

UC San Diego Unveils Groundbreaking Chicano Legacy 40 Años Mosaic

International art project celebrates Chicano culture during UC San Diego's 50th anniversary

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The Chicano Legacy 40 Años mural, which covered the east wall of Peterson Hall on the campus of the University of California, San Diego for two years, has been installed as a permanent mosaic. The 17-by-54 feet mural, made up of thousands of pieces of colored glass, will be unveiled at noon, May 25, in a free event open to the campus and San Diego community.

The art project was envisioned by students of UC San Diego's Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) several years ago as a way to express Latino/a culture, and then brought to fruition by world-renowned, San Diego-based artist Mario Torero. Torero created the conceptual mosaic; after a long search, he found an art group in China - the Panyu Muralists Art Collective - who created the tiles for the mosaic.

Designed as an educational art work for current students as well as future generations, the mural represents the Chicano/a movement and the historic struggle of individuals who fought for human rights, such as César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, founders of the United Farm Workers Union.

For the first time in its history, UC San Diego has a permanent outdoor art installation that reflects the history of a minority community," said UC San Diego professor of Literature Jorge Mariscal, a driving force behind the Chicano Legacy 40 Años project from start to finish. "The changing demographics of the 21st century soon will make Chicanos/Latinos a majority and the number of Chicano/a and Latino/a students at UC San Diego is rising. It is only fitting that the university celebrate these realities with a representational piece of art for the entire campus community, and indeed for all Californians."

One of the champions of the mural was UC San Diego Vice Chancellor - Resource Management and Planning Gary Matthews.

This is a celebration during our 50th Anniversary year of the contributions of our Chicano/a students, faculty and staff, and recognition of the contributions of the community in the growth and building of the physical campus," Matthews said.

The mural is a collage of vivid colorful images and features iconic figures such as Chávez and Huerta and San Diego landmarks Chicano Park and the Coronado Bridge. It is named in recognition of the 40th Anniversary of Chicano Park and of the Centro Cultural De La Raza in Balboa Park. The mosaic features icons of Chicano/a and Latino/a San Diego, the Coronado Bridge, the kiosk at Chicano Park and the border wall.

Our hope is that by locating these images on the La Jolla campus, the relationship between UC San Diego and working class communities might be improved and that students of color, especially Chicano/a students, would feel more welcomed and respected," said Mariscal.

Originally commissioned as a temporary art project, Chicano Legacy demonstrates the diversity of California and symbolizes the campus commitment to providing a public education and a welcoming environment to all groups in both our region and state.

The mural was made permanent as part of the initiatives to embrace diversity, foster cultural awareness and improve the campus climate at UC San Diego.

For people like me, I can relate to the imagery," said undergraduate Mar Velez. "The mural gives me a sense of belonging and support. This unveiling will be about students, artists the Latino/a and all underserved communities, on and off campus."

According to the mural artist, Torero, iconic figures Chávez and Huerta continue to resonate today not only for Chicanos but for all working families. "These figures help convey to students that they have a choice to be a service to humanity. We are "artists"- a connection between arts and activism. It's a bridge, not confrontation, but the 'mortar' for change."

Torero hopes the same process used to make the Chicano Legacy 40 Años will help to make murals throughout San Diego communities permanent.

Torero worked directly with MEChA members, who conceptualized the current mosaic's content.

The students struggled to have the project come to fruition," Torero said. "They are paving the way for changing the aesthetics and culture of the campus."

The May 25 ceremony feature remarks from the students, artists and administrators involved with the project.

As the 2010-2011 academic year draws to a close, UC San Diego continues its diligent efforts in addressing diversity and campus climate initiatives. For details regarding the progress the university has made, please visit the Campus Climate Update website at <http://campusclimate.ucsd.edu>.

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