

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents the first major survey of paintings by Carlos Almaraz (1941–1989). *Playing with Fire: Paintings by Carlos Almaraz* features 65 works, including mostly paintings and several drawings from the artist's studio practice. Almaraz was legendary during his lifetime, initially as a political activist and a cofounder of Los Four—among the first Chicano artist collectives to emerge in Southern California in the 1970s—and ultimately as a visionary studio artist whose compelling images convey a deep psychological impact. Almaraz first became an activist through his work with the United Farm Workers, painting banners for union rallies. Among his most visible works from this period were a number of public murals in East Los Angeles that depicted the Chicano civil rights struggle. By the end of the decade, however, Almaraz felt constrained by his role as a cultural worker within the movement and turned his creative aspirations to asserting a far more personal form of expression. *Playing with Fire: Paintings by Carlos Almaraz* explores this personal and artistic transformation.

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