

Fowler Museum to celebrate Chicano culture with La Santa Cecilia and Patssi Valdez

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Singer Marisol Hernandez, guitarist Gloria Estrada and percussionist Miguel Ramirez met during a jam session at a party in the summer of 2007. Little did they know they would later form a group, La Santa Cecilia, that has since exposed them to bigger audiences and has even garnered them a recent Latin Grammy nomination.

The Fowler Museum and the Grammy Museum will co-present “A Musical Conversation with La Santa Cecilia and Paper Fashion with Patssi Valdez,” including not only a performance from Latin-fusion band La Santa Cecilia but also an open Q&A panel with the band members.

La Santa Cecilia, based in Los Angeles, combines local and world styles to produce music that incorporates the sounds of genres such as samba, punk and cumbia. Besides Hernandez, Estrada and Ramirez, other instrumentalists include accordion and requinto player Jose “Pepe” Carlos, bassist Alex Bendana and drummer Hugo Vargas. Recently, the group received a Grammy nomination for its song “La Negra.”

Estrada said each of the band members’ L.A. roots have cultivated differing styles from their exposure to influential neighborhoods that vary in different scenes and tastes.

“We grew up in a place that’s rich in music and culture,” Estrada said. “We have our own styles that we gravitate toward, but at the same time all six members are very open; you can listen to any of our iPods and they are all over the place.”

Estrada said that, despite an overall understanding of their Latin feel, the six members each bring different outlooks to the equation regarding their band’s work.

“One of our first songs was ‘Klezmer,’ which has sounds coming from Jewish music, but in my head I was hearing a gypsy jazz sound,” Estrada said. “Our work is a hybrid of different genres that is left to our interpretation.”

Along with refreshments after the performance, a post-concert reception will feature Asco icon Valdez as she leads a workshop representative of Asco’s 1970s public appearances involving paper gowns and hats. Asco consisted of a group of artists – Harry Gamboa Jr., Gronk, Willie Herron III and Valdez – who used multiple art forms including performance and public multimedia to send relevant social messages in East Los Angeles.

The event coincides with the Fowler Museum’s current exhibition, “Mapping Another L.A.: The Chicano Art Movement.”

“The Grammy Museum approached the Fowler Museum with this idea to have La Santa Cecilia perform. They wanted to focus specifically on Chicano music and that coincided well with our current Chicano exhibition,” said Bonnie Poon, the Fowler Museum’s manager of public programs.

According to Poon, with the combination of paper fashion and live music, those who attend will experience a chance to embrace multiple aspects of Chicano art in one night.

“It’s a fusion of history, art and music. With those three combined, you come out a little more knowledgeable and a little richer in culture; it’s a beautiful thing,” Estrada said.
