HABLAMOS JUNTOS  together we speak

Friends No Matter What, charcoal/pastel on paper, 7’x4’2”  2008

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Contemporary Latin@ Broadsides Project
Museo Eduardo Carrillo & Pajaro Valley Arts
Supported by the City of Santa Cruz
Lorraine García-Nakata
Friends No Matter What, 2008
Charcoal & pastel on paper, 7 ft x 4 ft 2”

Let’s Get Personal

Cultural Heritage: My family came to the US from México in 1914. I identify as Chicana when referencing my family Méxican origin and identify as Latina when referencing being part of a larger community of other Latino cultures.

Mentored by: I was mentored by my grandfather, Basilio Prado. Later I was encouraged by my sixth grade teacher, Mr. Edward Inwood, who gave me his oil paint set because he felt I would make better use of it than he. In high school, I studied voice under Richard Hull and learned to play guitar and sing with Steven Greene. In 1973, I became one of the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF- an artist collective) “pilots” and we encouraged and supported each other.

Education/Training: I was self-taught in my early years, then became an art major in college where I trained in sculpture, painting and drawing. I then went on to teach ceramics and drawing at a junior college in Washington State.

Influences: My direct experiences and observations occur during significant cultural/social shifts. One outcome of the 60’s was ethnic studies and literature written by people of color, which allowed me to explore the important wisdom of Indigenous cultures and the ancient cultures of México/Latin America. This continues to inform all areas of my life, including my work as an artist and as a parent.

Tell Young Artists: If you have the desire to be an artist, start and never give up. You don’t have to choose between work responsibilities, parenting, and your creative work. You just have to commit to your art and you’ll make time and adjustments to keep it alive. It will keep you “alive.” For young women, the social pressure to give up their art is even stronger than it is for males. So, be tenacious and know that it is a political act to commit to a life as an artist. It won’t be easy, but you’ll be very glad; you continue to create. People will step in to help you, as they have for me.

Here’s the Artwork

Art Medium: Acrylic on Paper

Intent of the Work: Making art is about choices. I chose to let the unfamiliar creative terrain and process reveal important aspects of the human condition, and how we can live to our full human potential. “Friends No Matter What” pushes against fear of cultural differences and offers a view of how we can benefit from knowing each other. Creative work also helps me to gather my own life energy and diminishes the ability for outside forces to rob me of my inner strength.

Unique Skills: Art is more than learning technical skills. The creative process itself allows me to be comfortable with what is not familiar and strengthens the ability to hear and trust my inner knowledge. Indigenous cultures reference this as an aspect of “precious knowledge.” The comfort of not knowing for certain how things will come out helps in navigating and informing other sectors of my sometimes very challenging life.

Art Impacts Life: There are many distinct Latino cultures. Our experiences are highly diverse, and they affect/inform all areas of our lives, including culture and the artistic work we create. Art is a powerful way to communicate and it is a lifelong way to explore what we become —and we are always in the process of “becoming.”

Let’s Look Closely

Notice: The young girls in this drawing are friends and stand back to back as a symbol that they are from different cultures. They wear blindfolds that appear to be a game they are playing, yet represent that they are still too young to fully understand all that life imposes on them. Their clasped hands show a commitment to stand with each other, stronger together, no matter what.

Get a Fuller Picture

A Note from the Artist: This piece is autobiographical and set in the late 1950’s - early 60’s, before federal civil rights legislation made racial biases and other hate-related actions unlawful. Recently I have observed and re-experienced what I term “retro racism” reappearing in our lives, making “Friends No Matter What” still very relevant.