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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Elsa Flores

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Elsa Flores
Identifier:	AAA.flores97
Date:	1997 Feb. 18-Apr. 30
Creator:	Flores, Elsa (Interviewee) Rangel, Jeffrey J. (Interviewer)
Extent:	11 Sound cassettes (Sound recording (60 mins. each); analog) 209 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Elsa Flores, 1997 Feb. 18-Apr. 30, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Elsa Flores, 1997 Feb. 18-Apr. 30, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This interview is part of the Archives of American Art Oral History Program, started in 1958 to document the history of the visual arts in the United States, primarily through interviews with artists, historians, dealers, critics, and administrators.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Elsa Flores was born in Las Vegas, Nevada. Her mother was born in Sinaloa, Mexico, and her father was of Arab descent, born in Chile after his parents fled the Middle East. Elsa studied at the Art Center College, California State University, and the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts. Almaraz and Flores married in 1981 and their daughter Maya was born in 1983. They collaborated on *California Dreamscape*, a mural commissioned by the California Arts Council and is located in the Reagan State Building in Los Angeles.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Elsa Flores conducted 1997 Feb. 18-Apr. 30, by Jeffrey Rangel, for the Archives of American Art.

Scope and Contents

The interviews took place in Flores' studio, in South Pasadena, Calif., over four sessions. Flores discusses her parents' diverse backgrounds and her difficult childhood and adolescence; the development of her political consciousness; her involvement with Chicano art; her interests in art, photography, and music, including being a member of California State University, Los Angeles mariachi band; her art, which she considers more biographical and mystical than ethnic; her use, initially, of a dark palette to distinguish her work from that of her husband, Carlos Almaraz, and changing to a brighter, more optimistic palette after Almaraz's was diagnosed with AIDS. She recalls Almaraz's energy and genius; his struggles with AIDS and his search for alternative healing methods; finding solace in Kauai; and his request to have his ashes strewn around Kauai at his favorite places. Flores comments on the difficult period after Almaraz's death; her devotion to their daughter; keeping Almaraz's work at the forefront of public awareness; and her own art career.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Chicano art movement
- Latino and Latin American artists
- Women artists
- Women painters

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Almaraz, Carlos

Occupations:

- Painters -- California -- Los Angeles