

A Beating Heart

Artist: Carlos Rodriguez

2024

King Road & McKee Road., San Jose, CA 951126 / Council District 5

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Carlos Rodriguez's complex and layered mural design engages all surfaces of the 706 square foot restroom building adjacent to the Plata Arroyo Skate Park. The artwork features four distinct murals on each side of the building, unified by design elements and lettering inspired by vintage cannery labels. *Plata Arroyo* and *San Jose* are painted in bold lettering on the west side of the building that faces King Road. Decorative borders composed of leaves and roses surround the words, serving as a place marker for visitors to the park.



On the north side of the building, Rodriguez's composition features scenes rendered in black and white that depict the history of past generations and honor the work of Cesar Chavez. Conceptually, this panel represents the hard labor endured by workers to provide new paths of empowerment. These vignettes are surrounded by colorful borders and images of fruit, another reference to the neighborhood's agricultural past.

On the east side of the building, Rodriguez depicts the past and present Plata Arroyo neighborhood, inspired by Lower Silver Creek that runs along the northside of the park. A young boy stands holding a ceremonial whistle, surrounded by the animals of the Ohlone creation story, coyote, hawk, owl, turtles, hummingbird, and a woodpecker. About this composition, the artist states "this is the heart of Plata Arroyo." He further animates the panel with a vignette of young children playing and catching crawdads in the river, a memory shared by many community members who attended the visioning meeting with the artist.





On the south side of the building, Rodriguez shifts from warm to cool tones in his dynamic composition of the youth that hang out at the skatepark that they call “Plata.” The artist met with community members who provided inspiration for the design. Rodriguez’s design encapsulates the intergenerational histories of the Plata Arroyo neighborhood and transforms the humble restroom building to a place with dignity.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rodriguez was chosen for his style of painting, which is colorful, vibrant, playful, and highly detailed. As an artist who lived in the Plata Arroyo neighborhood, his connection to the community was particularly unique. Rodriguez grew up seeing murals by great Mexican muralists Orozco, Siqueiros, and Rivera. He immigrated to the United States when he was eight years old. Balancing his art, business, and family is what brings him the most joy.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

The City of San José Public Art Program seeks to build community identity by initiating artworks and exhibitions that enhance the civic landscape. Through active community engagement, public art strives to reflect the City’s diversity, historic richness, and envision its present and future.

The Public Art Program is part of the City’s Office of Cultural Affairs, a division of the Office of Economic Development. The Public Art Program was established by a 1984 municipal ordinance that provides public art through funding from City capital improvement projects and eligible private development.

For further information and photos, please contact the San José Public Art Program.