

home • artnews • artists

75 Latinx Artists to Know

BY

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October 15, 2024 3:16pm



Though Latinx people have long been part of the fabric of this country, Latinx artists in the United States have only recently begun to be acknowledged by the mainstream art world. Because of the lack of support for their works, many Latinx artists established their own venues—from New York to Los Angeles, San Francisco to Chicago, Phoenix to San Antonio—to showcase the varied artistic visions of this diverse community. In recent years institutional support has become more forthcoming, thanks in large part to a generation of Latinx scholars, curators, and writers who have raised the profiles of their artistic elders and contemporaries. And while market support has been much slower in coming, that too is beginning to change.

Below we examine 75 of the most important and exciting Latinx artists, who have had a profound impact on art history and their communities by creating work in which community members can see themselves represented. This list is by no means comprehensive but serves as entry point to learn about a diverse group of artists who deserve further study.

Consuelo Jimenez Underwood



Consuelo Jimenez Underwood, *Run, Jane, Run!*, 2004.

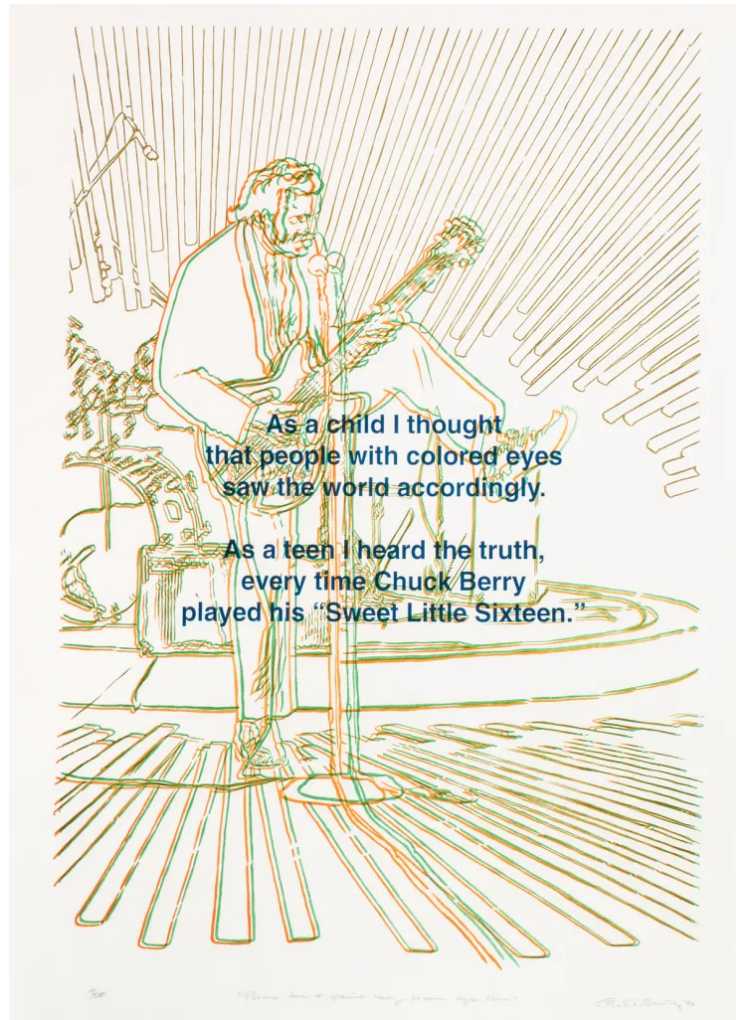
Photo : ©2004 Consuelo J. Underwood/Smithsonian American Art Museum

“Over 30 years ago, when ‘craft vs. art’ was the most divisive issue in the arts, I discovered and established my ‘authentic artistic voice,’ [and] refocused my artistic studies from the paintbrush and pigments to ‘needle and thread,’” Consuelo Jimenez Underwood writes in her artist statement. Her shift to textiles has made her one of the most important Latinx artists working today. In most sewing, thread is used to bring together two swaths of fabric while remaining invisible; in Jimenez Underwood’s hands, thread is visible, evidence of all the tears that need suturing.

“Jimenez Underwood was born in 1949 in Sacramento, California, the daughter of an undocumented field worker of Huichol origin. In the 1990s, she started her “Caution” series, consisting of woven-cotton signs depicting a three-person family running. These were based on an “immigrant crossing” sign that had become ubiquitous along the 405 Freeway near San Diego; when Jimenez Underwood first saw that sign, she was appalled by its brazenness and wanted to create art that would memorialize the countless anonymous people who had died crossing the US–Mexico border. In some of her pieces the image is repeated many times over; in others it is enlarged and placed at the center, as in the caution tape–colored *Run, Jane, Run!* (2004). In these works, the artist often incorporated safety pins and barbed wire to convey the perils of crossing the border. In a later series she took her focus on the border a step farther, creating large-scale installations that represent the border from San Diego to Brownsville, Texas, making it appear as a chasm in the earth.

Other works make this commentary more abstract. *Broken: 13 Undocumented Birds* (2021) consists of six vertical strips of black-ish woven fabric with red squares affixed to them. The red here represents the red-tailed Texas blackbird, which migrates between the United States and Mexico annually; some birds no doubt collide with the border wall. People are not the only victims of human-made borders, Jimenez Underwood is saying. — M.D.

Celia Álvarez Muñoz



Celia Álvarez Muñoz, *Please Don't Paint My Brown Eyes Blue*, 1994.

Photo : Smithsonian American Art Museum

Conceptual artist Celia Álvarez Muñoz once **told an interviewer** (<https://glasstire.com/2024/04/20/celia-alvarez-munoz-art-life-and-eternity/>) that she lives by these words: Nothing is forever. A paean to living in the present, the motto also serves as an apt lens through which to consider Álvarez Muñoz's expansive artistic oeuvre, which ranges from photography to works on paper and beyond, and often evokes a sense of impermanence. Born in 1937, Álvarez Muñoz came of age in the liminal borderlands of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, in Mexico—a formative experience that makes its way into her work.

Álvarez Muñoz started making art in her 40s, when she began graduate studies in photography at the University of North Texas. Álvarez Muñoz's five-decade artistic evolution was illuminated in "Breaking the Binding," her 2023 retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. A highlight of the show were monumental immersive installations like *Fibra*, in which Álvarez Muñoz embellished clothing to draw attention to the fashion industry's sexualization of women. —*P.M.*

Frank Romero



Frank Romero, *Death of Rubén Salazar*, 1986.

Photo : ©1986 Frank Romero/Smithsonian American Art Museum

Chicano artist Frank Romero was born in 1941 in East Los Angeles and grew up in the culturally mixed, middle-class community of Boyle Heights. Bold, colorful, and energetic scenes of daily life in Los Angeles characterize Romero's paintings, which feature iconic images like lowriders, palm trees, and freeways. Romero's paintings mix elements of pop art with traditional Mexican and Chicano motifs to produce unique visual experiences. One of his most iconic paintings is *Death of Rubén Salazar* (1986), in which Romero interprets the death and legacy of a civil rights activist and writer for the *Los Angeles Times* in the 1960s. In the aftermath of a significant Chicano protest in East L.A. in 1970 against the Vietnam War, police fired tear-gas canisters into the Silver Dollar Bar and Café, where Salazar and two others were struck and killed. Romero pays homage to this event in a painting that encapsulates his unique style of using bright pastel colors with contrasting hues.

As a member of the influential art collective Los Four, alongside artists Carlos Almaraz, Roberto "Beto" de la Rocha, and Gilbert "Magu" Sanchez Luján, Romero played a key role in bringing Chicano art into the mainstream and advocating for its recognition in major art institutions. The collective was crucial in establishing a distinct Chicano aesthetic and addressing issues of cultural representation and identity. —M.E.R.

Einar and Jamex de la Torre



Einar de la Torre, Jamex de la Torre, *Ohio Goza y Mas*, 2013

Photo : Smithsonian American Art Museum

Since the 1980s, brothers Einar and Jamex de la Torre have worked in tandem to develop their prowess in glass blowing, resin casting, and lenticular printing, to create idiosyncratic figurines and assemblages. Born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and having grown up in both Mexico and Dana Point, California, the brothers were deeply impacted by pop culture iconography on both sides of the border, those influences indelibly woven into their monumental sculptures. Spotlighting their work and now touring the US is “Collidoscope: de la Torre Retro-Perspective,” a collaboration between the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino and the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum. —*P.M.*

Yvette Mayorga



Yvette Mayorga, *Voyage to the Pink Castle* , 2023.

Photo : Courtesy David B. Smith Gallery

There's something absolutely sumptuous about the maximalist artwork of Yvette Mayorga, a rising artist born in 1991 in Moline, Illinois, and based in Chicago. Adopting hues of pink as her primary palette, Mayorga builds up her paintings in thick impasto, which at times gives the effect of frosting on a cake. Her paintings look to art history, filtering Rococo portrait painter François Boucher, 17th-century vanitas paintings, porcelain vases, and more into depictions of contemporary Latinx life, with a 1990s nostalgia flair.

In one, a young woman in elaborate French court dress relaxes in her bedroom, scrolling on her phone with a toy truck, horse calendar, and laptop nearby. Other works agglomerate iconography of Hello Kitty, Flamin' Hot Cheetos, *chanclas* (slippers), Tweety Bird, little green army men, McDonald's fries, and sets of long acrylic nails. Mayorga has also scaled her tableaux into the third dimension, creating decked-out sculptures and a room-size installation for an exhibition at the Momentary in Bentonville, Arkansas, titled *Bedroom After 15th* (2022). Each element in the installation, decorated with Rococo-inspired, Mayorga-designed wallpaper, is coated in pink, including a queen bed, backpack, handbag, painted French porcelain figures, a miniature carousel horse, a glitching laptop, and a Disney TV. At one point a Selena song plays. —M.D.

Michael Menchaca



Michael Menchaca, *Toro Lo Que Quieras Es Tuyo*, 2013.

Photo : ©2020 Michael Menchaca/Smithsonian American Art Museum

Encompassing digital animation, screen printing, and multimedia video installation, Michael Menchaca's works satirize the colonial impulses of contemporary corporate tech. Menchaca was born in 1985 in San Antonio, Texas. In their densely layered colorful works, they borrow from a range of cultural signifiers, including pre-Columbian codices, Big Tech logos, internet cats, emojis, and GIF memes. The artist uses these icons liberally and repeatedly in maximalist compositions, evoking the accumulation of browsing windows on a computer screen or the overwhelming density of digital advertising in everyday life.

In their series "Wild Wild Web3" (2021–present), Menchaca presents a scathing critique of Big Tech companies, correlating their "entrepreneurship" with the gold lust and greed of early colonial pioneers who decimated Indigenous communities and exploited natural