

THE COLOR AND TEXTURE OF DREAMS

HENRY A. J. RAMOS

The Gallery of Graphic Arts
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Dreams are the foundation of human expression and civilization. Our dreams drive our passions from concept to reality, and our ideals from theory to practice. Our dreams define our humanity and our greatest possibilities.

This retrospective showing of my art reflects the color and texture of my dreams. It shows how I have evolved in my capacity as an artist, yet remained true to certain fundamentals – a strong predisposition to depict what is most natural and kind in our world, using vibrant coloration and pleasing forms; and to speak to values that are finally unifying and transcendental.

My dream to paint the world along these lines began in my childhood during the 1960s, as a means of defending myself against the turbulence that surrounded family and social realities of the times. Drawing and painting frequently during these formative years with my paternal grandmother, Josefina, gave me great pleasure and release from those often harsh times.

In the late 1970s, I extended my dream to the public realm, leading a mural project at my high school that brought multicultural students together to create beautiful and socially meaningful art for our community. Applying my artistic interests to the social realm proved highly rewarding, but life pursuits then took me in many other directions for nearly a decade, engaging me primarily in social justice work.

Then, in the late 1980s, when the Berlin Wall fell, my wife, Claudia, a German citizen, and I decided to travel to Germany to learn firsthand of the profound changes that were taking shape there. We went to the Wall and observed its incredible hieroglyphs, chock full of color and political commentary. We learned that the Germans called the Wall's art *Mauer Kunst* – loosely translated from German: graffiti. The graffiti at the Berlin Wall changed my life. It made me dream of the possibility that I might one day find a way to match my passion for art with my deep commitment to progressive social change.

Later, in the 1990s, I would name my philanthropic advising firm *Mauer Kunst*, to commemorate the trip to the Wall and to manifest my now well-formed dream to combine my creative and political interests. Over the years since, I have painted with increasing frequency and boldness. On weekends, free evenings, and holidays, at home and on trips with Claudia to Europe and Mexico, I have dreamed on canvas and

cardboard about what makes me and all of us part of a larger plan that is finally affirming and good.

Most recently, in the aftermath of my father's passing and the terrorist attacks on America during 2001, I have redoubled my efforts to dream through my painting. I have taken from these deeply profound and disturbing developments a sense of greater responsibility to live a full and intentional life – one that gives back more than I take, and one that draws on all of my soul and all of my skills to help elevate us as humans and citizens of the universe. Through my current pursuits I seek not only to advance my own world of ideas and passions about life and society, but also to inspire others to dream and to express themselves with all of the fervor and purposefulness that resides within them. Only by following our dreams can we really say that we are living, and living to our fullest potential.

What are your dreams?

Henry A. J. Ramos was raised in Santa Monica, California and educated at U.C. Berkeley and Harvard University. His artistic work significantly reflects his west coast origins. During his high school years in the late 1970s, he directed a school-based mural project that was recognized by the City and County of Los Angeles for bringing together a multicultural group of students to celebrate cultural diversity. Ramos's own works have shown subsequently in exhibitions at Los Angeles's ARCO Plaza, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Bonn, Germany, Anarte Gallery in San Antonio, Texas, and the Gallery of Graphic Arts in New York. In addition to his artistic pursuits, Ramos is an accomplished author, civil rights historian, and advisor to leading U.S. philanthropies.