

# ByDESIGN

An Online Journal of Exceptional Achievement

## Latinx in Architecture

Melissa I. Garcia AIA  
Principal  
herman coliver locus architecture

## Block By Block

Struggle to  
Bring Community  
College to  
San Francisco  
Chinatown  
Jennie Lew

VOLUME 46

September 2023

## OUR TEAM

### Editors

Rogelio Roy Hernández, Publisher  
roy.hernandez@thirdwavecorp.com  
Joseph Martinez, Senior Editor  
jmartinez@martinezcutri.com

### Team Members

Aymee Barajas, Web Designer  
Martha Ruiz Campa, Sr. Editor  
Michael Hernández, Photographer  
Lourdes Aguayo Francia, Writer  
Itzel Torrez, Contributing Writer

### ByDESIGN is published by:

**ByDESIGN Enterprises**  
12100 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 800  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

ByDESIGN Magazine™ is published online by ByDESIGN Enterprises®. All Rights Reserved. The ByDESIGN e-zine and logo are trademarks owned by ByDESIGN. No part of this electronic magazine may be reproduced without the written consent of ByDESIGN.



## CONTENTS

### MEMO ..... 2

**Fighting the Powerful, Siding with the Powerless for a Pedagogy of the Oppressed**  
Rogelio R. Hernández, Publisher

### Perspective ..... 2

**CASA Alumni  
Fellowship &  
Internships**

**CASA Alumni Mentorship Program**  
Joseph Martinez, Senior Editor

### CASA Study Abroad ..... 3



**CASA Member Studies in Barcelona, and Sees Europe**  
Lourdes Aguayo Francia, UC Berkeley

### Cover Story ..... 4



**Block By Block: The Struggle to Bring Community College to San Francisco Chinatown**  
Jennie Lew, Planner

### Scholarly Essay ..... 8



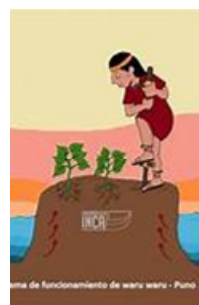
**Echoes: Unveiling Timeless Expressions of the Americas**  
Sulem Hernandez, CASA Alumni Fellow, Martinez + Cutri

### Latinx in Architecture ..... 10



**Strengthen, Educate & Expand Latino Design Community's Visibility & Impact**  
Melissa Iris Garcia AIA, NOMA, LEED AP, Principal

### Scholarly Essay ..... 13



**Sustainability and a Worldview: Renovation of the Ancient Waru Waru**

Faith Cuellar, 2023 CASA Alumni Intern, Martinez + Cutri

### Scholarly Essay ..... 15



**Mystification: A Conversation Between the Spoon/Cherry and the Vessel**

Alma Rodriguez Guzman, 2023 CASA Alumni Intern, Martinez + Cutri

## CONTRIBUTORS

Roy R. Hernández, Joseph Martinez, Martha Ruiz Campa  
Aymee Barajas, Michael Hernández, Lourdes Aguayo Francia  
Jennifer Lew, Francis Lee, Henry Der  
Alice Barkley, Jennifer Devlin-Herbert, Sulem Hernandez  
Melissa Garcia, Faith Cuellar, Alma Rodriguez Guzman  
Russ Lowe

## ON THE COVER

The cover photo of was taken at the Chinatown North Beach City College, San Francisco Chinatown October 31, 2023, San Francisco by Russ Lowe, FEOC Member

## Fighting the Powerful, Siding with the Powerless for a Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Rogelio Roy Hernández



“ Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence;... to alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects. Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral. ”

- Paulo Freire

This issue of BD is acutely relevant for the times in which we live. Freedom of thought in education is under political attack: incessant assaults on learning institutions, book bannings, white washing of history, and political impediments for the study of this country's true history abound. This is an epoch of struggle to promote unencumbered learning and scholarship in a quest for truth.

The cover story **Block by Block**, by **Jennie Lew**, is a tale of the powerless fighting the powerful to build a college in a community of color – and winning after 28 years! The struggle to get a permanent campus building in San Francisco's Chinatown started in 1980 and concluded in 2008, when all approvals for construction were secured and lawsuits filed by the opponents concluded. Construction commenced in 2008 and the Chinatown North Beach campus opened its doors for classes in September 2012 – 32 years after the struggle began. Additional contributors to this story include **Frances Lee**, **Henry Der**, **Alice Barkley**, and **Jennifer Devlin-Herbert**.

The **Study Abroad** article by **Lourdes Aguayo Francia**, chronicles how this young woman, raised in a small agricultural town in Central California, experienced a dream of studying architecture in Spain – and got to travel throughout Europe too!

## Perspective

### CASA Alumni Mentorship Program



Since the launching of the CASA Alumni Mentorship Program in 2022 (see *By Design*, Volume 41, January 30, 2022, page 11) seven CASA Scholars have experienced first-hand a rigorous tutelage under Architect Joseph Martinez.

The one-on-one sessions of select projects (painting, sculpture, architecture, et. al.) offer a tripartite approach wherein research and critical writing, case study and design theory,

as well as oral and graphic presentations, are simultaneously pursued in order to establish a basis for Critical Inquiry.

The over-arching objective is to more broadly understand Western European thought on the one hand, and on the other, dig-deep into the 20,000-year history of cultural aesthetics in the Americas. In addition to the articles by 2023 CASA Scholars (Sulem Hernandez, BA'23, Alma Rodriguez, BA'24 and Faith Cuellar, BA'24), past articles have been published in *By Design* of the writings by 2022 Scholar



Chinatown North Beach City College  
San Francisco Chinatown  
October 31, 2023, San Francisco  
Photo: Russ Lowe

A new section in this issue of BD is the **Latinos in Architecture SF**

(**LiA SF**). **Melissa Garcia**, AIA, shares her immigrant family story and trajectory from East Los Angeles, to UC Berkeley's College of Environmental Design, to Principal at Herman Coliver Locus Architecture, and to co-chair of the very active LiA SF, an AIA SF Subcommittee.

This issue also presents another new section, **Scholarly Essays**, where CASA Alumni fellows and interns carry out research, producing articles reflecting critical writing, case studies, and the synthesis of design theory. These scholars and contributing authors include fellow **Sulem Hernandez**, "Echoes: Unveiling Timeless Expressions of the Americas," intern **Faith Cuellar**, "Sustainability and a Worldview: Renovation of the Ancient Waru Waru," and intern **Alma Rodriguez Guzman**, "Mystification: A Conversation Between the Spoon/Cherry and the Vessel."

As a new academic year begins, BD reaffirms our steadfast commitment to the next generation of design professionals and our communities — and a pedagogy based on truth and freedom of scholarship for people of color/LGBTQ communities. As the old Chinese saying states: "A child without an education is like a bird without wings." Adelante!

Leslie Gonzalez BA'22 (Vol. 43: "A Mystical Analysis of the Gilardi House"), and 2022 CASA Intern Alexandra Morales, BA'22 (Vol. 44, "Gentrification in Four Dimensions: A Perspective of Barrio Logan"), as well as essays by 2021 CASA Scholars Omar Zoluaga Martinez, BA'21, Yale University M.Arch.'25, and Samantha Andalon BA'23.

This Program was conceived and is directed by Joseph Martinez; a practicing architect, author, founding Dean at The New School of Architecture, and the Father of Chicanx Architecture.

## CASA Member Studies in Barcelona, and Sees Europe

Lourdes Aguayo Francia, UC Berkeley



Within five months of receiving my U.S. citizenship I applied for a student visa to Spain, where I would spend half of the upcoming year in Barcelona, 5,000 miles away from everything I had known.

Those six months were first time experiences, bringing on personal and educational lessons that I aspire to keep for a lifetime.

UCEAP connects students, from all nine UC campuses, to host institutions promoting global opportunities. Through the immersive program at the Universitat de Barcelona, I took on a semester's worth of classes from both UC American and local Catalan students. As an architecture major, I enrolled in an Environmental Impact Assessment course regarding the local area and expansive country.

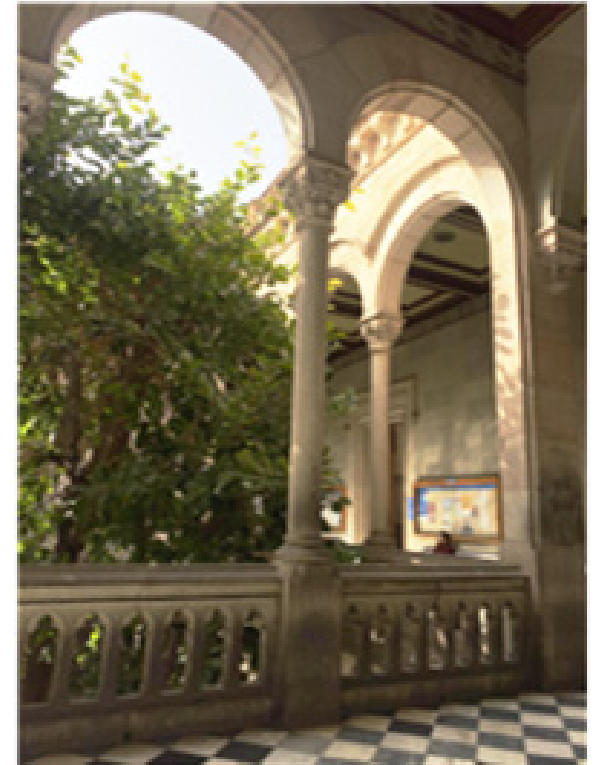
Additionally, I attended several Spanish culture and language courses including: art history, Barcelona urban culture, and literature. My Spanish speaking experience was limited to home and family conversations; I expanded my vocabulary in a formal setting inside and outside of class.

With the allure of Spain's capital city, Madrid, Barcelona's study abroad program was humorously smaller, allowing me to make some of the strongest friendships with fellow peers.

Whenever we had any days off we would pick the cheapest flights to a new country -- eventually visiting over eight countries. Through early flights, navigating foreign transportation symptoms, and languages, I gained a new level of independence and confidence in my abilities. I felt grateful and emotional at times to have my group of friends when we, distinctly Latino, received micro-aggressions or ridicule of our Mexican culture. In between the instant questions, "¿De donde son, de realidad?" I learned to advocate for myself to combat ignorance.

As I saw more and more of the world, while appreciating distinct cultures, I began to understand European culture apparent in each unique city we visited. Many Europeans live a slow life. Any store promoting 24/7 hours is lying as they work less, have more time for family, shorter commute times due to efficient public transportation, and prioritize dining in with friends.

Coming from the bustle of a college town, where everyone is constantly comparing themselves to their



Universitat de Barcelona campus.

studio partner and looking to do more, it was initially alarming. How could I slow down?

Eventually, however, I began to embrace the lifestyle changes. It wasn't exclusively about having a lighter workload but being able to enjoy every asset of my days. Not sprinting to get to point B allowed me to take the long way home to see more of Barcelona, buy the coffee without worrying about my financial situation in 10 years, or honor the little girl that wanted to live without borders by planning a week in Italy 3 days in advance.



**Top Left:** Eiffel Tower, Paris, France



**Top Middle:** Vondel Park in Amsterdam, Netherlands



**Top Right:** Parc Guell in Barcelona, Spain



**Bottom Left:** Vondel Park in Amsterdam, Netherlands with Eymard Bracamontes and Natalie Murillo



**Bottom Middle:** Salida de campo with Environmental Impact Assessment Course



**Bottom Right:** The Alps in Switzerland

### **About the author:**

Lourdes Aguayo Francia is a Junior BA Architecture, Class of 2025, College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley. She is a ByDESIGN Intern.

## Block By Block: The Struggle to Bring Community College to San Francisco Chinatown

Jennie Lew, Planner



A new short film, "Block by Block", presents the epic battle for a community college campus in San Francisco Chinatown between affluent and politically connected special interests and a grassroots community coalition, FEOC (Friends of Educational Opportunities in Chinatown).

The project serves as a testament to the perseverance and resilience of the powerless fighting the powerful, and what lessons it may hold for design and planning professionals.

### FRANCES LEE



FEOC member with 30 years in education (former Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, City College of San Francisco)

### What significance does Chinatown North Beach (CTNB) City College have for an immigrant, non-English proficient population?

The CTNB Campus is a crucial first step for Chinese and other adult immigrants. Learning English is a fundamental job skill to survive and advance in a new country. As busy as they are, our adult students find the time to attend classes either day, evenings or weekends to build a life for themselves and their families.

### Why the urgency for this particular project to be built?

Previous classrooms on Filbert St. were aged public elementary school facilities provided only on a rental basis.



Vincent Pan, Co-Executive Director of CAA, and Henry Der, Former Executive Director of CAA, representing the FEOC coalition at a community press conference

Photo: Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), 2007



Credit: Jeremy Bittermann

They were in serious disrepair with leaking roofs and falling ceilings.

Other rental space was scattered in churches, nonprofits and other City buildings, not always reliable nor suitable for adults.

Continual delays could have reduced or redirected vital State funds to other projects, jeopardizing any hope for a new campus altogether.

On **SEPTEMBER 18, 2023**, the 20th Annual Center for Architecture + Design Festival in San Francisco will be showing "Block By Block". To attend the viewing, log onto: [https://ACFest23\\_block-by-block-film.eventbrite.com](https://ACFest23_block-by-block-film.eventbrite.com)

The CAA (Chinese for Affirmative Action) Oral History Project "Block By Block" film is currently available for in-person educational public and private showings. To view the trailer, receive updates, host a screening, go to: <https://caasf.org/event/beyond-elite-institutions-the-fight-for-city-college-of-san-francisco-chinatown-campus/>



Student protester Hartley Ochavillo advocating for the community college in one of the many community meeting/protests. Photo: CAA

## Block By Block

### HENRY DER



FEOC and CAA Oral History Member.  
Photo: Russ Lowe

#### Why and how did the FRIENDS of EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES in CHINATOWN (FEOC) coalition come about?

I was shocked there was opposition to the proposed 16-story, Chinatown North Beach campus since it took 40 years to secure public funds and find a site. I gathered trusted community colleagues with whom I worked on many community issues over the years, and held weekly meetings to push back against the well-financed opposition orchestrated by the owners of the Hilton Hotel property.

FEOC became a broad-based, racially diverse coalition of students, faculty members, community groups, traditional family and district associations, Christian organizations and labor unions, all of whom overwhelmingly supported the proposed campus building.

#### Why do outside self-interests often challenge a community's desire for self-determination?

Those with financial resources and privileges based on racial domination always pursue their self-interests and especially at the expense of communities that are poor, limited English proficient, foreign-born and/or bereft of adequate political representation. They count on political institutions and power brokers to do their bidding. Our grassroots campaign grew into a Bay Area-wide coalition that focused on what low-income immigrants need to better themselves through educational opportunities.

#### Why create the film and what are current plans for the film?

"Block by Block" is an inaugural activity of the CAA Oral History Project, in collaboration with Cal's Asian American Research Center and Ethnic Studies Library.



Photos: EHDD Architecture

The film's co-directors are Kevin Wong and Seng Chen. We are holding group screenings of this film at this time and encouraging Q & A discussions with diverse audiences to inspire today's students and activists fighting social justice issues in their own communities.

### ALICE BARKLEY



Attorney for City College of SF Chinatown Project. Photo: Russ Lowe

#### Describe the EIR Process and what were key strengths of FEOC?

The Environmental Review process analyzes the potential adverse impacts for the decision makers. Adverse effects can be offset by mitigation measures to render them insignificant, or they can be accepted if there are "overriding benefits".

The EIR and appeal process are first administrative steps, then it can be challenged in court. It was the project opponents and actions of some public officials that politicized the EIR process. However, for me, the community organizing process with their weekly meetings was close to being perfect.

There were no egos involved and they worked as a team, making sure the most knowledgeable individuals for each issue took the lead in organizing the community's case.

#### How does one protect the integrity of the public review/ approval process?

The EIR consultants must be competent and not make it an advocacy or political document, meaning stick to the facts. The community should be involved from the start.

Self-described "community spokesmen" can actually be political lobbyists, so the community must rely on solid facts, strong advocacy and the political skills to counter such opposition.



**Front row:** Jennie Lew, Joanne Low, Frances Lee, Linda Wang, Eva Cheng. **Back row:** Cary Fong, Andrew Hom, Henry Der, Ling Chi Wang  
Photo: Russ Lowe



Photos: Jeremy Bittermann

## Block By Block

JENNIE LEW



FEOC Member, Urban Planner  
Photo: Russ Lowe

**How did this Chinatown land use battle compare to others in the past?**

Chinatowns are historic, ethnic, low-income enclaves often surrounded by some of the most expensive real estate in a city. Time and time again, affordable housing, parks, and in this case, an educational project in SF Chinatown are threatened by outside special interests not respectful of a community's history nor vested in the health or welfare of the residents that are impacted.

This reoccurring injustice not only plagues other Chinatowns throughout the North American continent, but can threaten their very existence. It happens everywhere, one can see how SF Japantown and the Black community in the Western Addition was "redeveloped" by government intervention, and how the Mission District suffers from gentrification.

However, in this case with CTNB community college, the level of political maneuvering and outside forces (e.g., attorneys, lobbyists, politicians) enlisted to spread misinformation by the opponents was outrageous.

In response, the community gave birth to one of the largest, broadest, and most organized coalitions ever to defend and define the neighborhood on its own terms. "Block By Block" is an extremely candid view of what it takes to not only fight back, but also how to WIN.



Wayne Barcelon, Principal of Barcelon Jang Architecture and CTNB Community College Project Architect  
Photo: Henry Der, 2023

“ This reoccurring injustice not only plagues other Chinatowns throughout the North American continent, but can threaten their very existence. It happens everywhere, one can see how SF Japantown and the Black community in the Western Addition was "redeveloped" by government intervention, and how the Mission District suffers from gentrification. ”  
Jennie Lew



Photos: Jeremy Bittermann Photography

## Block By Block

### JENNIFER DEVLIN-HERBERT



CEO of EHDD and SF City College Chinatown Project Architect.

**As part of the Architectural team for the CTNB Community College Campus, how did this differ from past design experiences and what lessons were learned as the architect for such a highly controversial project?**

In 2000, EHDD partnered with Barcelon Jang Architecture to be the Project Architects for what we knew would be an exhaustive public hearing and approval process.

Our core charge was to design for CCSF's programmatic goals but also to understand the community and its aspirations.

As designers of public places, we align with clients and communities that serve broad needs, integrating sustainability, equity, and inclusivity into places of inspiration and unique identity.

**Right Above:** Jennifer Devlin-Herbert, CEO of EHDD and CTNB Community College Project Architect  
Photos: Henry Der, 2023

“ We witnessed incredible community leadership and passion that went against ever-present, well-endowed, and politically connected opposition. It was the experience of a career for our team. ”

Jennifer Devlin-Herbert



This project was unprecedented in EHDD's history in the commitment and breadth of the grassroots effort.

While we can manage components of an engagement process, it is truly in the hands of community leaders, elders, and ambassadors to lift voices, create and inspire the movement, and support what is right and needed for them. We are partners, it is not our vision as architects, we must understand the community's history, their struggles, values and dreams - it's essential to the outcome.

A rich part of designing buildings in great and complicated cities is not taught in school and rarely accentuated in the profession.

We witnessed incredible community leadership and passion that went against ever-present, well-endowed, and politically connected opposition. It was the experience of a career for our team.

**Left Below:** CTNB Community College project architect Jennifer Devlin-Herbert, CEO of EHDD, and EHDD Mktg. Director Ellen McAmis with a scale model of the campus tower (2023).



Photo: EHDD Architecture



Photos: Jeremy Bittermann Photography

### About the contributor:

Jennie F. Lew is a life long activist promoting justice via community planning and design. She is a member of Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA) and is the recipient of an Emmy for her documentary "Separate Lives, Broken Dreams." regarding the Chinese Exclusionary Act. (See ByDESIGN Volume 12, May 2014.)

Ms. Lew received a Masters in City Planning, M.I.T. and a BA Architecture, College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley.

### Architecture + the City Festival link:

[https://ACFest23\\_block-by-block-film.eventbrite.com](https://ACFest23_block-by-block-film.eventbrite.com)



## Echoes: Unveiling Timeless Expressions of the Americas

Sulem Hernandez, CASA Alumni Fellow, Martinez + Cutri



Journey into the ancient landscapes of the Americas, where vibrant civilizations once thrived, and prepare to be mesmerized by the extraordinary tales etched in stone. Unveiling hidden treasures, La Cueva de las Manos emerges as a captivating testament to the artistic genius and storytelling traditions of the ancient inhabitants.

Nestled in Santa Cruz, Argentina, this awe-inspiring site showcases spellbinding cave paintings dating back 9,000 to 13,000 years, vividly depicting hands, animals, and abstract designs that ignite the imagination. Delving deep into the Tehuelches'; daily existence and culture, these ancient artworks unlock a trove of artifacts and tools, offering captivating insights into their way of life.

Step further into history and behold the majestic wonder of the Xochicalco Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents. This architectural marvel, constructed prior to 900 CE and situated within a vast architectural complex, stands tall as an emblem of Mesoamerican civilization at its zenith.

Rising to a height of 10 meters and stretching 21 meters on each side, its sloping walls enfold a breathtaking, roofless square present day monument. Adorned with enchanting serpent-carved balustrades and intricate stone carvings, this masterpiece pays homage to Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec deity associated with wind, sun, and the pursuit of knowledge.

La Cueva de las Manos and the Xochicalco Pyramid are UNESCO World Heritage sites, acknowledging their cultural importance. Despite worship differences, both cultures revered nature and recognized spiritual forces.



The Cueva de las Manos, Río Pinturas, Argentina. Source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/936>

“ Nestled in Santa Cruz, Argentina, this awe-inspiring site showcases spellbinding cave paintings dating back 9,000 to 13,000 years, vividly depicting hands, animals, and abstract designs that ignite the imagination. Delving deep into the Tehuelches'; daily existence and culture, these ancient artworks unlock a trove of artifacts and tools, offering captivating insights into their way of life. ”

As we unravel the intricate connections between La Cueva de las Manos and the Xochicalco Pyramid, we uncover the interplay of visual expressions, cultural narratives, and ancient peoples of the Americas.

As a first-generation Latina architectural student and recent UC Berkeley graduate's perspective, we celebrate the lasting legacy of Indigenous cultures and these architectural marvels.

First, focus on the enduring stories and their impact on contemporary Latino Art, despite the architecture's limited influence on our current Latinx world. Unveiling a hidden world of ancient artistry, the cave paintings at La Cueva de las Manos offer valuable insights into the rich cultural heritage of the Tehuelche People.

Created by skilled Tehuelche artists, these remarkable paintings- featuring handprints, animals, and abstract

designs- carry deep cultural significance, reflecting their connection to the land and spiritual beliefs. With meticulous attention to design, the artists skillfully utilize the cave walls' contours, enhancing the site's cultural significance. Deliberate handprint placement and intricate animal depictions reveal Tehuelche's mastery of composition and spatial arrangement.

The incorporation of geometric shapes and symbols in abstract designs serves as visual storytelling, resonating beyond the Argentinean caves.

The Xochicalco Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents, thriving from the 7th to 14th centuries CE, showcases the ingenuity of the post-Mayan civilization. This marvel in the central headlands functioned as a trade hub, astronomical center, and sacred site. Its intricate design and carvings showcase the Mayan's advanced knowledge in architecture, mathematics, and astronomy.

# Echoes: Unveiling Timeless Expressions of the Americas

The serpent carvings, representing Quetzalcoatl, bring ancient stories of creation, wisdom, and fertility to life. Meticulous craftsmanship and narrative elements in the carvings enhance the link between artistic expressions, oral traditions, and the Xochicalco Pyramid's cultural heritage.

Exploring the captivating stone tales of La Cueva de las Manos and the architectural brilliance of the Xochicalco Pyramid unveils a bridge between ancient expressions and modern Latino Art. Through tracing intricate parallels and shared themes, we explore how echoes from the past resonate through time, infusing contemporary Latino Art with profound cultural significance and revealing the resonating heartbeat of cultural continuity in this synthesis of past and present.

The Mexican Muralist Movement, spanning from the 1920s to the 1970s, significantly shaped global artists and the artistic landscape, similar to the enduring impact of La Cueva de las Manos and the Xochicalco Pyramid on contemporary Latino Art.

Depicting Mexican history, working class struggles, and national transformation, these murals employ symbolism, allegory, and realism to convey potent messages, fostering social consciousness and integrating into the public realm beyond galleries and museums.

“ Exploring the captivating stone tales of La Cueva de las Manos and the architectural brilliance of the Xochicalco Pyramid unveils a bridge between ancient expressions and modern Latino Art. Through tracing intricate parallels and shared themes, we explore how echoes from the past resonate through time, infusing contemporary Latino Art with profound cultural significance and revealing the resonating heartbeat of cultural continuity in this synthesis of past and present. ”

This resonance links to Orozco's portrayal of Zapata's struggle, which reverberates in historical Mexican art and resonates in the contemporary efforts of Latino artists.

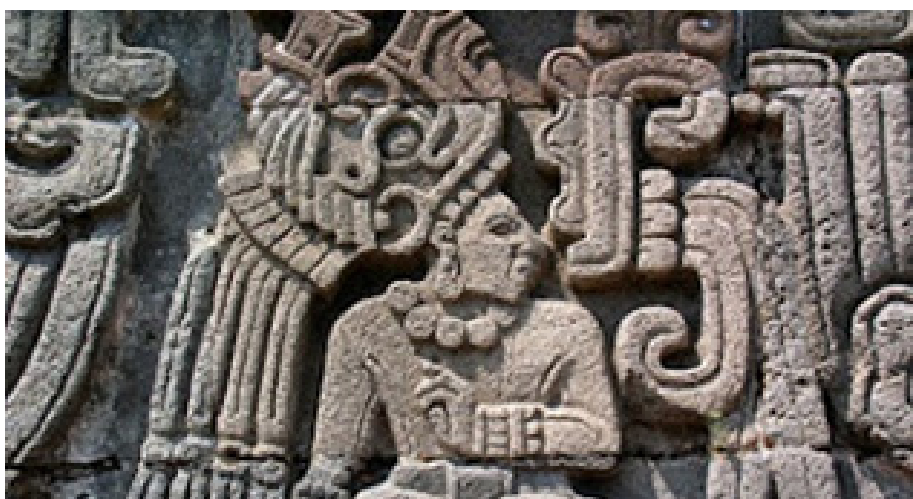
Just as La Cueva de las Manos and the Xochicalco Pyramid's enduring marks transcend their sites, the cultural impact of the Mexican Muralist Movement persists across time and space. Modern Latino Art embodies a revolutionary force that defies stereotypes, illuminates diversity, and empowers the Latino community.

I've witnessed its profound impact, igniting a sense of belonging and fostering a positive self-identity. This powerful expression imparts messages of embracing our identity, asserting our presence, and celebrating our cultural heritage in a marginalizing society. It fuels civic engagement, inspires future generations, and propels community involvement.

The Mexican Muralist Movement harnesses the power of Latino Art for social change and cultural reclamation, educating, empowering, and challenging prevailing narratives while celebrating resilience and engaging communities. Their enduring mark on contemporary Latino Art is vibrant and indelible.

Recognizing the profound fusion of visual expressions and cultural narratives in the Americas, for more than 10 millennia, we honor indigenous traditions while fostering an inclusive artistic landscape. The stories etched in stone and majestic carvings echo the interconnectedness of ancient societies and their enduring artistic legacies.

Embracing the transformative power of art, we build bridges, empower marginalized communities, and shape a vibrant future for Latino Art. These timeless expressions resonate, inviting exploration, learning, and celebration of human creativity across ages.



**Above left:** Xochicalco Detail  
**Above right:** Xochicalco Detail, east facade



**About the author:**  
Sulem Hernandez is a CASA Alumni Fellow at MARTINEZ + CUTRI Urban Studio Corporation in San Diego, CA. Ms. Hernandez received a BA Architecture, Class of 2023, College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley.

## Strengthen, Educate & Expand Latino Design Community's Visibility & Impact

Melissa Iris Garcia AIA, NOMA, LEED AP, Principal  
herman coliver locus architecture



*Ms. Garcia is the AIASF LiA SF Committee Co-chair with the mission to support Bay Area Latinx design students and professionals.*

**Tell us a little about your background, how you arrived at where you're at today?**

I was born in East Los Angeles, my parents, both born in Mexico, came to California as kids.

My father was an orphan and worked in every job from the field to the factory until he became a small business owner running his own trucking company. My mother and her seven siblings joined my grandfather in Los Angeles in 1959 once he earned enough money working in the Bracero Program.

I grew up in East L.A. but my parents always pushed my brothers and I to be explorers and adventurers in this great city of opportunity.

They believed most in the value of education and spent their hard-earned money sending us to private schools. At these schools I not only received the educational foundation that propelled me into UC Berkeley but also exposed me to a more diverse world beyond the rich Chicano culture I was surrounded with in my community.



Melissa, Andres & Nicolas Garcia, First Day of School 1983, Los Angeles, CA. Photo: Patricia Garcia



HCL Architecture partner Melissa Garcia, dedicated to working on affordable housing, schools and sacred spaces for non-profits.



LiA Members: (L-R) Patricia Centeno, Cesar Escalante, Dan Perez, Patricia Algara, Homer Perez, Melissa Iris Garcia, Raul Orellana, Patricia Alarcon, Emmanuel Garcia

“ As a UC Berkeley alumni, I was excited to learn that many of my fellow LiA members were also Bears and have a long standing relationship with CASA & NOMAS, mentoring the future designers to thrive in the field. It was at the 2023 LiA Kickoff & CASA Scholarship fundraiser where I saw *en persona* the power and influence of our *comunidad*. ”

### Why did you get involved with LiA?

When I graduated from Berkeley I started working in San Francisco at a small architecture firm where I was the third person and only woman in the office.

As the firm grew over time I found myself surrounded by many inspiring women but wondered where all the Latinas were. It was through a fellow female engineer who connected me with the San Francisco chapter of Latinx in Architecture and found my *gente*.

At the first meeting I found myself surrounded by incredible and successful latin@s on a similar professional path in architecture, building spaces that strengthen communities and use design as a force for positive change.



### What are the most significant activities of LiA; and what's the vision of the organization for the future?

As a UC Berkeley alumni, I was excited to learn that many of my fellow LiA members were also Bears and have a long standing relationship with CASA & NOMAS, mentoring the future designers to thrive in the field. It was at the 2023 LiA Kickoff & CASA Scholarship fundraiser where I saw *en persona* the power and influence of our *comunidad*.

The colorful, joyful and loud gathering was a stark contrast to the typical black & gray, too-cool-for-school vibe of most design events.

There was delicious food, lots of chatter, and storytelling from both elders and students. I was inspired by stories from Wayne Barcelon and Roy Hernandez who saw the need to start organizations specifically to support and empower our Latino design community.

I was in awe of the student speeches – all Latinas! – describing the joy (and pain) of studio, and especially moved by the show of support of so many students, families and colleagues who showed up in support of the cause.

That night made clear how important a sense of community is to the success of one and all.

## Strengthen, Educate & Expand Latinx Design Community's Visibility & Impact

In June at the AIA National Convention, LiA had the opportunity to gather once again, this time with a wider reach to Latino design professionals who came from all over the world. My short tenure in LiA has changed my perspective from feeling like a minority to reminding me that we as Latinos are a majority and we should all be doing our best to empower each other.

### What is your role at the firm where you are a principal?

While UC Berkeley may still not have the best DEI metrics, I have found CED alumni to share a passion for architecture with a positive social impact. Herman Coliver Locus Architecture was founded by three CED alumni who have mentored me throughout my career.

The community-centric approach to architecture celebrates culture and creates spaces that strengthen collective emotional, spiritual and intellectual sustenance of all users.

The firm has a unique focus working on affordable multi-family supportive housing, schools and sacred spaces with 100% of its clients being non-profit organizations.

As a principal in a small firm, our studio approach to projects allows me to maintain a close connection to the project from conception to

“ In June at the AIA National Convention, LiA had the opportunity to gather once again, this time with a wider reach to Latino design professionals who came from all over the world.

My short tenure in LiA has changed my perspective from feeling like a minority to reminding me that we as Latinos are a majority and we should all be doing our best to empower each other. ”

completion and foster growth amongst my team, mentoring young designers along the way.

Along with three other principals at the office my role includes a little bit everything from administrative, financial and staffing decisions to design lead, project management and client relations.

Mentorship and representation is incredibly important and working with CASA and volunteering with the National Organization of Minority Architects Project Pipeline Summer

Camp allows me to share my joy and passion for architecture with young people and hopefully inspire young people of color to see themselves in my role in their future. If they can see it, they can be it!

### What are the most significant projects you have worked on?

100% of HCLA's projects are collaborative efforts working with neighborhood or community groups, non-profit developers and public agencies – all of us investing in building a better community.

When I completed my first “big job” of 160 affordable senior housing units in Half Moon Bay and visited the site, my most proud moment was to see the outdoor spaces active with gardening, exercising, and bocce playing residents.

To see neighbors as friends, making the space their home, showed me the true potential of architecture as a powerful tool to positively impact lives for the better.

### What message would you give to the next generation of Latino designers?

As the world continues to change, as community builders we should all honor our cultures, respect and learn from each other and the earth upon which we live, and create spaces that empower and elevate the whole.



**Top Left:** Half Moon Village  
Half Moon Bay, California  
Affordable Housing for Low-Income Seniors  
Photo: Bruce Damonte

**Top Right:** Half Moon Village  
Garden, Half Moon Bay, California  
Affordable Housing for Low-Income Seniors  
Photo: Bruce Damonte



**Bottom Left:** Sanctuary Light  
Temple Beth Am, Los Angeles, California  
Photo: Richard Barnes

**Bottom Right:** HCLA on site  
San Rafael, CA  
Photo: Cahill Contractors

# Side Bar

## Melissa I. Garcia, AIA, LEED AP, NOMA

A uniquely talented and tireless contributor to the practice, Melissa Garcia celebrated her 23rd Anniversary with Herman Coliver Locus Architecture in May 2023. She has designed some of the firm's best work and was promoted to Principal to co-lead the firm on 2021. She is dedicated to bringing great design to underserved communities and all walks of life.

### Professional Experience:

Herman Coliver Locus Architecture, 2000 - Present  
Licensed Architect in California

### Selected Projects

- 772 Pacific Avenue Affordable Senior Housing (200 units), San Francisco CA
- Laguna Honda Affordable Senior Housing (173 units), San Francisco CA
- PG8 Affordable Family Housing (96 units), Hayward CA
- Stevenson Terrace (80 units) Affordable Family Housing, Fremont CA
- Irvington Supportive Senior Housing (90 units), Fremont CA
- Candlestick Point CPN10A (156 units) Affordable Family Housing, San Francisco CA
- St. Stephen's (40 units) Affordable Senior Housing, Santa Cruz CA
- Half Moon Village (160 units) Affordable Senior Housing, Half Moon Bay CA
- St. Peter's Place Apartments for Developmentally Disabled Adults (20 units), San Francisco CA
- Congregation Rodef Sholom, San Rafael, CA
- Temple Beth Am, Los Angeles, CA
- Congregation B'nai Israel, Sacramento, CA
- Ronald McDonald House of San Francisco

### Awards & Publications

- Faith and Form: International Religious Architecture Honor Award, Temple Beth Am, 2021
- AIASF Design Special Commendation for Social Responsibility, Half Moon Village 2016
- Sustainable San Mateo County Green Building Award, Half Moon Village 2016
- Business Times, Deal of the Year, Half Moon Village 2016
- Architect Magazine: "Half Moon Village" May, 2016
- California Home and Design, April, 2008: 2008 AIASF Design Awards
- Faith & Form, Number 1, 2007: 2007 Winners
- Urban Country Style, Book by Elizabeth Betts Hickman and Nancy Gent
- American Style, October 2005: A Colorful Life
- ArchNewsNow.com, October, 2004: Healing Stories
- San Francisco Chronicle, April 17, 2004: Ashes to Art
- San Francisco Chronicle, September 19, 2003: Soaking Up the Sunshine

### Engagement

- AIASF Latinx In Architecture Knowledge Community, Co-Chair 2023
- National Organization of Minority Architects, Project Pipeline Camp Committee & Volunteer
- Habitat for Humanity building crew, Rach Gia, Vietnam 2013
- Habitat for Humanity building crew, Lovina, Bali 2015



herman coliver locus

"Herman Coliver Locus Architecture has been nationally recognized for its work on affordable housing, schools and sacred spaces for non-profits as well as homes for private clients. The practice's work for neighborhood-based development corporations includes housing for seniors and families, the developmentally disabled, the homeless, those recovering from substance abuse, and other underserved populations. Each project carries the signature of its clients' needs, gives shape to their dreams and aspirations, and attempts to provide emotional and intellectual sustenance as well as shelter."



### Casa Adelante

2020 Outstanding Project Award for New Buildings  
New National Council of Structural Engineers Associations  
Nine-story affordable housing project for low income seniors.



### 1064 Mission Street

San Francisco, CA  
256 factory-built studios  
Affordable Housing for formerly homeless adults & seniors



### Temple Judea

Tarzana, CA  
New Synagogue and School Campus



### Half Moon Village

Half Moon Bay . CA  
2016 AIA San Francisco Design Awards  
Special Commendation for Social Responsibility  
Development Type: Affordable Housing for Low-Income Seniors



### 1100 Ocean Avenue

San Francisco, CA  
Development Type: 71-unit Affordable Housing for Low-Income Families and Transitional-Age Youth

Ms. Garcia received her Bachelor of Arts in Architecture in 1999 from the College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley, College of Environmental Design.

### Herman Coliver Locus Architecture

423 Tehama Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103

T 415 495 1776 | E info@hclarchitecture.com

# Sustainability and a Worldview: Renovation of the Ancient Waru Waru

Faith Cuellar, 2023 CASA Alumni Intern, Martinez + Cutri



“Knowing that I am related to everything around me and share breath with all living things helps me to focus on my responsibility to honor all forms of life... everything around us has *“being-ness.”*”

This passage from ethnobiologist Dr. Enrique Salmon, of the Rarámuri Indigenous tribe offers a worldview through a kincentric lens. Today, through this lens if we can lower our net carbon footprints and release less global emissions we would not only benefit our atmosphere, but heal the Indigenous lands.

Salmon argues that it is an awareness that life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin. Their relatives (meaning kin) include all natural elements belonging to an ecosystem.

No differently, the Aymara people of South America have a kincentric ecological connection with their land.

“ This passage from ethnobiologist Dr. Enrique Salmon, of the Rarámuri Indigenous tribe offers a worldview through a kincentric lens. Today, through this lens if we can lower our net carbon footprints and release less global emissions we would not only benefit our atmosphere, but heal the Indigenous lands. ”

In this instance, one can draw from the Waru Waru agricultural wonder, an ancient Aymaran form of raised-field agriculture. Central to their belief is a reverence for Mother Earth, known as Pachamama. This most powerful deity controls planting harvests, fertility, and possesses the power to sustain life.

Amazingly, The Waru Waru was first developed in the year 300 BC, well before the rise of the Inca Empire (1400-1533 AD). Unfortunately this method was abandoned as more “technically advanced” irrigation technologies were invented.

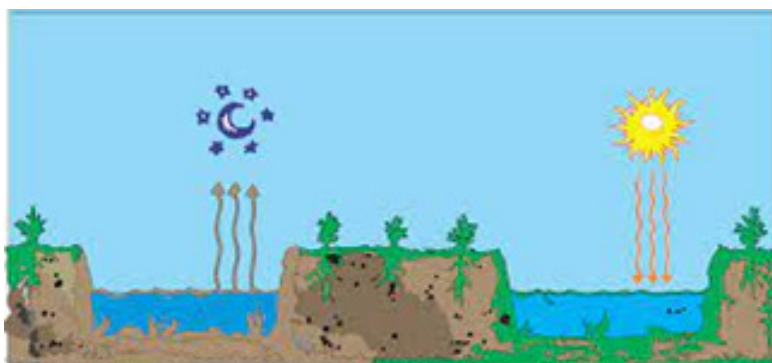
The main feature of the Waru-Waru system is the construction of canals and raised embankments.

These canals are used for water storage and to irrigate the plants, while the embankments serve as raised fertile beds.

Used by the pre-Hispanic people in the Andes region of Peru and Bolivia, it is an agricultural technique that is referred to as *Camellones* in Spanish. This circular-labyrinth pattern is an ancient way of growing crops on harsh high plains of the altiplano which surrounds Lake Titicaca on Peru’s southern border with Bolivia. These patches of corrugated land are divided into long narrow strips separated by furrows.

This vast plain is 12,500 ft above sea level. The furrows are 4-10 meters wide and 10-100 meters long. It should be noted that the soil of the altiplanos is generally poor for agriculture because of its unpredictable climate.

The life span of the Waru Waru is relatively short, the systems require reconstruction after about 3 years of operation. This form of agriculture was located on floodplains or near a type of water source so that the fields could be properly irrigated. The soils are rich in nutrients due to the aquatic plants and surrounding organic materials that they can produce natural fertilizers.



Source: <https://hidraulicainca.com>



## Sustainability and a Worldview: Renovation of the Ancient Waru Waru

The Waru Waru's structure also protects crops from freezing overnight, effectively extending the growing season, and creating artificial ecosystems that are home to other food sources such as fish, and attract different species of lake birds and insects.

The Aymara people took advantage of these methods to mainly grow potatoes and quinoa, but they also grew ocas, isanuss, ollucos, canihua, tarwi, and maize. Crops were rotated and placed in different sections to help better use the soil as well as avoid problems with worms, plant pests, and disease.

The Aymara Indians were not the only ones to have an irrigation system that used canals and raised plant beds. The Hohokam people of the Phoenix Basin in southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico are known for their extensive irrigation canals in the valleys along the Salt and Gila rivers.

The Aztecs built "chinampas," (small, artificial islands) to improve their agriculture. Scientists believe that

working in conjunction with the Waru Waru technique other agricultural systems like the Qochas' and Andenes' would yield greater production.

Dr. Salmon, in his book *Wilderness*, expressed that there is no such word as "wild" in his people's language. They believe they are one with their surroundings and there isn't a separation between humans and the outside world. Salmon states, "The rain is us, and I am the rain".

What Salmon is describing here is "kincentric ecology," which takes the notion of kin and applies it to how Indigenous people look at the larger, environmental, natural community as relatives.

Similarly, when the Aymara Indians plant crops, they make ceremonial homage to the 'Earth Mother' goddess Pachamama. As well as growing and chewing coca plants and using its leaves in traditional medicine, and in ritual offerings to the 'Sun' father god, Inti.

I gathered this passion and urgency for change through stories of my grandfather's land. Oscar Cuellar de Atoyac, Veracruz, México. He grew up in a humid jungle climate living right next to the *Cascada de Rio*, a beautiful waterfall, and *Puente de Ferrocarril*, a railroad. Atoyac was inhabited by four native cultures: The Huastecos, Otomis, Totonacs, and the Olmecs, one of the oldest cultures in the Americas. The Atoyac River is one of the most polluted rivers in the world. Due to industrial pollution, untreated sewage, and agricultural runoff, the river has become highly contaminated, causing serious health and environmental problems. Little has been done to clear the toxins in the river.

If we followed the kincentric beliefs of the Indigenous People we would have the need to benefit our relative lands. Humans would harvest for necessity rather than profit.

Sustainability through natural, ancient practice is well within reach. As intended by the Aymara people, the Waru Waru is us and we are the Waru Waru.



“ The Aymara Indians were not the only ones to have an irrigation system that used canals and raised plant beds. The Hohokam people of the Phoenix Basin in southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico are known for their extensive irrigation canals in the valleys along the Salt and Gila rivers. ”

**About the author:**  
Faith Cuellar is getting a BA Architecture, Class of 2024, at CED, UC Berkeley

## Mystification: A Conversation Between the Spoon/Cherry and the Vessel

Alma Rodriguez Guzman, 2023 CASA Alumni Intern, Martinez + Cutri



"I am for an art that takes its form from the lines of life itself, that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and

drips and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid as life itself."



The Vessel

A honeycomb and a spoon: Integral to these forms are shadows, presence, and reflection. Starting with iconic general forms, spheres, cones, and planes, these sculptures can be peeled back to reveal their essence. Zooming out to a larger scale, humans' micro-occupancy in the honeycomb sculpture resembles the buzzing nature of bees in our own work colony. Hudson Yards is a bustling atmosphere, where every minute matters and the "hamster wheel" way-of-life is accepted because we live to work. Correlating the Vessel and its volume allows for contemplation of the art, especially when approached through a non-Eurocentric cultural lens.

In my case, my Mexican background initially made this futuristic-looking sculpture appear as an "Al Pastor trompo," a comical approach compared to typical descriptions of the Vessel. The abstract nature of the polygonal forms provides a space for interpretation that allows this sculpture to transcend cultural differences. The bees are not constantly working, but constantly connecting with the rest of the public realm.

Would a spoon and cherry sculpture have the same ability to engage with the audience if it is an in-the-round work of art? The handle of Spoonbridge and Cherry consists of a rectangular form inclined 26 ft. to reach an exaggerated indented curve that touches the water and returns upward to the bowl of the spoon connecting the cherry.

The perfect balance of linear, rectangular, oval, and circular forms seduce the senses and brings a sense of humor to itself and the park. Likewise, friendly discourse has always been a staple in my Latinx culture and can be seen through Spoonbridge and Cherry with forms that intersect in specific moments,



Spoonbridge and Cherry

where we find a multitude of intellectual concepts and perceptions.

A byproduct of the Pop Art Movement, these rectangular planes intersect an oval form to create a mundane mass-produced object. This movement followed the manifesto of "commercial art as real art and real art as commercial art," opening up a new ideation pathway where humor is embraced through every interpretation.

Eurocentric cultures commonly associated a nostalgic, silly feeling with the Spoonbridge and Cherry, which were influenced by the exaggerated and bold images and colors used during the Pop Art Movement. With shapes as common as a spoon and a cherry, your background does not matter, everyone can participate in the discourse of possible deductions and interpretations of the sculpture. Art may be designed with a specific idea and/or purpose, but once physically placed in an environment, every individual interprets and perceives the structure in a different intellectual light.

Latino/Indigenous cultures, in my experience, have been more accepting of the unknown. Dr. Enrique Salmon states in his book, *Iwigara: The Kinship of Plants and People*, that gambling in Indigenous cultures is commonly misunderstood. Salmon states "Gambling is a sacred chance, an opportunity to be in contact with the living, breathing, scattered cosmos."

This culture accepts the mystery of the universe, of not always having the answer, and embracing it. European and Modern Art can learn from Latinx culture and a variety of other cultures not only in design practices, but in beliefs, reasonings, concepts, and broader associations with the world.

### About the author:

Alma Rodriguez Guzman is receiving a BA Architecture, Class of 2024, at CED, UC Berkeley.

This eccentric take on art could only come from Claes Oldenburg, one of the sculptors of the 1988 Spoonbridge and Cherry located in the Walker Art Center's Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. The intriguing 30 by 52 by 13 ft. stainless steel and aluminum Spoonbridge and Cherry weighs an astonishing 7,000 pounds. This sculpture has become what most people associate with Minneapolis, attracting tourists to its comically upscaled silver spoon with a gravity-defying 8'-10" diameter red cherry fountain at its tip. Its elegant placement on a Linden tree seed-shaped lake representing the trees of the surrounding grounds is not overlooked.

At a different location, but equally breathtaking, is the "Vessel," which stands an astonishing 150 ft. tall centered in Hudson Yards Public Square, New York City. This interactive sculpture was designed by Thomas Heatherwick in 2017 to be 16 stories, 154 flights of concrete stairs, 80 landings with ramps, and an elevator. With a 50 ft. wide base, the Vessel is covered by a skin of reflective copper-colored polished metal plates. This honeycomb structure expands in the opposite direction as the surrounding buildings, allowing varying perspectives within the city fabric.

The Vessel and the Spoonbridge and Cherry have formal and spatial characteristics and a clear conceptual basis that corresponds to their respective time and place. By juxtaposing these two sculptures, we can discover intellectual interventions that occur within their design ideologies through a cultural and societal lens. As a young Latinx architecture student, these sculptures provide an opportunity to share my unique perspective.