

Yolanda M. López

November 1, 1942 - September 3, 2021



Los Siete de la Raza poster, 1969—Yolanda M. López

Yolanda M. López was an iconic Chicana feminist artist who set the standard for young radical Latina and women of color artists to follow. Her artwork can be found in collections from coast to coast: from the LA County Museum and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art to the



Yolanda López, veteran artist y activista

Smithsonian American Art Museum. depicts the Virgen mending her own robe on a sewing machine and Lopez's abuela sits on her robe as she holds a snake skin in her hand.

These images freed la Virgen de Guadalupe of constraints and made her accessible to mujeres who were beginning their own push back in a society that devalued them. In 1984 *Fem* magazine in Mexico City featured an issue on Chicanas with the cover showing one of Yolanda's images—la Virgen de Guadalupe walking, with legs visible, in a modestly hemmed gown and robe with her feet in low-heeled pumps. That image caused an uproar with religious Mexicans causing vandalism in newsstands and at the offices of *Fem* magazine. Although the public rose up in horror at the thought that La Virgen's image had been altered, Lopez's series inspired a new generation of artists whose interpretations of Guadalupe were to be much more challenging to Catholic sensibilities.

Recently, López has received some of the recognition that she has long deserved—winning a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Ford Foundation, as part of its new Latinx Artist Fellowship. Her first solo retrospective exhibit, *Yolanda López: Portrait of the Artist*, part of the Feminist Art Coalition, will show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego from October



Partial mural facade honoring Yolanda López

16, 2021 through April 24, 2022 with fifty of Lopez's works.

While Yolanda was honored to know that her art would be exhibited at the museum, her ultimate honor came as six young women of color led by Jessica Sabogal completed a series of murals in her honor on four large walls (three 60-foot-tall & one 50-foot-tall mural) of an affordable housing building in the Mission district. It is this legacy—the artwork that she produced and her inspiration of young Latina artist/activists—that will endure. The mural evoked these words from Yolanda: "I'm glad that

Smithsonian American Art Museum.

A painter, printmaker, educator and film producer, López is known for works focusing on the experiences of Chicanas, particularly those of working class. Her artwork reflected her activism in the Chicano/Chicana civil rights movement, the Feminist movement and in issues related to social justice and immigration. Yolanda first became involved with Los Siete de la Raza, 7 Latino youth accused of killing a policeman in the Mission district of San Francisco in 1969 who were ultimately acquitted with community support and support from groups like the Black Panthers. In her support of Los Siete, Yolanda produced several political posters and, later, continued to use her artwork to advance social justice causes. In 1978, she produced, *"Who's the illegal alien, Pilgrim?"* poster, and in 2007, she produced, *Your Vote Has Power—Woman's Work Is Never Done*. The issues Yolanda addressed then through her art—police brutality, immigration, voting rights and more—continue to be front and center, today.

Her most recognized works, however, were a series of three oil pastel drawings depicting the Virgen of Guadalupe at different

ages represented by López, her mother and grandmother. In the 1978 triptych, López depicted herself as a young Guadalupe running with her robe billowing behind her as she clutches a snake in hand and steps on an angel, a symbol of the patriarchy.

Lopez's mother



Yolanda López's 1978 triptych of the Virgen of Guadalupe using herself, her mother & grandmother as models.

somehow my history is a paradigm of some way of being a woman in the movement."

The Esperanza staff, board, and Buena gente express our condolences to Yolanda's family, colegas and comunidad. Yolanda López, siempre poderosa y presente!