

RUIZ-HEALY ART

Latinx, Latin America, & Texas Contemporary Art

Ruiz-Healy Art is pleased to present *De aquí y de allá: Frank Romero, A Survey*, a concurrent solo exhibition of works by Los Angeles-based artist Frank Romero, curated by Rafael Barrientos Martínez at our New York City and San Antonio galleries. *De aquí y de allá: Frank Romero, A Survey*, will be on view at our San Antonio gallery from Thursday, December 5th, 2024, to January 25th, 2025. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, December 5th, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at our San Antonio gallery. A conversation with the former director of the Los Angeles Craft and Folk Art Museum, Patrick Ela, artist Frank Romero, and curator Rafael Barrientos Martínez will take place on Saturday, December 7th, from 1:30 to 2:30 PM, followed by a book signing presentation of *Dreamland: A Frank Romero Retrospective* (Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, 2017). This collection of work unravels the cultural mosaic of Romero's lived history as a pioneer of the Chicano/a movement, encompassing a variety of visual narratives influenced by his hometown of Los Angeles, California, and his travels across the greater American Southwest. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the influential Chicano art collective *Los Four*, of which Romero was an original member. The group helped redefine Mexican American artistic expression and bring attention to Chicano art in an institutional setting.

Throughout his over 60-year career as an artist, Frank Romero has been a dedicated contributor to the Los Angeles arts community. As a founding member of the 1970s Chicano art collective, *Los Four*, Romero and fellow artists Carlos Almaraz, Beto de la Rocha, and Gilbert "Magu" Luján helped define and promote new Mexican American awareness through murals, publications, and exhibitions at the peak of multiple political movements such as *El Movimiento*. *Los Four's* historic 1974 exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) marked the country's first show of Chicano art at a major art institution. *De aquí y de allá* features *Por El Pueblo*, a mural created in 1981 in conjunction with the exhibition *Murals of Aztlán: The Street Painters of East Los Angeles* at the Craft and Folk Art Museum (Los Angeles, CA), which Romero also curated. Barrientos Martínez shares, "*Por El Pueblo* reflects a diverse cast of signs and symbols that belong to a coded pictographic language first developed by the artist in the early 1970s. From a family pet to an unbridled horse, a military warplane to a 1920s Chevy, an oversized *corazón* to a *nopal* cactus, these icons, along with a stylized rollcall of family members names, are painted atop a large spread of cool hues with inclusions of deep red shades. Romero's motifs represent familiar surroundings within the range of Boyle Heights in

East Los Angeles to Arroyo Seco in Taos, New Mexico, pulling from his communal and personal record as a love letter to his culture and region composed in the tongue of his visual vocabulary.”

Outside of his neighborhood of Boyle Heights in Los Angeles, the artist found a home in Arroyo Seco near Taos, New Mexico, during the 1980s and 90s with his then-wife, artist Nancy Romero. Surrounded by a community of artists that included Lee Mullican and Luchita Hurtado, Larry Bell, and Ken Price, Romero was catapulted into the world of textiles, ceramics, folk art, wood sculptures, and the overall zeitgeist of the American Southwest. "Having built his own adobe home with the help of members of the Taos Pueblo, Romero would apply lessons taught to him by his new friends to create a series of rarely exhibited earthworks that bridge land and gallery. *The Adobe Series* exemplifies an important period in his practice where his work becomes intertwined with craft traditions native to regions and towns throughout the greater United States Southwest and Northern Mexico, including ceramics, wool, and wood carving. A voracious collector of Mexican and Indigenous American textiles, these patterned fabrics become the backdrops for Romero's still-life paintings, evoking a sense of multiculturalism inherent to both his upbringing, the spaces in which he has occupied, and the characters he has met along the way," explains Barrientos Martínez.

Romero's massive and vibrant painting *Recuerdo* captures a tapestry of imagery rooted in LA's urban culture, Hollywood cinema, and Mexican American heritage. *Recuerdo*, which translates to remembrance, is a large-scale, oil on canvas work that harmonizes Romero's cinematic narrative with color along with his habitual iconography of cars, hearts, cowboys, and more. Since the start of his artistic career, Romero has been interested in the importance of community-based murals and graffiti, noting that this type of public art is a way of communicating ideas. Through this ability to communicate with the public, Romero was fearless in experimenting with color, fueled by the cultural density of the surrounding community.

Romero's work invites viewers to explore the intricacies of cultural narratives, commenting on the intersections between heritage, *Chicanidad*, and region. "In these works, dating to an important period for Chicano art where the visual program meant for a particular community began to be seen and collected far beyond its borders, Romero communicates to his viewers using his coded language that is both deeply personal but altogether universal in its relationship to the every day." - Rafael Barrientos Martínez.

About Frank Romero

A pioneer of the Chicana/o art movement, Frank Romero (b. 1941, Los Angeles) is considered one of its earliest and most influential participants. Romero now spends six months out of the year at his home in Le Vermont, France, where he still paints daily. The artist has exhibited extensively in the United States, Europe, and Japan. His work is featured in many permanent collections, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; National Museum of Art, Washington D.C.; The Carnegie Art Museum, Oxnard, CA; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, CA; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; and the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX.

About Ruiz-Healy Art

Founded in San Antonio, TX, in 2006, Ruiz-Healy Art represents an international roster of artists, emphasizing Latinx and Latin American artists and working with prominent Texas-based artists. Biculturalism and identity discourse are important in several artists we collaborate with. In the spring of 2019, we opened a gallery space in the Upper East Side of New York City that works in tandem with the gallery in San Antonio as a platform to disseminate the artist's work. The continuous investments in these under-represented areas have remained a longstanding signature of the gallery program. The gallery is recognized for its success in placing works by our artists in prestigious museum collections ranging from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Smithsonian Institution, the LA County Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Antonio Museum of Art, McNay Art Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and many others.