

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Judy Baca Paints at LACMA

Elisa Leonelli · Sunday, October 29th, 2023

The general public is offered the unique treat of watching artist [Judy Baca](#) at work painting two new sections of *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* live at LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Arts) from October 26, 2023 to June 4, 2024.



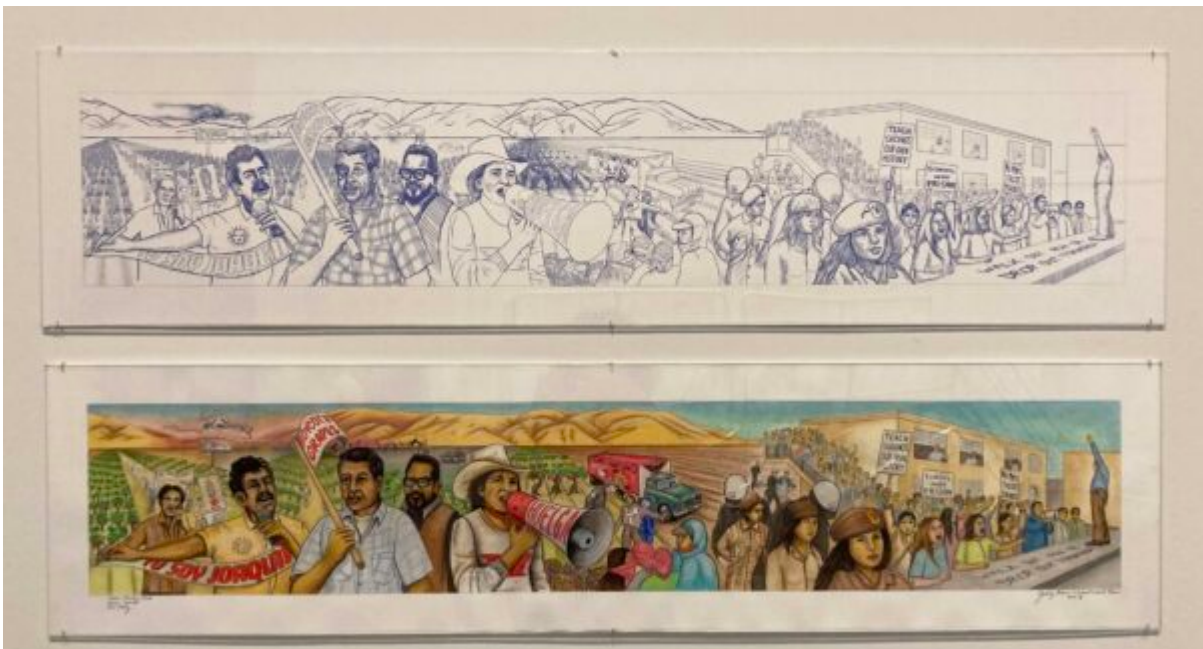
Generation on Fire

As a huge admirer of this woman of my generation who accomplished so much in her lifetime and is still going strong at age 77, I already wrote two articles on Judy Baca, one about a major [retrospective of her work at MOOLA](#), the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach, and another about the [World Wall project at MOCA Geffen](#) in Little Tokyo, where I also mentioned the Getty Museum exhibit of her Olympic mural *Hitting the Wall*. Please click orange links to read.



Judy Baca at LACMA

When I finally met this amazing muralist and activist in person, with other journalists at the press preview, she was wearing artfully paint-splattered white pants, and a jacket with a reproduction of her Olympic mural on the back. We chatted privately about our friend, [Alonzo Davis](#), director of the [1984 Olympic mural project](#), then she outlined her intentions for this new endeavor.



Farmworkers' Movement, East LA Student Walkouts

“What you are looking at is a 60 foot addition to the 2,740 feet mural, a half mile, that is already done in the channel. These characters coming out of the fields of California are very important people to the development of the Farm Workers movement, who agitated and fought to correct the situation for essential workers who feed a nation and are oftentimes ill from the pesticides, have no drinking water on the site, no toilets.” She mentioned Filipino leaders [Philip Vera Cruz](#) and [Larry](#)

Itliong, “he convinced Chavez that they should go on strike, and they started to **boycott grapes**.” Mexican-American activists **Cesar Chavez** and **Dolores Huerta**, depicted speaking into a megaphone with the writing ‘Huelga’ (Strike in Spanish), “she is prominent and large, because women were never given credit for the work that they did. She is as much a founder of **UFM** (United Farm Workers) as Chavez was.”

In the center stands **Corky Gonzales**. “He had influence on my own life. When as a young woman I heard him on the radio singing a poem called ‘Yo Soy Joaquin’ with his baritone voice, talking about the beauty of Latinos, of Chicanos, that had never been said out loud in my presence, and it made me think differently about who I am and who my people are. Corky began his crusade for racial justice, and you might think of him as our **Malcolm X**.”

In the background you see a truck for **Teatro Campesino**, lead by **Luis Valdez**, “Luis is a visionary and used theater.”

On the right side are “thousands of brave young people who stood up and walked out of the school system in East Los Angeles, and lead that movement, saying: we want our story told.” Baca is referring to the **Brown Berets** and the **East L.A. Student Walkouts** of 1968.



Watts Rebellion, Watts Renaissance, Black Panther Party

We are only seeing the **maquette** for this second section of the mural, which will be painted later and is titled *Watts Rebellion, Watts Renaissance, Black Panther Party*, but Baca described it: “The mural will continue and and you’ll see the **Watts Riots**, the Rebellion, and once again the arts will be prominent in it. You will see a muralist, **Richard Wyatt**, on the ground painting **Cecil Ferguson**. It’s a beautiful portrait that ended up at Watts Towers, which we sponsored through **SPARC** (Social and Public Art Resource Center). I was born in Watts, at 85th and Central, I lived there, so these are not stories that I have gone to visit, I didn’t parachute in with lots of money in my back pocket. I walked in with nothing, walked out with nothing too, except the work and the people.”



Generation on Fire, maquette

Baca explained that these two sections will be painted on canvas at LACMA then transferred to *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* and will look like the already completed section on display titled *Generation on Fire*. “Tom Hayden before he passed gave us a wonderful discussion that inspired that piece, he said ‘we were a generation on fire, self-described revolutionaries in the 1960s.’” It’s a reference to the [Freedom Riders](#), civil rights activists who rode buses into the South in 1961 to challenge the non-enforcement of the Supreme Court decision that segregated public buses were unconstitutional.

Don’t miss this opportunity to watch the artist and her team at work, at the LACMA exhibit *Painting in the River of Angels: Judy Baca and the Great Wall.*”

(All photos by Elisa Leonelli)

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