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# MECHICANO ART CENTER

MECHICANO ART CENTER  
Founded: 1969

Program Director: Leonard Castellanos

Address: 4030 Whittier Boulevard  
East Los Angeles, CA 90023

Telephone: 264-8334

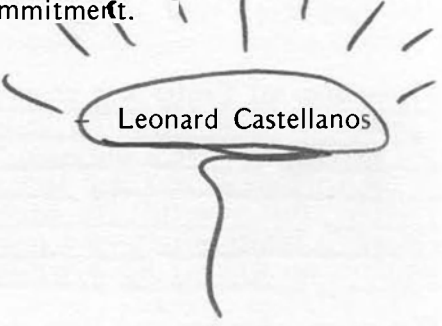
"We don't want to dictate to the community because we found out that as creative as artists can be in their own realm, meeting the needs of the community is a different kind of responsibility. And it is a great responsibility. It isn't just being an artist in a gallery doing your own work and then displaying it. You have to believe that art becomes a fundamental part of the identity of the community, that it has to become part of your environment."

Mechicano Art Center was organized as a response to the need of scattered Chicano artists in the Barrio to be known and exposed to each others' work, and in turn, to have a showcase for their art. Mechicano was first opened in the La Cienega area, but lack of funds forced it to close. We realized, however, that now that the artists were functioning together, they could become a center within their own community. We moved to our present location, on Whittier Boulevard in East Los Angeles, in 1970.

Our original funding was from the dues the artists paid themselves, in terms of both small amounts of money and enormous amounts of work in transforming a decrepit ex-laundromat into a functioning workshop and gallery. Donations of materials, small sums received for posters produced by the workshop, and token contributions from colleges and other institutions for exhibits loaned to them allowed us to get through our first year. On January 1972, we received our first grant, \$14,900, from the Catholic Convention for Human Development. This was to pay for rent, lights, a few art supplies, and some of the expenditures necessary to keep the free classes going. We offer classes in drawing, painting and silk-screen process Wednesday through Friday, photography on Tuesday evening, and a jazz workshop on Thursday evenings.

One of our most successful exhibits was the recently completed "bus-bench project" where Mechicano artists painted 30 bus bench backs. The benches added something beautiful to our community, which is a conscious goal of the Center. Cut off from the rich unbroken tradition of 35 centuries of art in Mexico and outside the mainstream of U.S. culture, the Chicano communities have lived in a cultural void. To the degree that art has been an intimate part of the daily and spiritual life of Mexican people, to that degree have the Chicanos suffered impoverishment of the spirit. Through projects such as this (funded by our neighbors, the East Los Angeles Doctors Hospital), we hope to stimulate the community's awareness and growth in the arts so that we can find new forms in which the tremendous heritage of Mexico will be made available to the Chicano, so that he may express his present role and identity in the cultural life of the United States.

Our plans for the near future include the implementation and expansion of present printshop activity into serigraphs and other fine arts media. We are placing special emphasis on the development of supergraphics, involving youth groups and gangs as assistants to our artist/teachers. And we will be involved in community beautification, creating vest-pocket parks and public art projects. The dramatic enhancement of the community brings awareness and pride in the area and acts as a catalyst to counteract the present neglect and defacement that goes on. Recognition of our efforts by the National Endowment for the Arts/Expansion Arts Program through a grant for 1972-1973 has given us new energy and commitment.



Leonard Castellanos

# méhicano

## art center

4030 WHITTIER BLVD. • LOS ANGELES, CA. 90023

264-8334 264-8513

### OUR PAST

Cut off from the Chicanos' unique heritage - a rich unbroken tradition of 40 centuries of art in Mexico, and kept outside the American mainstream, the Chicano communities have lived in a cultural void. To the degree that art had been an intimate part of the daily and spiritual life of the Mexican people, to that degree have the Chicanos suffered lack of direct access and avenues into the cultural life of the United States.

### OUR NEED

Mechicano Art Center was organized as a response to the need of scattered Chicano artists in the Barrio to be known and exposed to each others' work, and in turn, to have a showcase for their art. Mechicano opened as a gallery in the La Cienega area, but the artists realized that they were functioning well together, and could meet a greater responsibility by becoming a center within their own community. They hoped to stimulate the community's awareness and growth in the arts, and to find new forms in which the tremendous past of Mexico could be made available to the Chicano so that he could express his present role and identity in the cultural life of the United States.

### OUR ACTION

The Center was created by the artists with small contributions of money and enormous amounts of work in transforming a decrepit ex-laundromat into a functioning workshop and gallery.

We have continuing loan exhibits to universities, galleries and places of business throughout the greater Los Angeles area. Mechicano provides free classes in the plastic arts, and a place for study, work and exhibits. One of our most successful projects was recently completed for the East Los Angeles Doctors' Hospital. It included murals, paintings, and fine art backs for 30 bus benches bearing their insignia, which introduced notes of sudden beauty along the main thoroughfares. Minimal donations, contributions and gifts have enabled us to meet our essential obligations.

A constantly expanding program of supergraphics, silk screen posters, wall and sidewalk murals have created a dramatic enhancement to the neighborhood. They have replaced neglect with pride in the area, and act as a catalyst to counteract the present defacement and neglect.

Out of the concept of Mechicano, the Community Arts Alliance was conceived and developed by Victor Franco, Mura Bright and Leonard Castellanos. For the first time, all the community art groups and centers in the south, east and central Los Angeles areas were contacted and organized into one effective communication media. Through interaction of the communities, we were able to blend and exchange skills and resources. The most dynamic example was the National conference on 'Community Arts and Community Survival' held in Los Angeles June 19-23, 1972, for the American Council for the Arts in Education; organized, produced and documented by the

Alliance. This inter-community festival provided new guidelines for change in the emerging art forms in education.

**OUR  
FUTURE**

Our plan is to expand and implement our present art center, in-school and community programs. We are placing special emphasis on super-graphics and murals on existing architectural surfaces in East Los Angeles, involving youth and gang groups as creative assistants to our artist-teachers. Mechicano has succeeded in enlisting enthusiastic involvement of the newly formed Gang Federation. Instead of spray-can graffiti as an outlet for frustration and search for identity, they can be involved as working contributors to an art experience which can be enjoyed by all in the community. This approach utilizes the value of art as a tool for social change. The street mural tends to reinstate the great tradition of Mexican muralists transposed through the language and symbols of East Los Angeles, and is a contribution to the creation of American art.

The goals and demands of community and future projects create a need for continuing financial support to fulfill long-range goals. We offer one unique solution to the environmental problem of urban decay and abuse.



JOSE CERVANTES INTRODUCES TO THE LOS ANGELES AREA  
AT THE **MECHICANO ART CENTER**, A SELECTION  
OF MAJOR WORKS BY THE CHICANO MASTER  
MARIO ACEVEDO TORERO, JUNE 3<sup>RD</sup> THROUGH  
JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup>. RECEPTION FOR THE ARTISTS  
IS SUNDAY JUNE 3<sup>RD</sup> FROM NOON ON. MUSIC  
PROVIDED BY SOL, AT THE CENTER 4030  
WHITTIER BLVD. EAST LOS. FOR MORE  
INFORMATION CALL (213) 264-8334 ★

LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY ARTS ALLIANCE:  
OUTLINE

Title: Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance

Program Category: Education

Purpose:

The purpose of the Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance shall be to create a nucleus of funding and information for the arts. The function of this nucleus is to respond and react to the community needs of art groups or events in specified areas or districts of Los Angeles County.

Immediate action on needs, and central community services will be available through the monthly budgets of the district directors and coordinators.

This arts, cultural, and educational organization would develop a central media complex in terms of immediate services rendered to participating groups, centers, etc. These services would be:

- 1) Poster design and supplies
- 2) Flyers, mimeograph, and xerox for art show invitations, etc.
- 3) Silkscreen process for posters
- 4) Up to date information in current and upcoming shows, exhibitions, festivals, fairs, art competitions, scholarships, fellowships and positions that are available in higher institutions, businesses, etc.

The Alliance is being formed with the idea in mind of offering these services without charge unless it involves more time, funds, and help than the organization is able to handle.

The goal of the Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance is not to adopt or incorporate other agencies for membership in the Alliance. The one singular and dominant aspect in the goal of the Alliance is to reinforce every art or cultural group or center to exist in their own area and expand into functional community programs and project involvement. Hopefully, through this kind of operating procedure, the badly needed attention and proper focus can be given to the arts on the local, state and national levels. This would create not only more community interaction, but it would create viable avenues for companies, businesses, state and federal agencies, direct access and contact with functioning cultural and art centers.

Operating Agency:

- A) Name of Agency: The Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance
- B) Type of Agency: Public Non-Profit Foundation
- C) Contact Persons: \_\_\_\_\_

Background on the Organization:

The Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance is community conscious and aware of community needs. The Art Alliance has researched various methods of operating and has been extremely impressed by the San Francisco Neighborhood Arts Program, directed by Eric Reuther. It is with the San Francisco program in mind that the Alliance comes forth with confidence and the belief that Los Angeles needs a transfusion of this unique sort to awaken the mainstream of society and the nation with a more vital, practical, and dynamic approach for exposure in all the arts.

The Art Alliance is extremely aware of the shortcomings of the present day art agencies that fail to tap the abundant art that exists around them. These agencies seem only to cater to those few who paint or perform in a style or manner that leads to a narrow pedantic display of "in art".

The Alliance realizes that it has become obvious that since the mid-sixties, the flirtation between the artists and the business-and-government patronage has left no genuine rapport between the two parties. This unfortunately leads to the reinforcement of the bourgeois philosophy that art shall remain an orphan to be cared for only by the elite. This tragic scene of the arts in America will not be altered until some dynamic problem solvers make contact with real power. Until then this frustrated state of deflected communications shall exist and continue to stifle and numb the creative art force of this nation. Thus, as long as art has no genuine center in the minds of society, the arts will only continue to be accomodated, but will never become an integral and natural part of our lives.

Scope of Services:

Purpose and Beneficiaries:

The Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance is proposing to establish a multi-faceted art, cultural, and educational media center to provide information-coordination



services for specified areas of Los Angeles County.

Our primary purpose is to channel funds directly into community art and cultural groups, centers, etc. This is to be accomplished through innovative techniques applied and directed by community directors and coordinators.

The second purpose of the Art Alliance is to expand and expose the arts through community participation through their own art centers.

The third purpose is to develop a service center whose services will be offered to art centers, individuals, and for special events. The services will be offered in posters, invitations, flyers, letters, and postage. A full time staff of ten to fifteen people with the necessary expertise in these areas will be available at no cost to the artist, art center, or group.

The fourth purpose is to develop an information center on all matters relating to the arts and to cultural events. Also, on matters of education, scholarships, fellowships, etc., up to date files are to be maintained.

#### Content and Operation:

The L.A. Community Arts Alliance proposes a development project to establish a multi-community arts and cultural complex throughout the county of Los Angeles. Funding would be used for the following:

- 1) Hiring & orientation of staff
- 2) Office equipment & printing supplies
- 3) Support of community art centers & cultural events
- 4) Renting or leasing building to house service center and staff
- 5) Other supplies and equipment

#### Specific Results Expected:

The establishment of a multi-community arts media complex designed to produce a unique arts, cultural, educational, and informational source that is directly responsive to each and every community need of the participating art centers, groups, etc. Through this method, the enhancement, exposure, and activity of the arts will begin to serve a more functional and realistic role by involving community residents in active participation.

#### Relationship to Other Projects:

The Arts Alliance will be involved with all projects defined within specific geographic areas. Its primary function will be to disseminate funds and information

concerning available services to the participating community centers.

Definition and Selection of Geographic Areas:

The areas presently being considered and represented are: East Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, Echo Park, and the downtown Japanese district.

It must not be assumed that the center will take it upon itself to create and develop art centers if none are existant. The Arts Alliance can only be functional and realize the community needs through existing centers.

The criteria for selection should begin with:

- a) Communities with existing centers
- b) Financial needs and priorities
- c) Community representatives with knowledge and working relationships with community art groups.

A thorough plan should be requested to analyze the Los Angeles County area, as we do not want to overlap into areas or agencies with sufficient funds. An organization need not be non-profit in order to be eligible.

Proposed Timetable of Activities:

This should be drafted through community representatives for accuracy and scope of projects. It begins with the November 21st fund raiser. (see sample)

Citizen Participation:

The scope of the Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance is one of tremendous dimensions, yet since the organizing and distributing of funds will be handled directly by the existing community centers or groups, this plan is far more practical than the present corporate systems now prevalent through most of the funding agencies.

Citizen participation is the main force of this organization, since the people will serve as the creators, implementors, and extensions of their own projects. The Arts Alliance will encourage and feed this kind of positive expansive relationship however possible.

Evaluation Plans:

The proposed establishment of a multi-community arts, cultural, and educational complex can logically be assessed in terms of adequacy of services and of facilities designed to carry out the proposed activities of funding and supporting community centers directly through community directors and coordinators. Upon establishment of service and administrative facilities, the Alliance will begin to meet these needs for posters and flyers, designs and postage for the participating centers or individuals.

The work and activity will be evaluated through a complex of people and sources which will be developed by staff with the assistance of local residents and evaluation consultants. The growth and progress of the Arts Alliance will also be recorded photographically if funding for this can be obtained. It is felt that a visual record of the expansion of Art Alliance facilities would be invaluable, not only to funding sources for purposes of evaluation, but to those who might be interested in starting similar organizations in their own communities.

Funding:

The Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance is requesting funds to develop a multi-community arts, cultural, and educational complex which will specialize in supporting and helping all phases of the arts in the county of Los Angeles. The anticipated staffing and building costs are estimated at \$2,000,000.

## AN ART EXTRAVAGANZA

An action proposal by Leslie E. Aisenman

As adopted by the LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY ARTS ALLIANCE

In May 1972, a host of artists, art organizations, and art supporters, organized and coordinated by the Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance, will create and present the first county-wide

### LOS ANGELES ARTS FESTIVAL

The Festival will present  
The broad and exciting range of  
Los Angeles Arts and Artists,  
Professional and Amateur, Child and Adult.

Offering a major exhibition of two and three dimensional Arts,  
Filling two or more stages (both indoor and outdoor) with the  
Performing Arts (Music, Dance, Theatre, Film, Poetry, etc.),  
And enhanced by such other events  
(Lectures, Discussions, Symposia, and Art Demonstrations),  
As may contribute to a fuller statement,  
It will offer,  
Art, The Artist, and The Communities of Los Angeles.

All artists will be welcome to exhibit and perform.  
No restrictions, other than those dictated by available space or time,  
Will be imposed upon the participating artists.

Local, community based, arts councils are being organized throughout  
Los Angeles County  
Where cooperating artists, art organizations, and art supporters,  
will solicit, coordinate, and impliment each community's exhibition  
And participation, and select representation to work on the various  
county-wide Arts and Festival support committies.

JOIN WITH US NOW.

PROMOTE THE ARTS IN L.A.

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For further information, please call: 661-5566 (after 5 p.m.)

or write to:

The Los Angeles Community Arts Alliance  
P.O. Box 26476  
Los Angeles, California 90026