

## **HABLAMOS JUNTOS together we speak**

**Juan R. Fuentes**

1. My parents were born in Texas and moved to the Monterey/Santa Cruz area in the early 1950's. The family settled just outside of Watsonville, in Las Lomas. Everyone participated with work. We all picked raspberries, cucumbers, radishes, prunes, apples and of course strawberries. I'm one of eleven children and the only one to graduate from a University. My parents could not read or write in English, they only spoke Spanish. For this reason I understand the hardships of working in the fields and I have allot of love for those who toil in the fields. Cesar Chaves and the United Farmworkers have always been an inspiration to me for what they have done for farmworkers. Thus my art reflects how I feel, we are Chicanos.

We grew up poor, but well taken care of by my parents and older siblings. My mother always supported us and made sure we were in school. My older brothers and sisters always encouraged me to stay in school, even though they did not have the opportunity.

I graduated from Watsonville High in 1969 and was recruited by the Educational Opportunity Program and ended up at San Francisco State University. It was at the University that I fell in love with art and started learning to make art for the first time. My mentor was professor Ralph Putzker he opened up my heart and eyes to the beauty in the world. It was up to me to translate that into images. Another valuable teacher was professor and Chicano Artist Rupert Garcia, from him I learned about making images for the Chicano movement and other international struggles.

I had some great mentors and I have become a mentor now to many young artists. It was role models in the Chicano movement like Rupert Garcia and Malaquias Montoya both teachers that helped me pursue a career as an artist. If you want to follow in our footsteps you must study hard get as much knowledge as you can about the world and draw something everyday. Get your high school diploma and continue your studies as far as you can and be open to others ideas.

I had my first exhibit back in the mid 1970's at the Galleria de La Raza in the Mission District of San Francisco. It was here that I really felt a positive reaction from those that came into the gallery and saw my work. It was then that I felt like a real artist. It was around this time that I sold my first art to some friends.

While enrolled in college I worked in the evenings as a janitor at the Presidio Army base. After graduation I worked in a print shop, I have taught art at the Mission Campus it is part of City College. I also taught art at the California College of Arts in Oakland and I was the Director of Mission Graphica at the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts. I have taught art in the San Francisco County Jails and I retired from my teaching position at the San Francisco Art Institute three years ago. There I taught relief printmaking, now I work out of my studio Pajaro Editions.

2. I'm a print maker and I do prints on paper. I also screen print and do relief printing and sometimes I combine both mediums. I love paper, the smell of inks. I like to draw, carve and print. This medium requires all of this. It is exciting to see what new creation you can come up with, that is the challenge that keeps me hungry for more.

My image "Luis de las Flores" was done a tribute to my older brother Luis. Though he never picked flowers in the fields he did arrange flowers into beautiful decorations. He did do a lot of work in the fields like others in the family. The person carrying the flowers represents the hard work and beauty in the human condition and nature. This work was first done as a relief print; this means I did the drawing first. Then I transferred the drawing onto the block, and then it was carved out and printed in black and white only. From this image I created separations for the areas that are printed

in color. These were done by screen-printing, each color was printed onto the sheet until I had all the colors completed. Then I printed the black, which was the key block or outline of the image. This image was also a part of other images I have done of people carrying things on their shoulders or back. This is a metaphor for the hard work we do and the things we carry in order to survive. It is important to look at the composition of the work, how do the colors that I use make the work more dynamic. What kind of feeling do the colors represent in the image. Why is his face not shown? How do the shadows that I used make the image more interesting? Does it make you wonder who is the person carrying the flowers.

Every image tells its own story, think about something that you really feel passionate about and think about how you would translate this into a drawing. All of my images stem from this and then I work hard to make them come true on the paper.

Art is a powerful influence in our lives. We could not live without art. We are surrounded by it, the clothes you choose to wear. What you eat, the music you choose to listen to, the movies you watch etc... It is through art that we have a chance to experience how it feels to be human.