

MESA-BAINS, AMALIA (1943–)

“I come from a long line of inventors with patents and I was taught to use my artistic and creative skills to fix things that were broken; to use whatever was available to solve problems.”

From infancy Mesa-Bains observed her mother and grandmother engaged in the art of creating altars. She inherited their artistic talent and in time demonstrated new techniques in the use of media and materials conveying works on the American Southwest experience. Involved with the Chicano Movement as a young woman, she opened her first exhibition at the Chicano Art Show in Delano, California during the farm workers' strike. Activism, and a cultural heritage that enabled her to reclaim her past have continued to inform her art. Known for her memorial and homage pieces, her multi media work fused artistic elements from the ofrendas, altars, and yard shrine traditions. One of her major works *Altar for Dolores del Río*, was purchased by the Smithsonian for the Museum of American Art. She has received numerous awards, including the MacArthur Fellowship. Currently she is the director of the Visual and Public Art Institute of California State University at Monterey Bay.