

For immediate release
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Visiting scholar will lecture on Chicana artists

Guisela Latorre, a Ph.D. candidate in art history at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, will present "Muralism and the Contribution of Chicana Artists" at 3:30 p.m. Friday, October 15, in the Liberal Arts Center, room 1004. Ms. Latorre was awarded the Tinker Field Research Grant for Latin American and Caribbean Studies from University of Illinois. She is a fellow in the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities and a John Bardeen Scholar. She graduated from USI in 1993. The lecture is free and open to the public. The event is sponsored by the USI art and foreign language departments.

Latorre will survey the art of Chicana muralists while contextualizing their work within other relevant muralist traditions. Chicana is the feminine of Chicano; an American woman or girl of Mexican descent. Using interviews and materials she compiled while conducting research in Los Angeles and San Francisco, she will piece together a visual history previously ignored or veiled by traditional art historical texts. Ms. Latorre said, "I will underscore the politically-charged themes and refined aesthetics found in the murals created by these women artists."

The public and monumental nature of mural painting has situated its history both within and outside of broader artistic movements of the twentieth century. Some of the most prominent examples are found in Mexico's mural renaissance which, beginning in the 1920s, provided that nation with a renewed sense of nationalist pride and fervor. But while Mexican muralism was a state-sanctioned and government-financed enterprise, the proliferation of Chicano street and neighborhood murals that emerged in the late 1960s with the advent of the Civil Rights Movement was a counter-current that positioned itself along the margins of dominant cultures in the United States.

Latorre said, "For these particular artists, Mexican muralism was both a great influence and a point of departure in that - perhaps for the first time in history - we witnessed the critical contribution of women within this artistic practice." Though muralism had been regarded as an exclusively masculine creative endeavor up to that point, Chicana artists broke with that convention and took on an active role in the formation of this emerging artistic tradition.

For more information, contact Latorre at glatorre@students.uiuc.edu, or Dr. Carol MacKay, chair of USI's Foreign Language Department, at 812/465-1292.