

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

November 10, 2009

[Andrea Estrada](#)

Famed Artist Esteban Villa to Speak at UCSB and in Santa Barbara

Esteban Villa, a renowned artist, master muralist, and co-founder of the Sacramento-based artists collective known as the Royal Chicano Air Force, will discuss his work in a special presentation at UC Santa Barbara on Tuesday, November 17, and at La Cuesta Continuation High School in Santa Barbara on Monday, November 23. Both events are free and open to the public.

Titled "El Movimiento Chicano and the Royal Chicano Air Force," Villa's presentations are part of a monthlong residency at UCSB. The November 17 lecture will take place at 7 p.m. in 1610 Broida Hall, and the November 23 presentation at La Cuesta High School will begin at 9 a.m. La Cuesta is located at 710 Santa Barbara St.

Villa's personal papers, which include original sketches, correspondence, exhibition announcements, collected writings, and research files, are housed in the California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives (CEMA) of the UCSB Library. During his residency, Villa will provide historical documentation and narrative contexts to the visual arts materials in the collection, as well as to the vintage graphics of the Royal Chicano Air Force archives, which also are housed by CEMA.

"Esteban Villa is one of the Chicano Movement's most respected and admired Chicano artists, whose work resonates with multiple generations," said CEMA director Sal Güereña.

Born in Tulare, Calif., in 1930, Villa is a professor emeritus of art at California State University, Sacramento. He produced dozens of murals between 1970 and 1999, mostly in the Sacramento area, and his work continues to be shown in galleries throughout the state. He has served as an art consultant to schools and organizations in California, including Centro de Artistas Chicanos, which was founded by the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF). Villa also has led art programs for the state prison system.

With a keen interest in social issues, Villa became involved with the emerging Chicano mural movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's. The RCAF was formed in 1969 to express the goals of the Chicano civil rights and labor organizing movement of the United Farm Workers. Its mission was to provide the Chicano community with a bilingual/bicultural arts center where artists could exchange ideas, provide mutual support, and make available to the public a variety of artistic, cultural, and educational programs and events.

Villa and José Montoya, another RCAF co-founder and also a professor of art, knew each other through their involvement in the Mexican Liberation Art Front and the California College of Arts and Crafts. Their positions on the faculty of Cal State Sacramento gave them the creative freedom to initiate programmatic exchanges, such as the Barrio Art Program, which required university students to teach art courses at senior centers and other community venues.

While the RCAF originally stood for the Rebel Chicano Art Front, the letters were often confused with the acronym for the Royal Canadian Air Force. Villa and his fellow officers capitalized on the misunderstanding, and in good humor adopted the name Royal Chicano Air Force. This new identity found its way into their wardrobe, as well as their highly successful silkscreen poster program, which began to disseminate the World War I aviator and barnstorming bi-winged airplanes as icons. The RCAF gained a reputation for outrageous humor, fine art posters, murals, and community activism. Their pioneering spirit, which was well known in the California Chicano community throughout the 1970's and early 1980's, continues to the present.

Villa's presentations are co-sponsored by CEMA, the UCSB Chicano Studies Institute's Research Working Group on Chican@ Visual Arts, and the Chicano/Latino Research Group of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center.

Related Links

[California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives](#)

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.