

SEEDS OF JUSTICE:

Cultivating Community through
Art & Land Based Practices



Art & Environmental Justice
Initiative 2020-2022



Art & Environmental Justice Initiative 2020-2022

In 2020, Mural Arts launched the second round of its Art and Environment Capacity Building Initiative, which builds on the organization's long history of public art practice in Philadelphia to support artists and groups seeking to do similar work in other locations. The goal was to support community-based arts and environmental justice practitioners to work together to address environmental justice issues using participatory arts-based processes. Through providing substantial financial resources, one-on-one and group coaching, and targeted learning experiences as participants planned and executed a "demonstration project," Mural Arts sought to help participants build their capacity to do socially engaged, participatory art work over the long-term.



The initiative had several interrelated components:

- Learning arc—peer exchanges, visiting speakers, and other learning opportunities
- Place-based work—murals, workshops, and other activities that cohort members led or co-designed in their own communities
- Symposia and public events—opportunities to showcase the work of cohort members and others working at the intersection of environmental justice and creative placemaking, and cross-pollinate (recordings are available on the Mural Arts website)

The three teams of the cohort were made up of diverse collaborators in:

- Austin, Texas
- Kern County, California
- O’ga Poge/Santa Fe, New Mexico



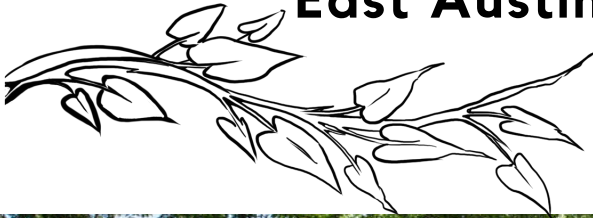


This publication seeks to highlight the work of the three cohort participating teams (through their own words and images), who served their communities and their aspirations, strengthened their relationships, and centered creative practice in their transformative social action through the challenging years of 2020 through 2022.

Meet the teams and learn about their work in the following pages!

Austin, TX

**Raasin in the Sun, The Mosaic Workshop,
East Austin Environmental Initiative,
Austin Creative Alliance**



Bolm Road Murals - Curated by Raasin in the Sun

Located along Bolm Rd. in East Austin, TX is a curation of fourteen different art installations, spanning nine-hundred feet, representing the surrounding community. This undertaking was in partnership with Raasin in the Sun, the Govalle Neighborhood Association, and commissioned by the city of Austin's Neighborhood Partnering Program.





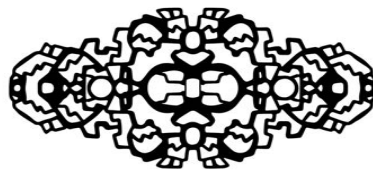
This large-scale restoration and beautification project highlights the Govalle neighborhood's past, present, and future. This vibrant art represents the importance of giving back to the community, the value of taking care of your neighbors, honoring our planet, and the importance of sustainability.

Austin, TX 



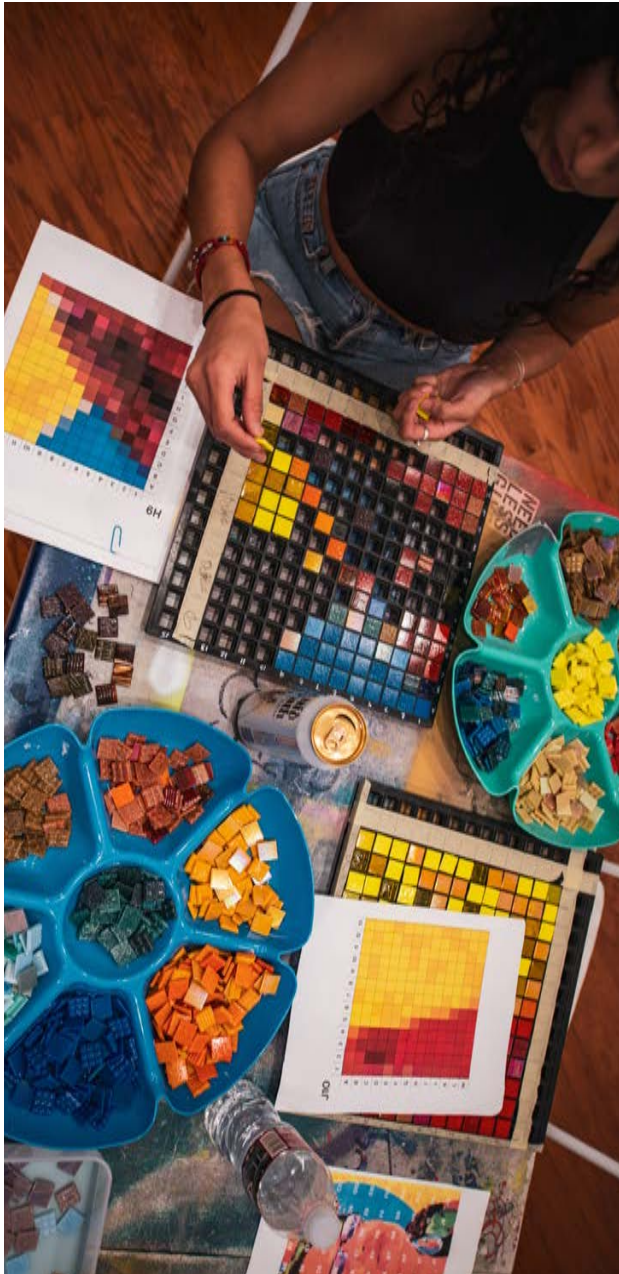
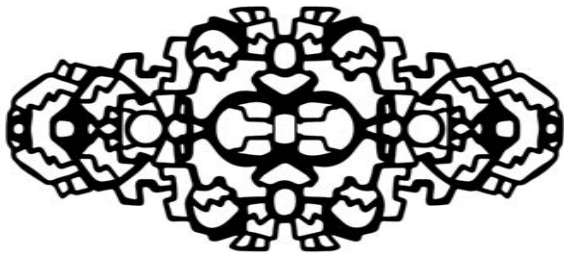
Austin, TX

Mosaic Portrait of Susana Almanza led by The Mosaic Workshop



"It is our hope that through activating spaces with artwork that has meaning and an important story, we can not only galvanize communities, strengthening bonds of shared experience and participation, but also educate others into the future as they inquire as to the significance of the artwork."

- J Muzacz, Co-Founder - The Mosaic Workshop



Austin, TX

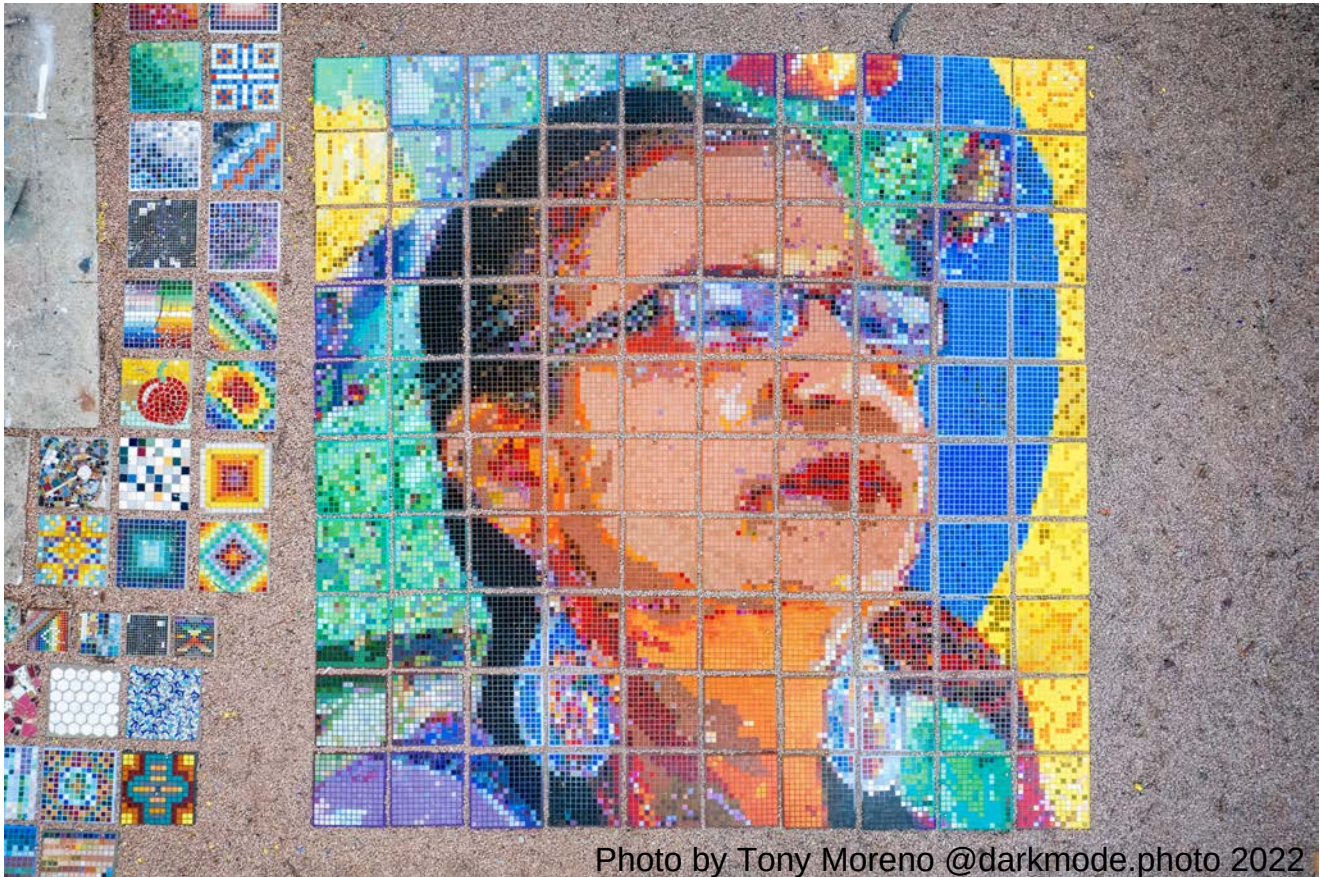
The Mosaic Workshop and Raasin in the Sun in collaboration with Something Cool Studios, and the East Austin Environmental Initiative, came together with an outpouring of community support and nearly a hundred volunteers to create a striking 100 square foot glass tile mosaic portrait showcasing the work and legacy of living legend and community leader Susana Almanza, environmental activist, politician, and co-founder of People Organized in Defense of Earth and Her Resources (PODER).





Austin, TX

Mosaic Portrait of Susana Almanza
led by The Mosaic Workshop



This public art installation will be used as a vehicle to highlight important environmental justice initiatives in Austin past and present. Inspired by PODER's tireless work against tank farms, pollution, and the disproportionately negative effects of climate change in Austin's communities of color, we hope to shine a light on those who have and are still paving the way for a better, more equitable environment for us all.

Austin, TX

Huston-Tillotson Mural by Candy Kuo



Raasin in the Sun in partnership with Huston Tillotson University and the Atx Mosaic Workshop to produce a three story mural on the Dickey Lawless Science Building on the campus of Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, Texas. After a highly competitive statewide artist call and selection process, the selection panel consisting of community advocates, art and cultural leaders, Huston Tillotson students and staff chose local Austin artist Candy Kuo.

The theme addresses climate change and resilience as it pertains to East Austin, a community historically red-lined and which has seen the disproportionate impact of oil tank farms, power plants, other toxic industries and gentrification in a city otherwise praised for its access to nature, clean living and affordability.



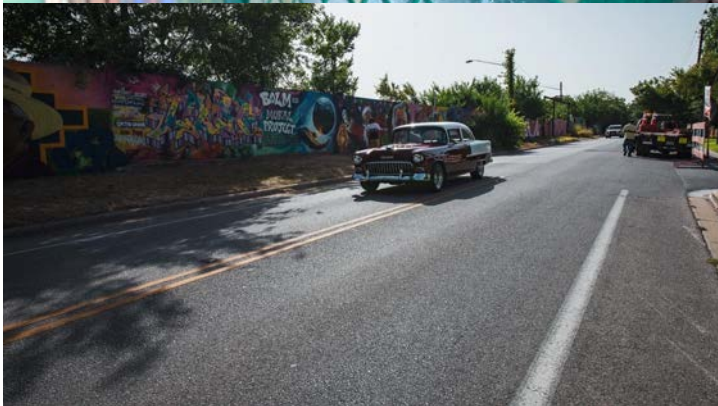
Photo by Leta Harrison.



In November 2023, the community in addition to Huston Tillotson's faculty and students attended the Building Green Justice Symposium and had the opportunity to meet the artist, discuss critical environmental issues in an open setting, participated in rotating sessions exploring creative ways to express through video/media, poetry, and sketch, and provide feedback on Candy's design. The mural was installed and unveiled at the annual Earth day event held on campus in April, 2023.

Austin, TX





Collaborators

Raasin in the Sun
Project design and management, community engagement, administrative logistics and communication, accounting

The Mosaic Workshop
Artist/Educators, project design, community engagement, fabrication, technical assistance

East Austin Environmental Initiative
City of Austin community organization, environmental activism, networking and promotional support

Austin Creative Alliance
Fiscal sponsorship

Austin, TX

KERN COUNTY, CA

WE ARE HERE/ESTAMOS AQUI

WE ARE HERE/ESTAMOS AQUI (WAH/EA) is rooted in the understanding that climate change is inherently part of racial capitalist and settler colonial logics and shows the ways in which Latinx and often Spanish-speaking communities' disproportionate exposure to air contamination is not an unfortunate externality but rather is inherent to the power dynamics of the present moment.



Through this lens, creative practice around environmental justice (EJ) within frontline communities in Kern County not only responds to specific climate-justice issues but also, methodologically, increases both resilience and resistance to the foundational disconnection and dehumanization that racial capitalism and colonialism produce.

Simply stated, WAH/EA changed the trajectory of California's EJ legacy by recruiting and engaging residents in the San Joaquin Valley 10-year campaign to establish a health and safety setback, the first in the state of California. Senate Bill 1137 (3200-ft setback) was signed into law September 16, 2022, by Gov. Gavin Newsom



KERN COUNTY, CA

We Are Here/Estamos Aqui combined art with environmental science and curated a stunning story of environmental impacts of everyday life by residents throughout Central California and embroidered them onto a 2500-ft story cloth. This was no small fete during the deadliest respiratory pandemic in American history, COVID-19. A dedication of the Story cloth and celebration of lessening of Covid restrictions was held April 24, 2022, at Panorama Park in Bakersfield California. Residents of all ages carried sections of the story cloth along a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile pathway, across a gulch from the 5th largest oil field in California, the Chevron Kern River Oil Field.





Elizabeth Spavento



We Are Here/Estamos Aqui collaborated with allies, schools, and universities across EJ network developing eco tours of air, water, and soil sites that harm our environment. We invited FracTracker to create a story map of areas of concern of eco tours to highlight the areas and historical impacts to communities. Sites are pinned with colorful icons created by a local artist so residents can project themselves into the map. A website www.WeAreHereEstamosAqui.com holds the completed tool kit including mini documentaries, lesson plans, maps, and illustrations for use by the community. The WAH/EA website and toolkit will be available in Summer 2023.

"We Are Here – Estamos Aqui."

Rosanna Esparza, PhD. 10/25/2022



KERN COUNTY, CA



KERN COUNTY, CA

We acknowledge and thank our team, collaborators, and community partners for their support of the WE ARE HERE/ESTAMOS AQUÍ (WAH/EA) Project. The Kern County team includes environmental health researcher and retired clinical gerontologist Dr. Rosanna Esparza, and Public Art & Master Social Practice Artist Michelle Glass. The Arts Council of Kern served as fiscal sponsor for the WAH/EA Project.



We acknowledge that the land on which we live, and labor were stolen from the Yokuts people and their descendants, who survived and remained in the homeland, in addition to those in the diaspora, who were forcefully removed and are still marginalized.





From its inception We Are Here/Estamos Aqui highlighted the talents of our community members. Older women are the traditional teachers and leaders of our young and less experienced members. No one group in our collaborative influenced us more than Las Mujeres de la Tercera Edad in Arvin. They set the pace and led us on a journey of discovery resulting in our collective EJ & Art project. We embraced the values of Intergenerational Support, Learning, Cariño and Corazón, and gravitated toward replicating what we know, and how we do things. It's no coincidence that the major roles in our project were held by women with support from male colleagues. When we set out to expand the collective knowledge of residents about air quality, water, wildfires and Mother Earth, women led the processions, learning sessions, artmaking and eco tours. We put our words into action practicing tantear, the intentional being together without pressure of where we're going or the outcome. We Are Here ~ Estamos Aqui.

KERN COUNTY, CA



Since 2014, The Center on Race Poverty and the Environment (CRPE), The Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN) and The Central Valley Air Quality Coalition (CVAQ) have joined forces on multiple campaigns to build collective strength and to demonstrate that together we can change the world. As collaborative partners, CRPE, CCEJN and CVAQ serve many of the residents, laborers, organizers, and community-based organizations across California and the world.

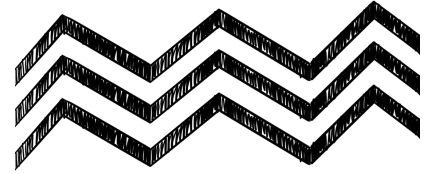


The Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment is headed by Caroline Farrell, JD and her team of attorney's, organizers, and advocates in the Central Valley and Emeryville, CA – Cultivating in community: Standing in solidarity. CRPE provides legal, organizing, and technical assistance to groups throughout the U.S. and abroad; CRPE Serves as a fiscal sponsor and clearinghouse for major environmental donors and is a well-established placement site for law school interns, recent graduates, and Post-doc fellows.

CRPE increased our awareness of the linkages of environmental science, law and community-based health based on years of research on the impacts of pesticides and workers. CRPE helped determine the project focus – Safety Setbacks. California is one of the few States that did not have setback regulations for proximity to sensitive receptors (homes, schools, hospitals, recreational areas...) oil & gas development. CRPE offered hands-on support from Director of Organizing, Gustavo Aguirre Sr author of Beyond Organizing, 2021. Aguirre shared community wide strategies for active participation during the 2019-2022 Covid Pandemic. <http://www.crpe=ej.org/>

KERN COUNTY, CA





KERN COUNTY, CA



Central California Environmental Justice Network is headed by Nayamin Martinez, MPH and her staff in Fresno and Bakersfield. CCEJN works towards eliminating harmful environmental impacts, provides technical assistance to residents, regulators, regulatory agencies, and water/environmental justice orgs. CCEJN oversees IVAN (Identifying Violations Affecting Neighborhoods) Air Monitoring Network for particulate matter (PM) a research project funded by the State of CA. Sites in Fresno (FERN-Fresno Environmental Reporting Network) and Bakersfield (KEEN-Kern Environmental Enforcement Network).

CCEJN strengthened our relationships with organizations and residents in the Fresno area and provided technical assistance to our project about outcome measures of air quality standards and what we need to know about air quality, water quality and wildfires. CCEJN was helpful in sharing viability and replicability of art projects rooted in environmental justice. The organization has a long history of "Teatro" performances in collaboration with El Teatro Campesino one of the most influential theatre groups of the Chicano Movement and the Farm Worker Movement of the 1960's.

<https://ccejn.org>

KERN COUNTY, CA

Central Valley Air Quality Coalition

CVAQ is led by Dr. Catherine Garoupa White a geographer, environmental policy analyst, and community-based researcher. CVAQ is a partnership of more than 70 health, policy, environmental, and regulatory organizations in California. CVAQ leads the fight for clean air in the San Joaquin Valley the nations #1 most polluted air basin in the United States. CVAQ ensures that all communities, races, cultures, classes, creeds, and self-identifiers – can be involved in policy development and regulatory processes improving individual and regional health.

Accessing strategic planning documents and regulatory briefs, CVAQ enabled us to hone in on a strategic policy focus to build a campaign in favor of health and safety setbacks primarily for implementation in oil and gas development. Using geography techniques to map areas of interest offered us an opportunity to develop a Story Map with FracTracker Alliance <https://www.fractracker.org> and build an interactive map and history of south San Joaquin Valley community most impacted by oil and gas development, agriculture/pesticides, and water contamination.

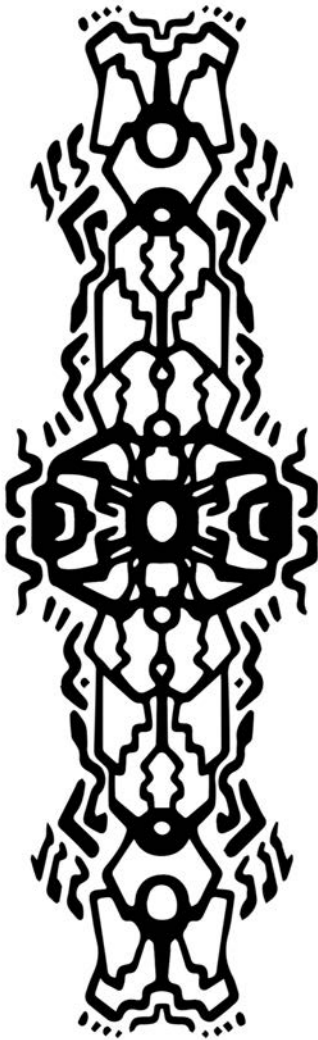
www.calcleanair.org



Community partners, collaborators and contributors include Professor Laurie Palmer, Graduate School of Art, University of California Santa Cruz, Dr. Vivian Underhill Post-doc fellow Northeastern Uni., Dr. Julie Maldonado, University of California, Santa Barbara, ADELANTE Art Collective Arvin, Liberated Youth for Empowerment(LYFE) with the Dolores Huerta Foundation, Fabian Euresti, Gabriela Alemán, Kyle Ferrar FracTracker Alliance, Arvin Family Resource Center, Bird Dog Arts, Kern Valley Indian Community Tribal Organization, and community members throughout the Central Valley of CA.

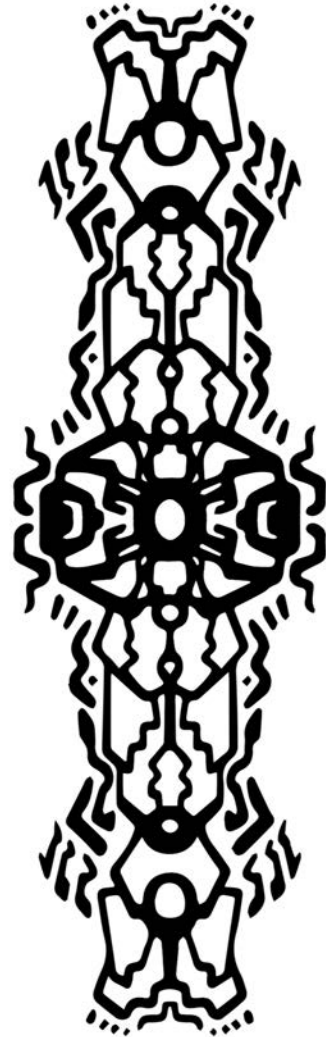
O'GA POGEH/SANTA FE, NM

FULL CIRCLE FARM



The last two and a half years has been a fruitful collaboration between Alas de Agua and Three Sisters Collective! Along with our growing farm/community learning space, Full Circle Farm in O'ga Pogeh/Santa Fe, we have created large-scale artwork, public facing murals, hosted numerous art shows and offered BIPOC centered art/poetry and permaculture workshops to the larger community.

O'GA POGEH/SANTA FE, NM



We have further established our community garden, Full Circle Farm, as part of the growing "Land Back" movement taking place across the Americas. Full Circle Farm came about through our allyship with Reunity Resources and Youthworks, two local non profit organizations in partnership with Santa Fe County. By mobilizing efforts, we were able to lease two acres of "underutilized" county land at minimal cost in an area that was once a thriving Tewa village known as Pindi, or Turkey Pueblo, due to the evidence of large scale turkey cultivation.

The intention behind Full Circle Farm was not only to re-establish our agrarian traditions as land based peoples, but to create a safe space in our community for BIPOC people to gather, commingle, co-create and dream up a new reality for ourselves in a city that is mostly unwelcoming to us. Our farm community is multigenerational and multicultural, with an emphasis on youth engagement. We host "Intersectional" days and events where the larger community can volunteer or participate while receiving education and insight by Indigenous/POC community leaders on how to engage in supportive allyship and stand up for the rights of Mother Earth, which by default supports Indigenous lives and lifeways.

O'GA POGEH/SANTA FE, NM



In such a short time, we are proud to have created a warm, healing and welcoming space for several intersections of community, who come to our farm knowing they are safe, accepted as they are and wanting to be exposed to Indigenous thought and consciousness because they recognize that our Traditional Ecological Knowledge is desperately needed as we experience ongoing climate insecurity. We have engaged in youth programming, planting and maintaining traditional heirloom crops, building shade structures, a storage shed, an outdoor oven inspired by those found in the local Pueblos, and several murals on site. Most recently, we were able to build an outdoor educational structure to host community events throughout the year. We will continue to learn and share our ancestral knowledge to those wanting to use it responsibly as we seed the next generation of Mother Earth caretakers.



O'GA POGEH/SANTA FE, NM

Creative Expression is one of the pillars of our work in both Alas de Agua and Three Sisters Collective (3SC). The humble warehouse space that is Alas de Agua is located on the south side of Santa Fe, home to many Latinx immigrants and families. Although small in size, we are proud of the many offerings we have hosted there for the BIPOC community. From poetry and mural workshops led by Israel Haros Lopez to workshops in several artistic mediums led by local artists, to single and group art shows highlighting up and coming artists, we are proud of providing a safe art space in a part of O'ga Pogeh/Santa Fe that is often overlooked. The mural workshops have led to the training of muralists in the community and we will continue to offer mural arts training for years to come

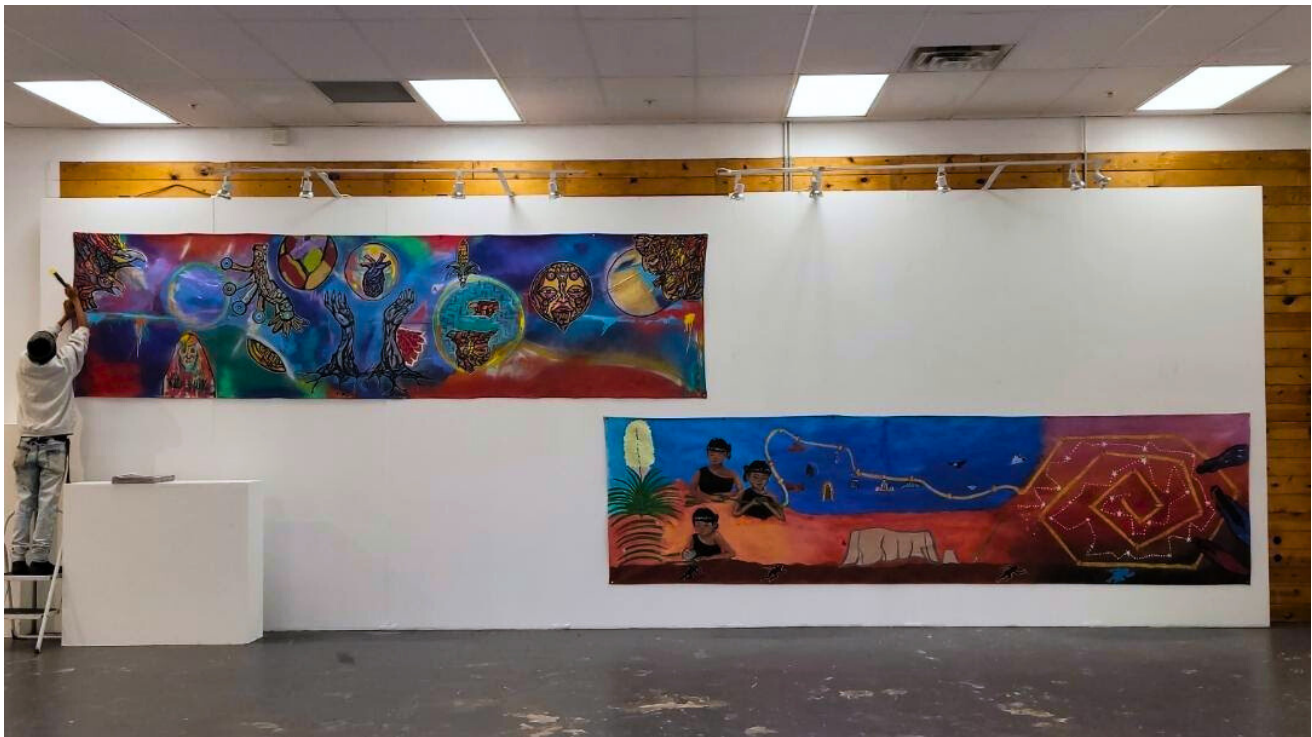
The "Barrio Art School" is a new BIPOC led summer arts program entering its second year of learning and teaching. Barrio Art School is built in recognition that we have ancestral arts knowledge that is not found in classrooms or universities and that it is our responsibility to hand this knowledge down to the next generation.



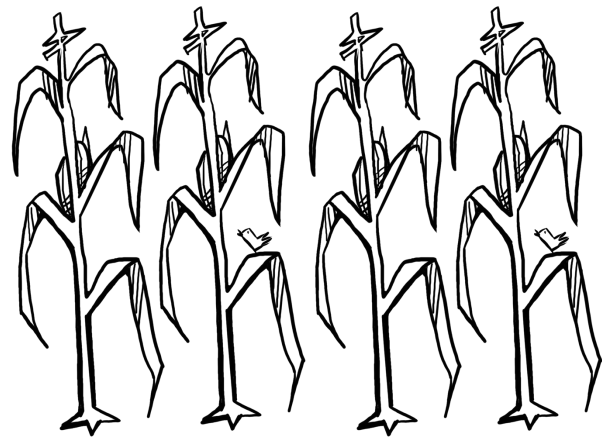
O'GA POGEH/SANTA FE, NM



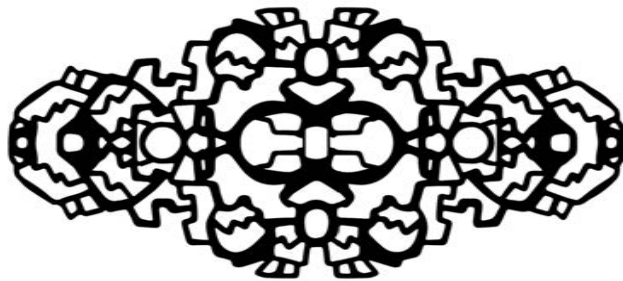
In October of 2022, we showcased our "artivism" work at an art show we organized in collaboration with local gallery, El Museo Cultural. The title of the show, "Full Circle: Returning to the Land, Reclaiming Ourselves," was curated by 3SC's in house artist, Autumn Dawn Gomez and encapsulates the effort we are collectively making to reclaim/continue our Pueblo and Indigenous cultures in the face of radical shifts in our environment, the Covid era, ongoing colonialism in the form of extractive industry and environmental degradation, and the long term effects of nuclear colonialism specific to the state of New Mexico.



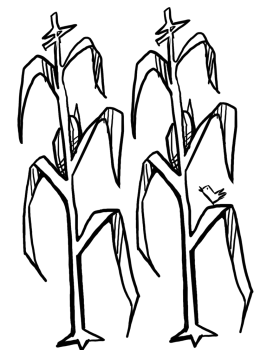
Over the last two years, we are proud to have created several murals throughout O'ga Pogeh/Santa Fe proper that display Indigenous iconography and themes. We strongly believe in the power of public art as an instrument of cultural reclamation in a city that is in the process of removing prolific murals painted in the 70's-80's during the height of the local Indigenous/Chicano movement in favor of a "streamlined," industrial aesthetic. We are committed to keeping O'ga Pogeh/Santa Fe multicultural and reminding the community that this is and always will be, Indigenous Land!



O'GA POGEH/SANTA FE, NM



In Santa Fe, New Mexico, Indigenous and Chicanx artists, activists, scholars, and community members that comprise Alas de Agua Art Collective and Three Sisters Collective are working towards addressing the complex dynamics of colonial history, cultural erasure and environmental racism in Santa Fe, O'ga Po'Ogeh, Tewa Territory .



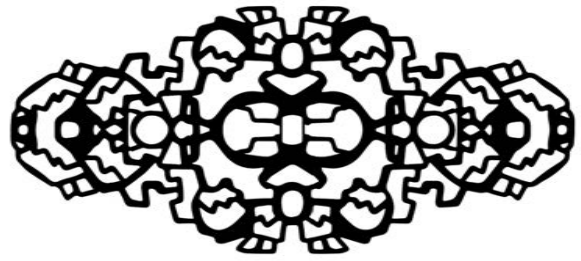
O'GA POGEH/SANTA FE, NM



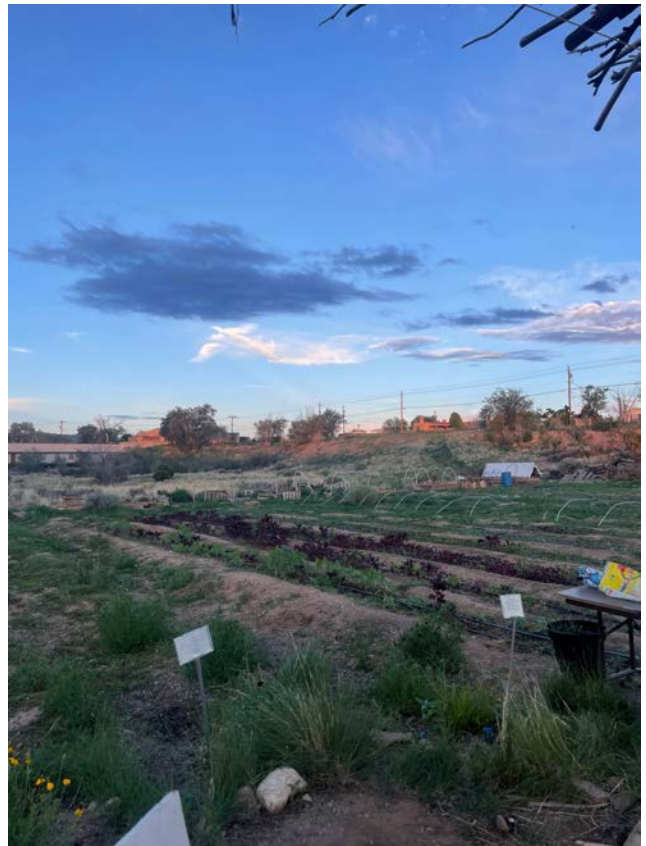
Alas de Agua Art Collective is an intersectional grass roots space providing resources and opportunities for artists of color, native artists, immigrant, undocumented, and queer artists who have historically and currently been marginalized and not afforded the same resources. They offer opportunities for said artists to provide alternative narratives, and they remove barriers and creatively go around them.



Three Sisters Collective utilizes a deconcolonial, Pueblo rooted, matriarch-led framework to create an extreme social shift to counteract social and environmental injustices in the community. Indigenous and communities of color in and around Santa Fe have borne the burden of environmental disregard including the storage of nuclear waste on Pueblo territory, the overgrazing of land and overharvesting of plant medicines, contamination of waterways, and heightened vulnerability of women and girls towards violence from temporary workers of environmentally extractive industries (MMIWGT2S).

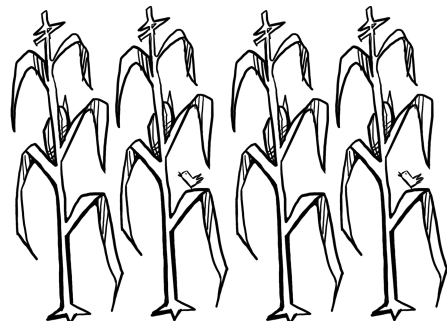


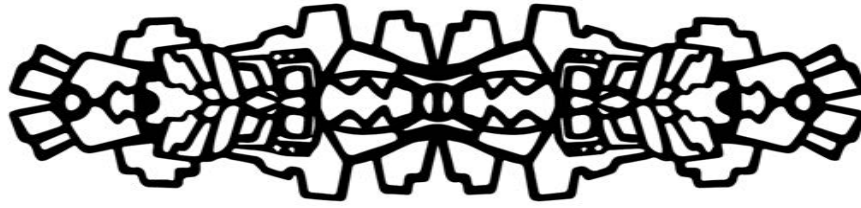
O'GA POGEH/SANTA FE, NM



Key team members include:
Dr. Christina M. Castro and Autumn
Dawn Gomez,
Three Sisters Collective

Israel Haros, John Paul Granillo, and
Jessica Ortiz,
Alas de Agua Art Collective





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Learn more at muralarts.org/institute