



# Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California

*Guisela Latorre*

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Exploring three major hubs of muralist activity in California, where indigenist imagery is prevalent, *Walls of Empowerment* celebrates an aesthetic that seeks to firmly establish Chicana/o sociopolitical identity in U.S. territory. Providing readers with a history and genealogy of key muralists' productions, Guisela Latorre also showcases new material and original research on works and artists never before examined in print.

An art form often associated with male creative endeavors, muralism in fact reflects significant contributions by Chicana artists. Encompassing these and other aspects of contemporary dialogues, including the often tense relationship between graffiti and muralism, *Walls of Empowerment* is a comprehensive study that, unlike many previous endeavors, does not privilege non-public Latina/o art. In addition, Latorre introduces readers to the role of new media, including performance, sculpture, and digital technology, in shaping the muralist's "canvas."

Drawing on nearly a decade of fieldwork, this timely endeavor highlights the ways in which California's Mexican American communities have used images of indigenous peoples to raise awareness of the region's original citizens. Latorre also casts murals as a radical force for decolonization and liberation, and she provides a stirring description of the decades, particularly the late 1960s through 1980s, that saw California's rise as the epicenter of mural production. Blending the perspectives of art history and sociology with firsthand accounts drawn from artists' interviews, *Walls of Empowerment* represents a crucial turning point in the study of these iconographic artifacts.

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