



Myisha Arellano

is a Los Angeles–based public artist and painter whose work explores the relationship between people, place, and ecology through site-specific environments and placemaking. Since 2010, Myisha has designed and led the creation of murals across Southern California, working across commercial, civic, and community spaces.

Their practice is grounded in storytelling and community collaboration, often partnering with grassroots organizations, housing developments, cultural institutions, and universities. Collaborators include the Armory Center for the Arts, CSUCI, Hollywood Community Housing Corporation, and the Pasadena Community Job Center. Through this work, Myisha approaches public art as a shared experience—shaping not only visual identity, but how spaces are approached and engaged.

In addition to their mural practice, Myisha has contributed to the conservation and restoration of over 20 landmark murals across Los Angeles. Their background in scenic painting informs a material sensitivity to aging, movement, and time, which they use as narrative elements in both public and studio work.

Raised in Los Angeles after emigrating from Mexico City, Myisha’s work is deeply informed by the layered realities of migration and growing up in the San Fernando Valley. Their studio practice reflects these influences—blending representations of nature, reimagined places, portraiture, and political themes to construct alternate spatial narratives that question presence, visibility, and environmental futures.

1.

How are current immigration policies shaping students' ability to plan your career after graduation—are they creating uncertainty, limiting options, or forcing you to rethink their path?

Being formerly undocumented immigration policy affects me differently now. I'm experiencing immigration policy through the community that makes this city home. For me, architecture and public art are a vehicle to invest in the people and environment that has raised me. It's very challenging to focus on placemaking when the communities we are designing for are being harassed and displaced through deportation.

Another challenge is the financial impact on families as we have to spread resources to mitigate the risk for our community members who are being racially profiled and threatened. All the changes around financial aid and limited future work opportunities are very serious for students. It doesn't just make me rethink higher education but it's creating conditions that will make it more difficult.

2.

What are the biggest barriers students are facing right now—from visas to licensure to employment—and where do they feel the system is most out of sync with the reality of being a student today?

The impact is different across. Councilors and architecture departments are not always available to support students on a case by case basis to navigate institutional and USCIS policy. I would say financial aid and access to updated immigration policy information are key to supporting students right now. Paid programs and development opportunities are also a great way to keep students focused on education. I see this through the impact of the internships and fellowships I've partaken through the CA Center for Climate Change Education.

3.

If those barriers remain in place, how might that influence students' decision to stay in the U.S. or build your career elsewhere—and what does that mean for the profession here?

Financial stress and immigration policy are very interconnected. I have considered studying and building a career in a different country where education might be more affordable, however migrating all over again would also be very difficult. It's not an easy decision for anyone. I would rather continue building a career that allows me to design a sustainable and healthy future for this city and our people. The future of architecture needs to support frameworks that can respond to climate change and movement— such as local mobility and international migration.