

## Five Years of Ni Santas

Joan “Zeta” Zamora  
*Ni Santas*

Ni Santas is an all women of color art collective that started in the summer of 2016, in Boyle Heights, California. Ni Santas was created out of the need to: uplift underserved and underprivileged voices, maintain and develop sisterhood, and empower young female artists all while creating art. Ni Santas began when Andi Xoch and a friend, who wishes to remain anonymous, made a social media post inviting women to come to Self Help Graphics & Art and make art with them. Self Help Graphics & Art is a community art center and gallery where Andi Xoch was a teaching artist.

Since its inception, Ni Santas has hosted free monthly workshops to the public. In the beginning, the workshops were free because Ni Santa members would donate their own art materials and time. Later on these workshops were funded by: merchandise designed and printed by Ni Santas, fundraisers, and a private grant received in 2018. These workshops were also funded by the freelance art jobs Ni Santas began to get. In 2018 Ni Santas members began to give a percentage of their Ni Santas art jobs earnings to the collective in order to remain self-sufficient.

Ni Santas membership once peaked at 13 artists. Some of the mediums that Ni Santas have used are graffiti, painting, installations, poetry, silk screening, and altars. The collective prides itself in encouraging its artist to seek opportunities in areas of interest, whether that be personal or professional. Some of the notable opportunities that the members have engaged in are participating in various L.A. Freewaves exhibitions, live painting for the Vida television show’s premiere party, and the Branded Arts’ Maya Angelou Mural Festival at the Dr. Maya Angelou Community School in South Central Los Angeles. The current collective is composed of: Andi Xoch, Joan Zeta, and The Clover Signs. There is no hierarchy or positionality in the collective. Instead, we all take turns leading the different projects that come into our hands. We also take turns handling the money, emails, meetings, and social media outlets. During the COVID-19 pandemic we have hosted virtual workshops. These workshops include stenciling workshops with Chapman University’s Cross Cultural Center and Harvard Latina Empowerment and Development Conference.

### Ni Santas Organizing and Rituals



**Figure 1:** Ni Santas member, The Clover Signs, burning sage at the beginning of a Ni Santas meeting. She was burning sage as part of a spiritual ritual to cleanse herself and the space.  
August 2, 2016.



**Figure 2:** Some of the original Ni Santas members having a meeting about a Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) project. Before deciding how a project would visually look like all members would usually have a talk about it and sketch out ideas. Once these sketches were done we would try and take elements from all sketches to make sure everyone's voice was included.  
October 13, 2016



**Figure 3:** Work in progress photo of Ni Santas completing a mural at the all ages venue, The Smell, Los Angeles, California. The mural was part of an art exhibition that Ni Santas curated along with live bands and vendors.  
November 30, 2016



**Figure 4:** Ni Santas member, Joan "Zeta" Zamora, headed the mural project at The Smell. The goal of the mural was to make women of color more visible.

## Free Community Workshops



**Figure 5:** Ni Santas hosting one of several free community workshops on making stickers at Self Help Graphics, in Boyle Heights, California. In this workshop each participant designed and printed their own sticker on vinyl sticker paper. July 12, 2018.



**Figure 6:** Ni Santas' member, Andi Xoch, showing neighborhood children how to silkscreen. November 10, 2018.



**Figure 7:** Andi Xoch leading a macrame and terracotta pot painting workshop for Mother's Day. Participants were invited to create a macrame and were encouraged to give to a maternal figure in their lives.  
May 9, 2019.



**Figure 8:** Attendees painting their terra cotta pot at a workshop. This intergenerational workshop had mother-daughter duos as part of its participants.  
May 9, 2019.

## Working on the Dr. Maya Angelou Community School Mural Project



**Figure 9:** For a better part of 2019 Ni Santas was so busy that projects would often overlap. Here we see Ni Santas members having an impromptu meeting at the back of The Clover Sign's El Camino car. While knocking out the details of a serigraph print Ni Santas also had to supervise a mural project at Maya Angelou High School, in South Central LA.  
May 14, 2019.



**Figure 10:** Branded Art's mural project led by The Clover Signs at Dr. Maya Angelou High School. In this project Ni Santas were paired up with high school students to complete the project.  
May 13, 2019.

Current Ni Santa Members their own projects



Figure 11: Ni Santas members live printing in support of Black Lives Matter, July 2020.



Figure 12: The Clover Signs holding a painting she created, March 2021, South Central Los Angeles.



**Figure 13:** Joan "Zeta" Zamora holding a linocut she carved during the pandemic, March 2021.



**Figure 14:** Andi Xoch standing at one of her two stores, Latinx With Plants, that she opened in 2020





**Figure 15:** *With Andi Xoch being busy running two brick and mortar stores, Ni Santas is now being led by Joan “Zeta” Zamora and The Clover Signs.*