



Detail, Zapatista character, *Los Angeles: Untitled*, 2011. Photo by Christian Guzman

## The Illegal Face of Wall Space: Graffiti-Murals on the Sunset Boulevard Retaining Walls

*Stefano Bloch*

*Los Angeles: Untitled* is a series of murals running along a quarter-mile stretch of retaining walls on Sunset Boulevard in the Echo Park and Silver Lake neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Painted by graffiti writers Cache and Eye One, the murals depict cartoonish chickens riding bicycles and small, masked Zapatista characters raising their fists in playful defiance. Various incarnations of the central mural have depicted smaller chickens playing ball and reading books, Zapatistas gleefully stopping the wheels of industrial production, the LA skyline, the Hollywood Sign, and cat characters painted by recent collaborator Atlas from the CBS (City Bomb Squad) graffiti crew. Visually arresting, they are also, in the words of Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) Murals Manager Pat Gomez, “technically vandalism.”<sup>1</sup> However, since no one has complained about the murals to Gomez’s office or to the Department of Building and Safety that oversees the public walls on which they are painted, no action has been taken to paint over the murals or criminalize the artists who painted them.

Given their large size and placement on a busy stretch of Sunset Boulevard, these unsanctioned “graffiti-murals” appear to be legally produced.<sup>2</sup> And because they are a welcomed alternative to the “tagging” that had previously covered the walls, they have been tacitly tolerated, if not outright welcomed, by law enforce-

*Radical History Review*

Issue 113 (Spring 2012) DOI 10.1215/01636545-1504930

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ment, local business owners, and, most importantly for Cache, “Señoras with their kids who have to walk by these walls every day.”<sup>3</sup>

Unlike previous muralists who legally painted the Sunset walls, Cache and Eye One are able to actively call the laws regarding wall aesthetics into question with the support of a paradoxical alliance of local interest groups. This is an alliance of strange bedfellows—including existing residents, hipster gentrifiers, law enforcement, business owners, local governmental agencies, and graffiti writers—each member seeing in the murals something different, even disparate, to accept. As Pat Gomez’s statement suggests, the laws regarding “vandalism” have not changed, but the neighborhood has, along with what type of murals its residents and stakeholders see as suitable.

### Painting the Sunset Walls

In 1968, more than 25 years after the Sunset retaining walls were built by the Work Projects Administration, the Chicano mural movement in California began. It started as *los muralistas*—artists aligned with the Chicano-led civil rights movement—turned to wall art to represent the political and social causes that were important to the Chicano population living and working in the agricultural regions and inner cities of California.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike *los tres grandes*—as the three great Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros were collectively known and whose work inspired the Chicano mural movement—*los muralistas* worked collaboratively on community-funded and politically radical wall art. By the 1970s many of these “critical muralists”<sup>5</sup> would give rise to some of the major public art and mural organizations in Los Angeles, including the Mechicano Art Center in 1971, the Citywide Mural Project in 1974, East Los Streetscapers in 1975, and the nonprofit Social and Public Arts Resource Center (SPARC) headed by Judith Baca in 1976.

These organizations brought gang members, graffiti writers, and traditional muralists together to create works of public art that were both aesthetically pleasing and socially significant, the most famous being the series of 82 murals completed at the Estrada Courts public housing projects in 1978.<sup>6</sup> Judith Baca, a contributor to the Estrada Courts series, had already produced one of the city’s first critical murals on the Sunset Boulevard retaining wall six miles away in the Echo Park neighborhood.

When Baca sought permission to paint her 8-by-186-foot *Evolution of a Gang Member* in 1975 she did not initially go to the Citywide Murals Project, which awarded her the commission and was the agency responsible for the appearance of the walls. Rather, she sought permission from the rival Silver Lake 13 and Echo Park (EXP) gangs. Silver Lake 13 and EXP had controlled the neighborhoods adjacent to these walls since the 1950s; as Baca put it, “I wanted to make



***We Are Not a Minority***, painted at the Estrada Courts in East Los Angeles in 1978 by Mario Torero, Rocky, El Lion, and Zade of El Congreso de Artistas Cosmicos de las Americas de San Diego. Photo by Dean Musgrove, Herald-Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library

sure the actual people in these neighborhoods accepted what I was trying to do. I needed the residents' respect, including the gang members', and I got it by showing them that they had mine. I wasn't trying to control this space or be elitist, I was trying to express a collective feeling about prevailing social issues facing the community.<sup>77</sup> Baca's concern for the control and appearance of public space in this neighborhood stems from a long history of contested restructuring, or community challenges to redevelopment, which gave rise to the very retaining walls on which she worked.

In 1940, the Work Projects Administration (WPA)<sup>8</sup> began constructing retaining walls to shore up the sandstone hillsides along Sunset Boulevard. The walls were part of a larger redevelopment project that included the paving of the nation's first freeway at Arroyo Seco and 51 miles of the Los Angeles River that same year.<sup>9</sup> By 1959, once the public works infrastructure had been built, the residents



Eviction of Aurora Vargas from Chávez Ravine, 1959. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Library Photo Collection

who lived in the hills above Echo Park were forcibly displaced. Through eminent domain the city cleared the 352-acre Chávez Ravine located a few blocks off Sunset Boulevard to make way for subsidized public housing. When the housing plan was deemed communistic by the real estate lobby, the area eventually became home to a new 56,000-person-capacity baseball stadium and 13,000 surface-level parking spots.<sup>10</sup> As Dodger Stadium neared completion the Sunset Walls became platforms for contestation and expression.

Some of the families displaced from Chávez Ravine included members of the EXP gang—then a local clique of young men who identified as cholos, zootsuiters, and low riders. Many of them relocated to neighboring communities, which were also rival gang territories. The resulting struggle over changing territorial boundaries began to play out on the Sunset walls in the form of antagonistic gang graffiti.

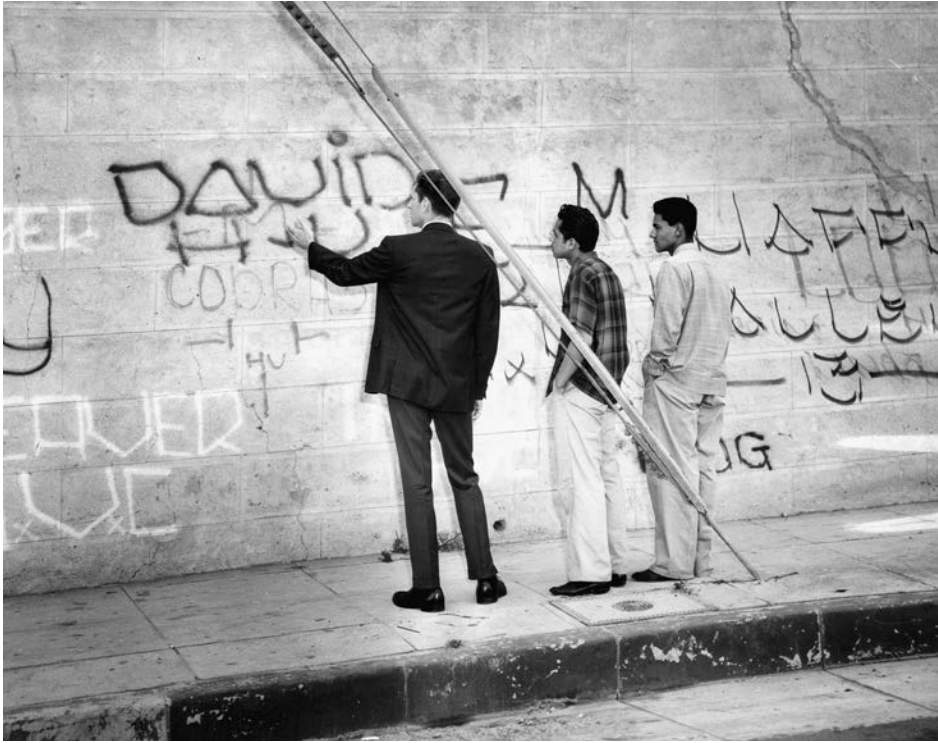


Judith Baca depicts the battle for Chávez Ravine in one section of her half-mile-long *Great Wall of Los Angeles* mural in the San Fernando Valley, 10 miles north of Echo Park. The section, “Division of the Barrios and Chávez Ravine,” depicts Chicano families being divided by freeways, a forced eviction, an incoming bulldozer blade, roaming chickens, and Dodger Stadium landing like an alien craft in the background of the struggle. Image courtesy of the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC)

In response to the arrival of EXP gangsters, Happy Valley 13 (a gang whose membership lived along the Arroyo Seco) began making its own retaliatory incursions back into Echo Park and Silver Lake. By making visual claims to Echo Park’s wall space in the form of graffiti, Happy Valley 13 asserted its beef with EXP, thereby showing its strength.

When Baca took to the walls to call for unity, the loss of Chávez Ravine had by then spilled over into a full-blown gang war that included Silver Lake 13 and other area cliques such as White Fence, Rockwood Locos, and Temple Street. Her mural temporarily covered the very graffiti that told the violent story of the territorial struggles initiated in part by redevelopment. But given the respect she showed for local conflict, the message as well as the aesthetic of her production was widely accepted and remained intact and free of graffiti for several years.

But, given Los Angeles’s rampant xenophobia and the vestiges of anti-immigrant and anti-Chicano hostilities evidenced by the Zoot Suit Riots of 1947,<sup>11</sup> even Baca’s widely accepted mural could not garner respect from the Anglo power structure and business elite intent on building strip malls instead of preserving the aesthetic of public walls.



Members of the Happy Valley 13 gang (also tagged at right) reading graffiti on a wall in Echo Park with Deputy Probation Officer Al Franklin in 1965. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection



"Unity" from *Evolution of a Gang Member* by Judith Baca, 1975. From the "Chicano Wall Art, the First Generation, 1968–1985" (unpublished collection of images), courtesy of Elliot Barkan

### Bombing the Sunset Walls

Murals are getting hit by taggers. For the first time in the history of the mural movement, over 30 years, murals are being vandalized by young people.

—Judith Baca, interview with Warren Olney, 2008

Almost two decades after Baca painted her mural, Echo Park was undergoing a round of “crisis-generated restructuring” in the aftermath of the LA justice riots of 1992.<sup>12</sup> This restructuring came in the form of community redevelopment, revitalization, and concomitant gentrification across many of Los Angeles’s working-class districts. As developers received huge tax incentives via the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA-LA) to redevelop burned-out lots on the city’s south side, the CRA-LA was using its increased political capital to declare entire untouched neighborhoods on the north side of the city “redevelopment project zones.”

As part of the clearance of these project zones, the LAPD’s CRASH unit was called in to patrol the streets with the same viciousness and machismo as the gang members it sought to control.<sup>13</sup> But as rising rent prices became more effectual than the police at ridding the streets of roving gangs, graffiti abatement became the prescribed cure-all, following the slippery logic of the popular broken windows theory.<sup>14</sup> As part of this enforcement strategy, the LAPD refocused its attention on the outward appearance of “blighted” neighborhoods and initiated a zero-tolerance policy against tagging in and around CRA-LA project areas. The resources that were used to combat gang violence were now being used to keep public walls a dull shade of beige.<sup>15</sup>

If the city appeared, on the surface, to have things under control in an otherwise economically depressed and politically disregarded neighborhood such as Echo Park, then maybe it would be more attractive to a higher class of resident and outside investment. In post-riot Echo Park, therefore, any writing on the walls, even the presence of murals, was deemed out of place.<sup>16</sup>

Blending old-school Chicano glyphs with so-called graffiti art, Los Angeles bombers began competing for wall space with gang members as well as advertisers and traditional muralists.<sup>17</sup> Despite their growing popularity in some niche communities and bohemian enclaves (namely Echo Park and Silver Lake), graffiti writers and street artists were not afforded “spots” aside from those that they appropriated by night and took from muralists. The struggle for wall space resulted in the destruction of murals across Los Angeles, most famously that of the freeway murals produced for the 1984 Olympic Festival. But this struggle for wall space expressed on and around the Sunset walls would also force local interest groups to reconsider what they deemed an appropriate use for, and appearance of, public space.





Image of artist Lita Albuquerque, *7th Street Altarpiece* by Kent Twitchell, 1984. Photo by Mike Sergieff, Herald Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library



*7th Street Altarpiece* with graffiti. Photo by Dave Conti

### Repainting the Sunset Walls

In tandem with the cultural, socioeconomic, and structural changes taking place in Los Angeles during the 1990s, the DCA began to oversee the graffiti-covered Sunset walls.

The DCA began assisting artists with the mural permitting process, though the legal and ultimate responsibility for the surface appearance and structural upkeep of public walls shifted between the Departments of Public Works, Recreation and Parks, Planning, and finally the Department of Building and Safety. Regardless of official stewardship, the Sunset walls became prime platforms for the expression of individual creativity as well as lingering gang hostilities. In 1996 the DCA helped broker a deal between the city and local Chicano activist and long-time muralist Ernesto De La Loza. With the support of the DCA, De La Loza secured official permission and \$20,000 in funding to paint his *Inner City Kickin' It* on the main section of the Sunset wall.

De La Loza painted his mural in the style of *los tres grandes* who inspired his work: a social realist image of the child and mother à la José Clemente Orozco, kneeling *trabajadores* in the style of Diego Rivera, and a lush tropical landscape with a fetus in homage to the work of Siquieros. As De La Loza explained, in an effort to get the “Anglo elite to accept the mural, they had to be made to feel comfortable about art made in public places. They had to know that this wasn’t graffiti that I was doing.”<sup>18</sup> So at the center of his mural he painted the image of the Gerber Baby above the logo for Wonder Bread. According to De La Loza, “Nothing makes the power structure in L.A. more comfortable than a fat smiling baby and sliced white bread, so I gave it to them.”

Despite his mural’s radical subtext and display of leftist Chicano politics and indigenist themes, De La Loza was able to appease neighborhood boosters and the city, as well as secure official and legal protection for his mural under the federal Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) of 1990. According to the provisions of VARA, artists possess moral rights to their works regardless of where the work exists. The rights also preserve the integrity of the work, barring even subsequent owners of the work from destroying, distorting, mutilating, or modifying the art. Despite federal protection, De La Loza was not able to appease members of the graffiti community who, in reality, had direct control over the appearance of the Sunset walls regardless of the law.

In the late 1990s, as the city cut funding for mural preservation but continued to buff white walls as part of its still-funded graffiti abatement and “beautification” programs, murals all over the city became havens for graffiti writers looking for “landmarks.”<sup>19</sup> As Judith Baca acknowledged, “There is a policy that says that any graffiti on a wall has to be removed within 24 hours, except if it’s on a mural. So that has actually shifted the emphasis on to painting on murals. Because if you want to get your mark up, if you want to get your tag up, and you want it to stay up, hit a



“Throw ups” by graffiti writers Rime, Otis, and MQ from New York City among others on De La Loza’s *Inner City Kickin’ It* in 2001. De La Loza’s Gerber Baby image is still visible to the right of wheat-pasted street art posters of artist Frida Kahlo. Photo by Stefano Bloch

mural.”<sup>20</sup> As a result *Inner City Kickin’ It: Drug and Alcohol Free*, like the freeway murals in Downtown, was completely covered with graffiti by 1999.

### Cache and Eye One’s Welcomed Vandalism

By 2004, after several years of graffiti and street art accumulating on the surface of the Sunset walls and local freeways, Echo Park became a destination in the new hipster economy, with the neighborhood helping Los Angeles to rank high on Richard Florida’s bohemian index.<sup>21</sup> The graffiti covering the Sunset walls was produced by some of the most prolific writers, who were themselves attracted to the neighborhood’s burgeoning bohemian amenities and existing cultural capital. “Getting up” in Echo Park assured a wide audience and recognition from local street artists and exhibitors such as Robbie Conal, Shepard Fairey, Mear One, Unit, and Banksy.<sup>22</sup> While these artists were in many ways benefiting from gentrification in the form of

increased exposure, the Sunset wall's lack of aesthetic coherence did not garner any supporters outside of the graffiti and street art communities.

As Echo Park underwent the first rounds of revitalization, community members pleaded with the small Echo Park Chamber of Commerce and Council member Eric Garcetti—founder of Uniting Neighborhoods to Abolish Graffiti (UNTAG)—to clean up the neighborhood, the huge Sunset walls in particular.<sup>23</sup> But because De La Loza's buried mural was still protected under VARA and the California Art Preservation Act (CAPA), passed in 1979, and because there was no funding to pay him to restore it, the Sunset walls could not legally be touched. But neither De La Loza nor the walls' legal veneer stopped Cache and Eye One from producing their graffiti-mural. Literally overnight the crowded wall was covered with a series of Cache's trademark colorful chickens. With his characters Cache is alluding to the historical significance of chickens in Los Angeles. What were once seen as a nuisance and a backyard pet for immigrant and Chicano families are now being embraced by hipsters as part of the urban homestead movement. Also, "chicken corner"—an intersection in Echo Park near Dodger Stadium where chickens once roamed free and a mural was painted in their honor—has been one of the epicenters of contention between established residents and perceived gentrifiers. Soon after the chickens arrived, Eye One's Zapatistas showed up next to a "Los Angeles" written in large graffiti-style lettering. These graffiti writers-cum-artists said they were at once trying to "show the incoming hipsters who we are already living in this neighborhood" and show "the old guard [traditional Chicano muralists



*Los Angeles: Untitled.* Photo by Christian Guzman, 2011



Eye One illegally touching up his mural in 2011. Photo by Stefano Bloch

such as De La Loza] that we don't need no fucking money or permission to paint on walls in our community, we just do it."<sup>24</sup>

With a disregard for the current signage ban,<sup>25</sup> the cessation of funding for mural production, and the draconian laws making the production of unsanctioned public art a felony offense, the Sunset walls and the neighborhood, in the words of local shop owner Steve Melendrez, "have never looked better."<sup>26</sup> "The funny part is," Eye One recently said to me as he touched up the black border around the wall's original WPA plaque, "we could get arrested for this when it comes down to it. Don't forget writers and artists are actually getting incarcerated for trying to express themselves even when it is fundamentally good for the neighborhood."<sup>27</sup>

### Conclusion

Acceptance of Cache and Eye One's series of graffiti-murals is indicative of people's changing perceptions of what constitutes appropriate wall aesthetics. Unsanctioned art placed on public infrastructure has always been illegal in Los Angeles, but it is the social and cultural context that determines what gets criminalized and what gets romanticized, and by whom. In Echo Park, a neighborhood with a long history of conflict over the legal right to occupy and aestheticize public space, Cache and

Eye One are able to appeal to multiple publics simultaneously with an art form that merges the transgressive with the traditional.

Their widely accepted graffiti-murals are forcing people to reconsider how the dichotomies of legal/illegal come to bear on what should be deemed, to use Tim Cresswell's phraseology, *in or out of place*.<sup>28</sup> Cache and Eye One, like other graffiti-muralists and street artists, are thereby actively determining the appearance of public space regardless of legal code or top-down prescriptions for appropriate or profitable aesthetic production. While traditional graffiti writers are still being criminalized for their work, greater tolerance for alternative aesthetics and practices may be an unintended side effect of business owners' and boosters' desire for increased cultural capital. Perhaps it is this sort of counterintuitive community pride and street-level conceit on the part of graffiti-muralists and their strange bedfellows that it takes to help preserve one's right to the city and a sense of pride in its appearance.



A bike rider on Sunset Boulevard passes Cache's chickens with backgrounds painted by graffiti-muralist and recent collaborator Kofie. Photo by Stefano Bloch

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## Notes

This essay was written with financial support from the University of Minnesota Department of Geography and the University of Minnesota's Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship. I dedicate this piece to Roger Miller (1951–2010), my PhD adviser and friend.

1. Pat Gomez, interview by the author, Los Angeles, August 1, 2009.
2. "Graffiti murals" have been discussed in the academic literature on so-called hip-hop graffiti. Use of the term often denotes sanctioned wall art that consists primarily of multicolored, complex graffiti-style lettering and/or characters. Others use the term *graffiti mural* to denote a mural produced in the "graffiti style" as a deterrent to vandalism and other acts of unsanctioned wall writing. In such cases so-called graffiti murals are sponsored and paid for by business owners and/or local governments, and are often produced by artists simply emulating the graffiti style. See Susan Philips, *Wallbangin'* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 325; and Ronald Kramer, "Painting with Permission: Legal Graffiti in New York City," *Ethnography* 11 (2010): 235–53. I define *graffiti-murals* as those produced by self-described, acknowledged, and active members of the graffiti community in public view with, primarily, the use of aerosol spray paint. Graffiti-murals are also visually thematic in that they cover the entire surface of a wall with a balance of letters, characters, and/or images painted against fully painted backgrounds. Graffiti-muralists can be negatively defined against traditional and critical muralists in that they are motivated to produce their work for the sake of fame and personal expression in addition to critical concerns for community and artistic concerns for aesthetics. Graffiti-muralists also work independently and illegally as opposed to traditional and critical muralists who rely on public support for legal and logistical reasons.
3. Cache, interview by the author, Los Angeles, August 10, 2009. Tagging is the marking of walls, light poles, and other pieces of infrastructure with one's "tag" name, or moniker, typically with the use of markers or spray paint.
4. Shifra M. Goldman, "How, Why, Where, and When it All Happened: Chicano Murals of California," in *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, eds. Eva Sperling Cockcroft, Holly Barnet-Sánchez, and the Social and Public Arts Resource Center (Venice, CA: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993), 22–53.
5. Arturo Rosette, "Critical Muralism" (PhD diss., University of California at Santa Cruz, 2009).
6. Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino, "Mi Casa No Es Su Casa: Chicano Murals and Barrio Calligraphy as System of Signification at Estrada Courts, 1972–1978" (Master's thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1991).
7. Judith Baca, interview by the author, Venice, CA, September 3, 2009.
8. The WPA changed its name from the Works Progress Administration to the Work Projects Administration in 1939.
9. Blake Gumprecht, *The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
10. On opposition to the housing plan, see the documentary *Chávez Ravine: A Los Angeles Story*, dir. Jordan Mechner (Oley, PA: Bullfrog Films, 2004), DVD; and Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).
11. The Zoot Suit Riots were a street fight waged between young Chicanos and white naval service men. The servicemen were undergoing training at the Naval Reserve Armory in Chávez Ravine at the time of the brawl. See Errol Wayne Stevens, *Radical L.A.: From*

- Coxey's Army to the Watts Riots, 1894–1965* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).
12. Edward W. Soja, “Los Angeles, 1965–1992: From Crisis-Generated Restructuring to Restructuring-Generated Crisis,” in *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*, eds. Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 426–62.
  13. Community Resources against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) was the Los Angeles Police Department’s controversial gang suppression unit in operation from 1987 to 2000.
  14. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, “The Police and Neighborhood Safety: Broken Windows,” *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1982. Wilson and Kelling argue that the presence of quality-of-life infractions like broken windows, if left in disrepair, signal to others that an area is uncared for and out of control. For critiques of “quality-of-life” policing, see Steve Herbert, “Policing the Contemporary City: Fixing Broken Windows or Shoring Up Neo-Liberalism?” *Theoretical Criminology* 5 (2001): 445–66; and Gregory J. Snyder, *Graffiti Lives: Beyond the Tag in New York’s Urban Underground* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 47–56, for an interesting discussion of the counterintuitive link between the prevalence of graffiti in New York City neighborhoods and decreased violent crime rates.
  15. It is difficult to overstate the amount of force used by the LAPD against graffiti writers after the LA riots. In 1996 my family’s apartment unit was raided by detective Jerry Beck and several well-armed members of the LAPD’s Community Tagger Task Force, and my eight-year-old sister was ordered at gunpoint to lie on the floor. Other graffiti writers have been given prison sentences of up to forty-four months for felony vandalism.
  16. Graffiti writers and street artists may be equally motivated by fame, adventure, and artistic expression; however, I define *graffiti* as the systematic, stylistic, and name-based marking of infrastructure with implements such as markers and spray paint by acknowledged members of the graffiti community. “Street art,” on the other hand, is typically theme-based and produced by individual artists who use a variety of mediums such as stencils, posters, and stickers. See Luke Dickens, “Placing Post-Graffiti: The Journey of the Peckham Rock,” *Cultural Geographies* 15 (2008): 471–96.
  17. Susan Philips, *Wallbangin’: Graffiti and Gangs in L.A.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicano/Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008). A “bomber” is a prolific graffiti writer, or tagger.
  18. Ernesto De La Loza, interview by the author, Los Angeles, CA, September 1, 2009.
  19. In fiscal year 2008–2009 the following was spent on graffiti eradication: \$7.5 million by the Los Angeles Department of Public Works, \$12 million from the Metropolitan Transit Authority, \$15 million by the LA Unified School District, \$30 million from the County of Los Angeles. These numbers are taken from a 2009 SPARC action alert “Seven Action Items to Save Los Angeles Murals,” [www.savelamurals.org/now/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=59:seven-action-items-we-must-do-to-save-la-murals&catid=16:the-front-page](http://www.savelamurals.org/now/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59:seven-action-items-we-must-do-to-save-la-murals&catid=16:the-front-page). A *landmark* is a graffiti tag that remains in place without being painted over for an extended period. The term also refers to the piece of infrastructure that supports the tag.
  20. Judith Baca, interview by Warren Olney, “Which Way L.A.?” 89.9 KPCC, Pasadena, CA, March 6, 2008. Full interview available at [www.savelamurals.org/images/stories/Which\\_Way\\_LA\\_3\\_6\\_08\\_kcrw.mp3](http://www.savelamurals.org/images/stories/Which_Way_LA_3_6_08_kcrw.mp3).
  21. Richard Florida, “Bohemia and Economic Geography,” *Economic Geography* 2 (2002):



- 55–71; and Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 59. According to Florida, the bohemian index is a “location quotient that measures the percentage of bohemians in a region compared to the national population of bohemians divided by the percent of population in a region compared to the total national population.”
22. Robbie Conal is a Los Angeles-based political guerrilla poster artist. Shepard Fairey, who owns a studio on Sunset in Echo Park, is the street artist behind the “Obey Giant” sticker and poster campaign and the “Hope” poster for the Barack Obama presidential campaign in 2008. Mear One is a legendary graffiti writer and artist from the Los Angeles-based CBS (Can’t Be Stopped) and WCA (West Coast Artists) graffiti crews. Unit is a graffiti writer and founder of the popular Los Angeles-based graffiti website [www.50mmlosangeles.com](http://www.50mmlosangeles.com). Banksy is a London-based, internationally known street artist whose satirical stencils have appeared most notably on the Israeli security barrier in the Palestinian Territory. His first major US art show was in Echo Park in 2001.
  23. Community members and shop owners, informal interviews by the author, Los Angeles, August 2001–August 2005.
  24. Cache and Eye One, interview by the author, Los Angeles, August 10, 2009.
  25. To cope with the influx of LCD and LED billboards, there is currently a moratorium on the construction of all new “signage” in the city of Los Angeles.
  26. Steve Melendrez, interview by the author, Los Angeles, July 20, 2008.
  27. Eye One, interview by the author, Los Angeles, January 5, 2011.
  28. Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).