

**Roberto L. Delgado** **Avenue 50 Studio**  
**131-135 North Avenue 50** **Los Angeles CA 90042**  
**Tel: 323-258-1435 Studio: 626-571-6761** [ave50studio@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ave50studio@sbcglobal.net)

### **Pilot Program for a Ceramic Tile Studio in Central Chiapas**

The Project consists of the following objectives:

- To foster the creativity of the Tzeltal and Cho'ol communities and preserve the visual arts heritage of central Chiapas.
- To implement a one year pilot program to provide instruction, studio, and materials in ceramic tile design and fabrication for the secondary school students of the Tzeltal and Cho'ol communities of Yajalón, Chiapas, México.
- To design, fabricate, and install two ceramic tile murals on the inclined façades of the University Administration Building and the University Library, UNACH. Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México.

The idea for this project grew out of our experience in public art both here and in Mexico, and our awareness of its growing worldwide application in building construction and renovation. Working with the University, Yashalum de Santiago Apostol, A.C. ([yashalumac@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:yashalumac@prodigy.net.mx)), in Yajalón, and the Avenue 50 Studio in Los Angeles, we will impart the knowledge and tools necessary for the public art creative process in a project that complements their grassroots program of college preparatory education for indigenous youth. All entities are non-profit and 501c3 status. Under the direction of Artist Roberto Delgado, the indigenous young men and woman of Yajalón will see their creative efforts culminate in tile murals celebrating the culture and history of Chiapas at the university plaza in the state capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez. Mr. Delgado has had many years of public art experience, including living and working in Chiapas on a number of projects.

Coupled with the monumental history of Mayan culture, it is our belief that this youth education project will nurture and maintain Mexico's rich tradition of public art. From the murals of the US Works Progress Administration of the 30s to its current renaissance of public art, the influence of Mexican art on the US is historically evident. As tourism, consumers, and employees are increasingly demanding an aesthetically pleasing built environment, art development fees are mandating public art as a percentage of private and public sector new construction budgets. Both sectors see public art as a worthwhile return on their investment.

As a consequence of this contemporary artistic trend, it has become increasingly evident that the private and public sector are asking for techniques and materials that guarantee durability and permanence for their investment. Mexico's role in this has been a centuries-long tradition, from the Talavera tile of Puebla to the current generation of ceramicists. Our project will introduce new techniques in photo silkscreen and airbrush that have been proven in the public art of the United States. They will complement traditional ceramic techniques and give the students a sound education in the design and fabrication of large ceramic murals.

This pilot project will last one year and will have a core group of 20 students. They are typically 15 to 18 years old and will be drawn from Yashalum de Santiago Apostol's boys school and the separate Casa Santa Maria for girls. The design aspects will cover basic art techniques, art history of Mayan culture, digital photography, design-to-cost budget preparation, traditional proportional grid drawing, and the latest Adobe Photoshop imaging. Fabrication techniques will include basic kiln firing and the integration of photo silkscreen and airbrush with brush majolica and squeeze bottle slip trailing. These are proven fabrication methods used by Roberto Delgado in numerous public art projects in the United States. Although the students will not be doing the actual installing, an overview of installation techniques will be studied.

The integration of public art in new construction and architecture, is a US phenomenon that is beginning to be felt in Mexico. The knowledge and skills that we intend to impart to the indigenous youth of central Chiapas will help to prepare a generation of Mexican artist to meet the demand for public art design and fabrication. On a broader level, what is below the surface of a culture that has been largely ignored, is the creative challenge that we are seeking in the young people of indigenous Chiapas. Their abilities and the finished murals will be part of the cultural impact that the people of Chiapas will feel about their traditions, their heritage, and their future as a historic center of Mexican culture.

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*Remarks from MTF:*

The chicano muralist, Roberto Delgado, has offered to teach Mayan students the art of painting and of making ceramic tiles while working on a mural proposed for the Chiapas State University. Of course, all we need is the funding.