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Make Zines and Screenprint Slogans at a Politically Minded Festival

by Matt Stromberg



Mexican dancers from the Cabeza de Vaca Cultural Dance School. Pico Block Party, October 2017 (photo by Erica Rodriguez, image courtesy 18th Street Arts Center)

Now in its third year, 18th Street Arts Center's Pico Block Party is a family-friendly festival that combines political activism and youth empowerment with arts engagement. The event grew out of the center's community outreach programs, including the oral history project culturemapping90404.org, and was created in conjunction with a neighborhood advisory council of 12 to 15 local leaders. "We wanted to ask our local community how we could better serve and recognize the arts and cultural heritage of the Pico Neighborhood," 18th Street Arts Center Director of Communications and Outreach Sue Bell Yank told *Hyperallergic*. A long, thin strip squeezed between Olympic and Pico, Santa Monica's Pico District was a thriving African American community, up until the construction of the Santa Monica Freeway in the 1960s, which cut the neighborhood in half, displacing hundreds of residents. It is now one of the most diverse areas of Santa Monica, but is also battling the twin scourges of high crime rates and creeping gentrification.



Youth MCs from the Pico Youth and Family Center music program. Pico Block Party, October 2017 (photo by Erica Rodriguez, image courtesy 18th Street Arts Center)

Workshops include “Create your own Pico Neighborhood Lotería cards” with the Santa Monica High School MEChA Student Group; protest slogan screenprinting with artist-in-residence Mariángeles Soto-Díaz; and a zine workshop with youth from Santa Monica High School, led by Isabelle D’Amico. Performers range from Rondalla Sueño Romántico, a youth band from St Anne’s Church; Pico Youth and Family Center youth MCs; and artist-in-residence Paul Pescador, who will be performing in conjunction with his exhibition Going West, a chronicle of all the Los Angeles neighborhoods he has lived in over the past 15 years. In addition, the artists Yvette Gellis, Daniel Canogar, Orly Ruaimi, Clayton Campbell will have open studios, amongst others.

When: Saturday, May 19, 3–6pm

Where: 18th Street Arts Center (1639 18th Street, Santa Monica, California)