

Aztlán to Magulandia: The Journey of Chicano Artist Gilbert “Magu” Luján

October 7—December 16, 2017



UCI Claire Trevor | Art
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University Art Galleries
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Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Aztlán to Magulandia: The Journey of Chicano Artist Gilbert "Magu" Luján*, organized by University Art Galleries, University of California, Irvine, curated by Hal Glicksman and Rhea Anastas.

Aztlán to Magulandia: The Journey of Chicano Artist Gilbert "Magu" Luján will tour to Riverside Art Museum, June 2–September 29, 2018.

The exhibition and catalog *Aztlán to Magulandia: The Journey of Chicano Artist Gilbert "Magu" Luján* would not have been possible without the critical support of the Estate of Gilbert "Magu" Luján and their establishment of the Magulandia Archive.

All works by Gilbert "Magu" Luján © 2017 Collection of the Estate of Gilbert "Magu" Luján, unless otherwise stated. Photography: Fredrik Nilsen.

Acronym for Magulandia Archive collection identification number: MA ID.

Cover: *Amor en Aztlán* (detail), ca. 1988
pastel on paper, 18 ¾ × 24 ¾ inches, MA ID: 1052
Collection of Mardi Luján

Back cover: *Flying into Hollywood*, 1997
Marker on acetate, 27 ¾ × 25 inches, MA ID: 4713

"Magulandia: A Tale of Ethnic Proportions" © 2017 Naiche Luján.

Design: Habib Placencia Adissi.

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Aztlán to Magulandia: The Journey of Chicano Artist Gilbert "Magu" Luján is part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, a far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles, taking place from September 2017 through January 2018 at more than seventy cultural institutions across Southern California. Pacific Standard Time is an initiative of the Getty.

Major support for the *Aztlán to Magulandia* exhibition and publication is provided through grants from the Getty Foundation.



"La Peaches y Artster Jamming to the Beach" (detail), 1984
Prismacolor on paper, 18 3/4 x 23 1/4 inches, MA ID: 0510

Aztlán to Magulandia: Exhibition and Catalog

UC Irvine's University Art Galleries (UAG) presents the first survey of one of the most iconic figures of the Chicano art movement, Gilbert "Magu" Luján, and an accompanying publication. This retrospective focuses on the creativity and invention in Luján's work in a myriad of sketches, drawings, paintings, and sculptures. Luján combined two world-making concepts, Aztlán, the mythic northern ancestral home of the indigenous Mexican Aztecs that became a charged symbol of Chicano activism; and Magulandia, the term Luján coined for the space in which he lived and produced his work, and for his work as a whole. Together, Aztlán and Magulandia represent both physical spaces and the complex cultural, geographic, and conceptual relationships that exist between Los Angeles and Mexico and serve as dual landscapes for Luján's artistic philosophy and cultural creativity.

Curated by Hal Glicksman and Rhea Anastas, *Aztlán to Magulandia: The Journey of Chicano Artist Gilbert “Magu” Luján* is the first major exhibition devoted to the full career of Gilbert “Magu” Luján (1940–2011). Spanning two galleries, the exhibition features over two hundred artworks from the Estate of Gilbert “Magu” Luján and numerous additional works from private collections. This presentation of his work encourages new audiences to engage with, conceptualize, and respond to his work.

Accompanying the exhibition is a catalog of the same title. Published by UAG, it is the first publication to draw from Luján’s entire output and activities, including rare works and archival sources that have only recently come to light with the recent reorganization of the artist’s extensive archive by his estate. The Magulandia Archive is featured throughout the catalog, and was established to create a pathway for the substantive research necessary for this ambitious and large-scale endeavor.

Right: *Los Enamorados* (detail), 1990
Mixed Media, 20 × 12 × 10 ½ inches, MA ID: 0011
Below: *Untitled*, ca. 1981
Ink on paper, 8 ½ × 11 inches. MA ID: 2670





Magulandia Study—Suburban street meeting a holyman, ca. 2003
Prismacolor and ink on paper, 3 ¼ × 27 ½ inches, MA ID: 3612

Magulandia: A Tale of Ethnic Proportions Naiche Luján

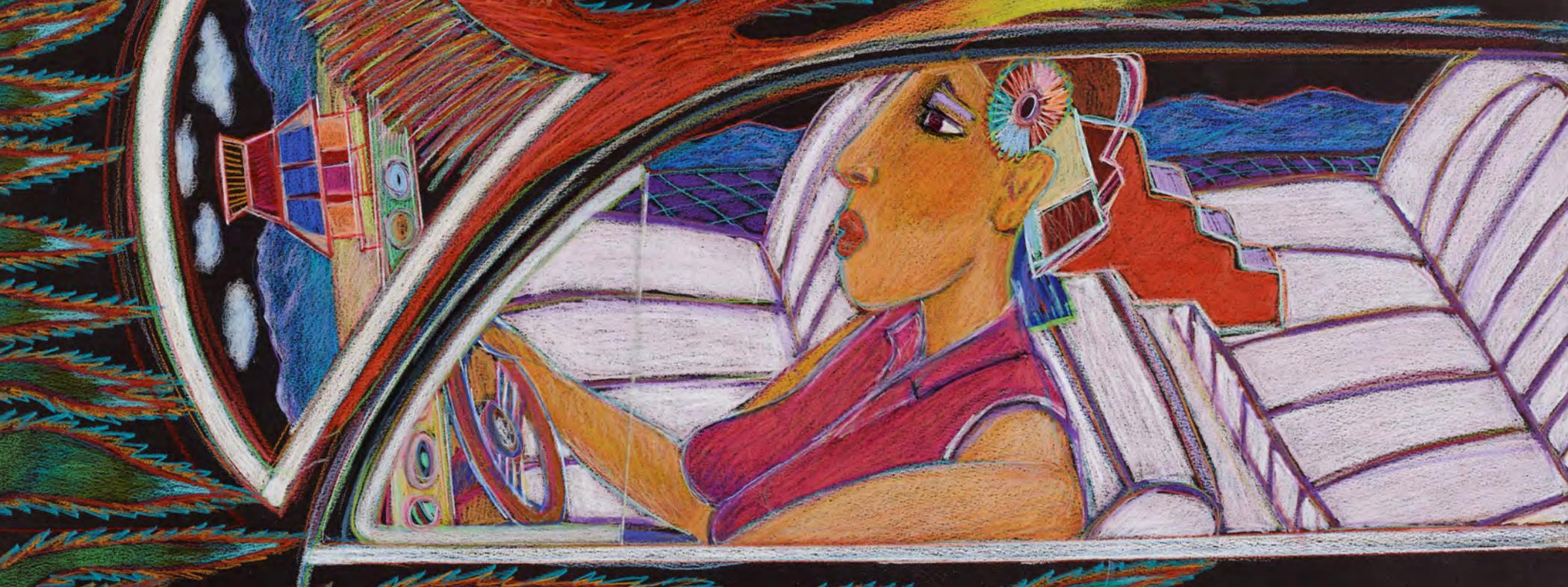
There was once a young boy, an insatiably curious boy, who fell in love with cars and art.
Innocence, perhaps his greatest gift, inspired him to dream, to see the good in people.
He sketched cars endlessly, often during class—
Voluptuous '50s *carritos*, tricked out, low down, with feathers and flames.
He squinted at the texture of paint on canvas; his friends teased him,
“Look! It’s Mr. Magoo!”
He goofed off and told jokes;
He played tricks and stoked fires.
He wore a mischievous, lighthearted grin.
He challenged opinion, especially when he agreed.
Fearless and idealistic, he spoke out against powermongers, petty tyrants,
anti-intellectuals, the Man . . . and refined sugar.

Just out of high school, the Air Force whisked him to a far-off land.
This young trickster quickly became an intellectual, a self-aware beatnik thirsty
for knowledge.
He read volumes upon volumes of literature and ruminated while guarding jets.
He explored new cities, steeped himself in European culture and aesthetics.
He wrote poetry—it didn’t make sense.
His mind quieted at the Zazen temple,
His imagination stoked by Carlos Castaneda,
His discourse polished by academia,
He became an artist-mystic, adept at pleasing tough crowds with fanciful
words.
Meanwhile, his world erupted; the Vietnam War, farmworker abuse, blatant
hatred, humiliation and degradation of his sisters and brothers.
Incomprehensible injustice tore at his heart.
His mind sharpened.
Heated debates stretched into the night—no resolution in sight.

Making friends, making foes;
Pushing buttons, questioning assumptions, seeing where the path led;
Never to convince, never to convert.
Elevating discourse, community actualization, his goals.

His contempt and rage at injustice, his unwavering idealism, his goddamn
stubbornness, all took their toll. On his health, on his family.
The price, perhaps, for following his path—a path with heart, and foolishness.
“Politics divide, arts unite,” he proclaimed.
A passionate community organizer—less naïve, more experienced—gradually
made peace with an unjust world.
Out of painful, shared experience, unbreakable bonds formed, mending old
wounds.
Victimization gave way to liberation and self-empowerment.
Dwelling on past wrongs faded to celebration of shared potential.
Levity, a wicked sense of humor, an optimism emerged, in his heart, his mind,
his art.

Artist, dreamer, social architect and institution builder, teacher, dedicated
rabble-rouser and pot stirrer...
I say, my father walked a path with heart.
And as he neared his journey’s end, he smiled his mischievous, lighthearted
grin, surrounded by all his creations, by Magulandia:
A place where rules don’t apply,
Where the childlike is nurtured and the imagination is freed to explore,
Where all are invited, showcased, celebrated,
Where visions of a reconciled past and a hopeful future culminate
in this very moment.



La Ella Cruising (detail), 2004
Prismacolor on paper, 21 3/4 x 30 inches, MA ID: 2797

A Homecoming for Luján

Rhea Anastas and Kevin Appel

Adapted from the exhibition catalog

A quality of radical generosity that we locate in the art and thinking of Gilbert “Magu” Luján was all the spur we needed to create the exhibition *Aztlán to Magulandia: The Journey of Chicano Artist Gilbert “Magu” Luján*, the first survey of this most iconic and influential artist of the Chicano art movement.

Here is a capturing of time as well as a homecoming for Luján, as the University of California, Irvine’s University Art Galleries also hosted Luján’s first major group exhibition, *Los Four*, in 1973—one he organized with then—gallery director Hal Glicksman, including artists Carlos Almaraz, Frank Romero, and Beto de la Rocha. It has been our great good fortune to realize this work with the beneficent support of the Getty-led Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA initiative.

Gilbert “Magu” Luján was a renowned California-born contemporary artist; a spokesperson for the artist group *Los Four*; and a seminal voice of Chicano art practice, theory, and debates. Magu produced ambitious public-art projects (including a full-scale transit station for the Los Angeles Metro) and exhibited his drawings, prints, mixed-media works, murals, and sculptures extensively in galleries and museums within the United States and abroad. In addition to his work as an artist, Luján also made a significant contribution as a teacher, in ways both formal and informal. Over the course of his career, Luján taught La Raza studies at Fresno City College and art at the Claremont Colleges, and was active in community outreach at the Pomona Arts Colony. An articulate, constant talker and passionate promoter of complex rather than simplistic notions of aesthetics and identity, Magu was also beloved for his influential “Mental Menudo” events which regularly attracted artists and writers in the Southland, greater Southwest, wherever they were held.

In the late 1960s, in the wake of the Civil Rights era and artistic modernism, Luján set about defining and testing concepts of Chicano identity and culture in collaboration with a small group of dedicated artists and intellectuals. Luján's own claiming of *Chicano* involved, in part, rejecting the limiting categorizations *Mexican-American* implied and reclaiming history as *Chicano*. His works combined various historic and contemporary visual sources with original, startling, and sometimes confusing results—pyramid-mounted lowriders driven by anthropomorphic dogs traversing a newly defined and mythologized LA. Luján's conceptualization of *Chicano* also entailed, moreover, a reclaiming and reimagining of space. Luján combined two notions of world-making. The first was *Aztlán*, the northern ancestral home of the mythic indigenous Aztecs, which became a big symbol, one charged politically and popularly by the era's Chicano Movimiento. Luján's *Aztlán* is a contemporary vision of social life, far more urban than pastoral. Second, *Magulandia*: the term Luján applied in describing his studio, the space in which he lived and produced his work, and would apply far more broadly later in his life. *Magulandia* is a spatialization, encompassing physical places, imagined utopias, and the project of articulating and building concepts of cultural identity—cultural identity as understood from an American experience from a Chicano perspective, and from the artist's aesthetics and his theoretical work, complexly.

Below: untitled (detail), 1985
 Ink on paper, 11 × 8 ½ inches, MA ID: 1434
 Right: untitled, 2005
 Mixed media, 12 × 14 × 8 inches, MA ID: 0046



“Magulandia is a spatialization, encompassing physical places, imagined utopias, and the project of articulating and building concepts of cultural identity...”



Luján's culturally astute and cosmopolitan practice resounds clearly today, reminding us of the struggle for political speech alongside the importance of laughter, sexuality, and play at all times. *Aztlán* to *Magulandia* makes a place for Luján's work in step with art history from the 1970s through the first decades of the twenty-first century. With the exhibition and catalog, Magu's visual conversations with national and international contemporary art during the second half of the twentieth century can now be studied anew.



Events and Programming

Exhibition Dates

October 7–December 16, 2017

Curated by Hal Glicksman and Rhea Anastas

Opening Reception

October 7, 2:00–5:00 p.m. (open to the public)

Docent-Led Tour

November 4, 1:00–2:00 p.m.

Learn about the history and works of art in the exhibition. (CAC Gallery)

Los Four Panel at LACMA

November 27, 7:00–9:00 p.m.

Hear from panelists Howard Fox, Hal Glicksman, Cheech Marin, and others.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. (Bing Theater)

Docent-Led Tour

December 2, 1:00–2:00 p.m. Learn about the history and works of art in the exhibition. (CAC Gallery)

Magu's Mental Menudo Discussion Forum

December 2 & 16, 2:00–6:00 p.m.

Led by Naiche Luján, these forums are modeled after Magu's community-based, consciousness-raising talks about art and life. (University Art Gallery)

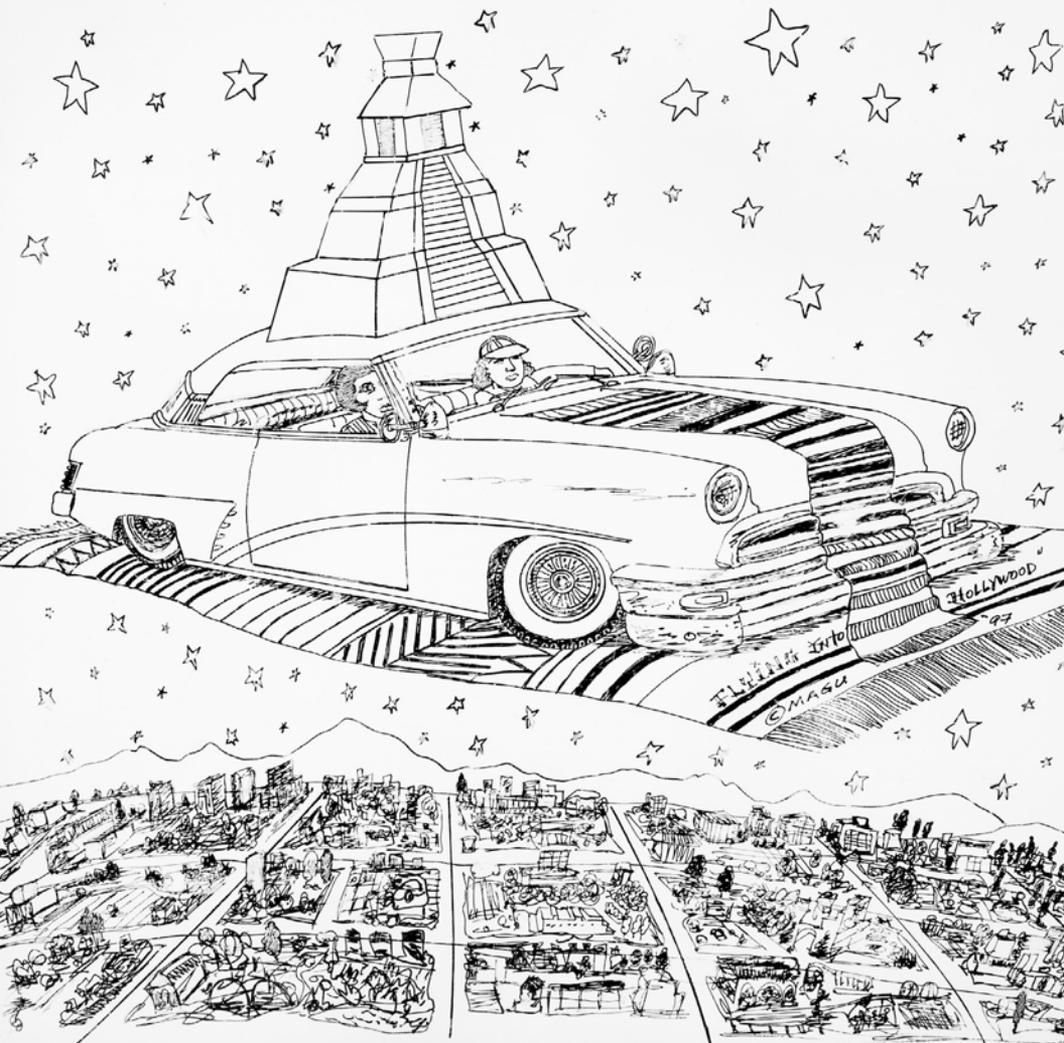
All events and programs (unless otherwise noted) **are located at the UAG Galleries, UCI campus**

712 Arts Plaza, Claire Trevor School of the Arts
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For more information and related programming, please visit <http://uag.arts.uci.edu>.



untitled, ca. 1980s
Paster on paper, 9 ¾ x 30 ½ inches, MA ID: 9036
Collection of Stan and Pat Kandel



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