

Marlies Biesinger and Jen Lim
January 17, 2015

Reflections on Suspend Animation

Suspended animation is to be at a physically dormant state closest to death, to occupy a space not within the realm of life or death but in limbo. In context of this science fiction phenomenon, our mural's title hopes to incite ideas on bridges, gaps, transcendence, humanness, and the posthuman; thus placing the viewer into a magical and creative—*othered* space of thought. The act of painting a mural in itself is a form of suspended animation, taking the painter to an almost non-living state in which the painter becomes part of the wall. Moreover, the physical act of orienting one's muscles and body toward the wall, hyperfocusing, taking full control of one's hand, and losing time outside of the image suspends the painter in a process of creation and imagination. Having to build this world from the ground up, layer to layer, symbol to symbol was a constant, all-consuming process of negotiations on race, color, poetry, imagery, and metaphor. For example, painting the "dreamscape" above the woman instantly provoked certain images in our mind—pyramids, *La Loba*, etc. We had to ask ourselves *why* these images were being invoked—we had to be critical about stereotype reclamation and the power of the stereotyped image.

Unanticipated were the interactions we had with those passing by and those stopping to chat and watch us paint. People always had questions or opinions about various images; they would make suggestions based on the feelings the painting elicited from them. The conversations got especially interesting after we painted the woman's face; in a disoriented surprise, one student exclaimed, "Oh. I didn't know she was going to be Asian." Even more interestingly, another student commented on how we changed the ocean from red to blue. He said: "The red ocean made it look like Asian domination, like Asians were taking over." These conversations reveal the insidious remnants and transformation of yellow peril in the American consciousness.

Overall, though, the experience was both internal and historical and external and futuristic, in that this mural will be traveling in time through this community and changing its meaning with the shifts in consciousness that occur. We have already imagined its future, we have imagined the gaze onto the painting and its ever-changing nature, and now it is the viewers' turn.