA sparks serious discussions both inside and outside the gallery about the conjoined legacies of photography and activism.”

LA RAZA is produced in collaboration with UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center, directed by Chon Noriega, and is co-curated by Scott and Luis C. Garza, a LA Raza photographer and independent curator.

“LA RAZA is an argument for the role of photography and aesthetics in defining the Chicano Movement's visual identity while articulating its key demands,” says Garza. “This exhibition testifies the pivotal role of the photographer as artist and activist and the camera as a tool for empowerment, creating a rich and layered experience that we think will touch and speak to audiences from different backgrounds.”

Major support for the LA RAZA exhibition and catalog is provided through grants from...
The photographers of El Movimiento captured a distinct tension between the agency of the activists and the rigidity of the state and its law enforcement. With images of marchers filling the uncontrolled environment of the street-juxtaposed with images of off-combat-ready police presence designed to contain them-viewers explore how La Raza photographers countered mainstream media narratives and representations of Chicano/as as criminals and gangsters.

Through thematic and time-bound groups of images, this section investigates the role of photography in articulating revolutionary ideas and documenting the Chicano presence across the city. These include iconic events such as the massive school walkouts and demonstrations of 1968, the thirty-thousand strong Chicoan Moratorium of August 29, 1970, and the thousand mile March of the Conquistada. Shown alongside some of the many other gatherings that unfolded across the city, this section speaks to the energy and agency of the movement and the use of protest to visually reclaim public space.

Portraits of a Community

The La Raza photographers worked to create a direct correlation between the Chicano Movement and the community at large by capturing the presence and participation of elders, parents, children, and extended families, as well as couples, friends, colleagues, church officials, and other community leaders. These photographs reflect a community in which thick networks of social ties form a critical underpinning for political action. The images also convey the multigenerational appeal of the movement, which challenged primarily Anglo assumptions about the “nuclear” family. They offer instead a more broadly defined, extended network of familial and peer relationships based on inclusivity, mutual aid, and solidarity.

The Other and the State

Comprised of images that deliberately complicate the idea of vision and surveillance as a tool of state control, this section includes portraits of police-in riot gear or undercover, in small groups or large military-style formations-which are rife throughout the archive. The images reverse the longstanding logic of police photography by challenging the Other and the State.

The Body

La Raza photographers documented police belligerence and brutality, cataloguing the bodily damage and physical toll of LAPD aggression. The images brought the forceful tactics to the attention of a wide audience and issued a powerful call for equal treatment, creating a shield against further violence. Images of bruised and battered men and women document a racist system; they attest to the systemic, abusive behavior towards elders, parents, children, and extended family, as well as couples, friends, classmates, and agency of the movement and the use of protest to visually reclaim public space.

Signs of the Times

This section chronicles the ways in which La Raza photographers consistently documented the ways in which signage protest signs, posters, banners, flags, graphic artwork, murals, and graffiti functioned as a vital messaging system, broadcasting Chicano/as demands across the city and out into the world. Signs of protest also helped define activists, both distinguishing them from and tying them to American culture as represented in the government buildings, movie theaters, restaurants, car dealerships, strip malls, and storefronts seen across the archive. The majority of signs were homemade and straightforward in their appearance and language, but others were designed to appeal to a variety of audiences-government, law enforcement, and commercial.

Interactive Touchscreen Table

Incredibly, the 200 photographs on the walls represent only the tip of the iceberg. Through the Autry’s interactive touchscreen table, visitors can explore over 12,000 images from the full La Raza archive across a variety of categories-allowing each user to choose a unique path through the La Raza experience.

Public Programming

Events and public programs will be held in concert with the exhibition, including a seminar with several photographers of La Raza on Sunday, October 15. Please check back at TheAutry.org/LARA for details.

Part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA

Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA is a far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles taking place from September 2017 through January 2018. Led by the Getty, Pacific Standard Time LA/LA is a collaboration of arts institutions across Southern California. Through a series of thematically linked exhibitions and programs, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA highlights different aspects of Latin American and Latino art from the ancient world to the present day. With topics ranging from ancient cultures to contemporary art, the exhibition offers a unique perspective on the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Latin America and the United States.
The museum, store, and cafe are closed on Mondays. Visit TheAutry.org for more information.

Crossroads West Cafe: Tuesday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

LA RAZA is presented in conjunction with: Harry Gamboa Jr.: Chicano Male Unbonded and public programs—including lectures, film, theatre, festivals, family events, and music—possesses a distinct narrative, one that interweaves the subject's creative life with his connection to his community and the artist.

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