



Canción de la Unidad/Song of Unity Update, November 2012

From across the street, the mural covering La Peña's façade is as impressive as ever. Up close, however, deep cracks, chipped paint, and broken ceramic quetzal feathers reveal its deterioration. The damage is irreparable.

During the past several months, mixed messages have circulated about La Peña's plans for the mural. This is a brief summary of events leading up to the current negotiations with the 2012 Mural Committee and Ray Patlan for replication of *Song of Unity*.

By 2006, the mural showed signs of weather damage beyond our capacity to repair with patching and touch-ups. For the next five years, we sought professional advice and tried unsuccessfully to obtain funding for restoration and preservation of the mural.

Eventually we found that funding was available to create a new mural. In 2012, La Peña staff and board decided to remove *Song of Unity* and replace it with a more sustainable structure and new artwork by Trust Your Struggle (TYS), the collective that created the *Relevo* mural around the interior walls of the lounge area.

Song of Unity muralists Osha Neumann, Ray Patlan and O'Brien Thiele approved that decision and agreed to advise the process. There was no plan to destroy or "throw away" *Song of Unity*, rather a number of ideas were proposed for preserving it in a different, interior form.

"As for the original mural, it will be carefully dismantled and we are already exploring ideas for how it can be relocated to an interior space, preserving it as an historical East Bay landmark for future generations. We envision a day when you can visit La Peña and experience the transformation of our communities over a span of almost 40 years through the stories told within these two murals. The murals are the different skins of our organization and they change as we change."
-- 2nd Skin Mural Project Campaign, Indiegogo, June 2012



In June, TYS and La Peña launched an Indiegogo campaign to raise the additional funds needed to begin the 2nd Skin Mural Project. The campaign generated local media coverage and public awareness. More than 150 people responded enthusiastically and made donations.

Others, however, were very upset by the idea of dismantling *Song of Unity*, given its historical and cultural significance. Several community meetings were held to hear the voices of those for and against a new mural, after which La Peña and the Trust Your Struggle collective agreed that the 2nd Skin Project should not go forward. We have explained our decision to the Indiegogo donors and given them the option of requesting a refund or redirecting their donation to La Peña's Arts Education Program.

An independent group from the community has formed the 2012 Mural Committee to raise funds dedicated to replicating the current *Song of Unity* mural under the direction of Ray Patlan, one of the original muralists.