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La Entrada invites the community into an *urban/border/Latino/Mexican* art project

**By Vanessa K. Nevarez
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In the middle of Barrio Logan's re-development, near a traditional Mexican fruit stand, an auto mechanic shop, and in-between the cross section of Logan Avenue and Beardsley Street, there is an urban and culture-infused low income housing development called La Entrada or The Entrance.



The Rooster being painted by WREC. Photographs by Geraldine Lozano

In a community where many would look the other way, artists known as Crol and as Werc decided, with aerosol spray paint can in hand, to look. Their profound mixture of acrylic life-like portraits and aerosol sprayed urban murals on The Gateway Apartments last year, gave them the recognition to be invited to do the murals for La Entrada.

Werc and Crol said they had lived in two border towns: El Paso and San Diego, so it was natural for them to be inspired by border culture. A border culture that include experiences, things witnessed and nostalgia that infuses into their art to create Mexican Picasso graffiti master pieces.



La Entrada's first mural is of a rancher-hat wearing accordion player on a red, salmon-pink, and magenta background, a rooster with his vibrant feathers, and circular honeycomb paper decorations accenting the edge of the mural.

"We're redefining the icons and creating a hybrid culture urban/border/Latino/Mexicano," said Werc.

The second mural is a grinning little cajeta-colored boy eagerly holding up a sky-blue spinning top or a nostalgic Mexican childhood toy called a "trompo."

Artists Isaias Crow on the scaffolding with cans of spray paint.

Werc said in American culture, children do not play with trompos the way he used to; instead they play video games. He said that it is a nostalgic memory he wants to internalize in his mural.

La Entrada paved the welcome mat for not only those looking for low income housing but for artists from all walks of creativity.

It has become more than housing. It has become an artistic movement to engage the Barrio Logan and Logan Heights communities to a positive creative direction said Werc.

Juarez-born Werc and El Paso, Texas native Crol are at the heart of this movement. Werc and Crol wanted to do more and turned it into a community project.

Both artists collaborated and interviewed community members and leaders to personalize La Entrada's murals. They felt it was important that the community felt ownership of the murals.

"It's more of a collaborated force, it has been more like 'let's just create, let's generate public art and then from this, it's branched to working now with other people,'" said 30-year-old Crol.

They wanted to involve the whole community by beautifying their communities through promotion of self-expression.

“We just want them to express themselves. I don’t think kids get enough of that these days especially when schools cut all sort of programs and to get that social interaction,” said 29-year-old Werc.

La Entrada Project is an art project for the public with free art workshops.

The multimedia, photography, film, writing, painting, music, screen printing, graffiti art, and storytelling workshops conducted by a group of collaborated artists and community members called the Prism Process. Crol said the Prism Process is a circle of people that make the project possible.

Prism Process member Irene Castruita organizes music, art, and danza for the community said the Prism Process is a fusion of the arts. “It is a collective group not an individual one.”

Castruita said the Prism Process tries different artistic facets and what they learn from each other they take it and spread to the community. She said then Prism Process and the community taps into each other’s artistic realm.

“I think that is what this project is about, it’s really engaging with the community, working with them and getting to know them,” said Crol.

All material and art supplies are provided and paid by commission Werc and Crol received for The Gateway murals. They have held five workshops since Jan. 30. for all community members.

Their workshops “Entra-das” or Entrances, involves painting doors free of charge to community buildings and residents’ doors. Werc said he hoped the workshop sent the neighborhood a positive message. “Entradas,” is a two-day workshop that started on Feb. 28 and will continue through Mar. 7.

“I think this is more specific but at the same time it marks a place where we really transcend our trade roots of graffiti and we transcend from there into something and we are venturing from there to create the workshops, everything that encompass’ the project,” said Werc.

For more information on La Entrada Project and upcoming workshops visit their website at www.laentradaproject.com or contact Crol at 619-757-6146.

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