

Ernesto Vazquez Bio 2019

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I am an artist born and raised in the projects of Boyle Heights. I found my love for art through my love for comics and cartoons. As a six year old, I would often re-create my favorite characters and everything that caught my eye. My teachers recognized my talent and encouraged me to participate in contests. I won several scholarships to art schools throughout my childhood. As an adolescent, I continued to explore art in its different expressions. I was captivated by graffiti art and the underground street art scene. I spent many hours studying the style but after spending even more hours in community service, I decided to enroll in a school for graphic arts. After two years, I redirected my focus toward giving life to my ideas rather than someone else's.

My first exhibition was in 2001 at Casa De Sousa in Placita Olvera. Through this event I was invited to meet with Chicano artists in a group called "Mental Menudo" facilitated by the great Gilbert "Magu" Lujan. Mental Menudo awoke in me an appetite for cultural art. I started to appreciate the connection between art and my identity. In 2005, I began to learn the art of printmaking at La Mano Press. I learned linoleum and wood block printing from Artemio Rodriguez and screen printing from John E. Miner.

In 2007 I became more involved with community organizing which influenced me to create socially conscious artwork. In 2009 I joined a group of five community members in establishing Solidarity Ink, a politically driven screen-printing cooperative. Being a part of this cooperative allowed me to gain experience in managing a print shop and curating cultural and socio-political art shows. Solidarity Ink closed its doors in 2012, giving me the opportunity to re-evaluate my path as an artist. Around this time I was introduced to, and immediately captivated by, the art of Jiu Jitsu. Learning this art has taken my creative energy in a new direction as well as given me a passion for teaching and sharing knowledge. As a continual student of art in all its forms, I look forward to learning new ways to share my expressions with you. Recent exhibitions have included not only my hand made prints but original illustrations, paintings and mixed media pieces. As of 2018 I returned to school to study Printmaking and hopefully within the next few years I will be able to acquire an MFA in Printmaking in hopes to continue to evolve as a student and as an artist.