

# L.A. TACO

TACOS ART MUSIC EVENTS L.A. RADIO SHOP



*Writing about art and artists is always on some level an exercise in futility, because you try to put into words what someone has already figured out in a far more interesting way visually. Gajin Fujita, the Japanese-American artist from Boyle Heights, creates work that makes the writer's job is not just frustrating, but downright embarrassing. Attempting to describe his epic canvases that straddle centuries of artistic tradition, and create lines of dialog between ancient masters and the graffiti crews of East Los Angeles is not only impossible, but feels like a betrayal.*

*His work is both masterful and of-the-moment; entirely his, and yet borrowing from traditions both new and old. Of the many amazing artists who have emerged from East Los Angeles over the past couple of decades, it's not surprising that Gajin Fujita is one who has transcended all art spaces, from the street to the gallery to the museum. If the desire in the early days was to be "All City", the new designation has to be "All Planet".*

*For years Fujita has integrated tags from his friends into his art, but the formal role of curator is a new one. His first show as both artist and curator, "Roll Call: 11 Artists from L.A.", opens November 16th at [LA Louver](#) in Venice, and shows off the talents of other LA-based artists who form a common cause— a seriousness in technique, roots in the graffiti culture of the East Side of Los Angeles, and a desire to transcend false limitations imposed by society. We got the chance to do this Q&A with an artist who defies easy definition but also defines Los Angeles. After the interview, keep scrolling for preview images, artist portraits, and the official press release...*

## **What's your favorite taco spot?**

Old school: King Taco / New school: Guisados.

## **How does curating "Roll Call" fit into your artistic career as a whole?**

I wasn't really looking to curate any shows, but the opportunity came about serendipitously through Peter Goulds at LA Louver, who was curious and excited about home-grown artists coming out of L.A. This curating project brought about a new challenge in my artistic career,

and forced me to analyze other artists' works and practice. I realized curating is another artform in and of itself.



**What do the artists involved in the show have in common, and how did you select them?**

The common thread among the artists involved is that we're all L.A.-raised and have origins in graffiti and mural painting. The artists I've selected for "Roll Call" are all passionate about their art, and have continued to pursue careers in creative fields. They all brought awareness to our city and brought a unique cultural voice to Los Angeles.

**What is the most beautiful thing in the world?**

To me, life is beautiful.

**When and where are you most happy?**

I'm most happy when I can make my mom, wife, family and friends proud of my accomplishments.

**What role do sports and competition play in your work?**

The competitiveness I saw in hip hop with b-boys, DJs and graffiti artists battling each other inspired me to push myself and to hone my skills and techniques, and to take my creativity to another level.

**Do you have a lucky number?**

Not really... although I've always liked number 1.



**What is your entrance music? What should be played at your funeral?**

Bob Marley "Natural Mystic" and Pink Floyd "Shine on You Crazy Diamond"

**What keeps you in Los Angeles?**

Not only because it's where I was born and raised, there's no place like L.A. It's a unique metropolis with a diverse population of people and cultures living together.

**You're a member of the k2s graffiti crew. What role did the crew play in your life, and what is the importance of loyalty and affiliation today?**

K2S isn't the only crew that I'm from, there's KGB as well, and for me, they're not just friends, but an extension of my family. Some of the guys I've known for over 30 years, and we've maintained a friendship to this day, like Defer and Jesse Simon, who I've known since Jr. High.

**You've spoken before about "violating expectations," what does that mean to you?**

To me, "violating expectations" is not only challenging myself, but also challenging the viewer to see a new perspectiv



**Describe the artists from the show with one emoji:**

Chaz 🦴

Sleeps 🛌

Fabian ♠️

Ricardo 🖐️

Alex 🦵

Patrick 🔥

Retna 💰

Prime 😏

Jesse 🏊

Slick 🙌

**Got any shoutouts?**

My mom, Chitose, my dad, Yoshi and my teachers Scott Grieger and Dave Hickey. Also, Peter Goulds.