

SLUG QUEEN FRIDA BABOSITA  
SPORTS A SLUG UNIBROW

PHOTO BY ATHENA DELENE

## A NEW QUEEN IS CROWNED

*The Patron SLUG of Arts and Culture*

**T**he newly enthroned 35th SLUG Queen Santa Frida Babosita plans to use her new position to further the arts and raise awareness for Latinos and people with disabilities in Eugene.

“Babs,” as emcee Bananita Sluginsky called her, was crowned Friday, Aug. 11, after competing in the annual pageant at the Park Blocks downtown. Judges included a coterie of old queens (the proper term for those who have finished their “rain”); Lindsay Selser, a transportation planner at the city of Eugene, known for her work on Eugene Sunday Streets; and *Eugene Weekly*’s own Camilla Mortensen, in addition to an audience member.

The queen’s alter ego, Mija Andrade, spoke with *EW* at the Lincoln Gallery, home of an art studio run by Oregon Supported Living Program (OSLP). A food-themed exhibit entitled FEAST graces the walls until Aug. 25.

Andrade has attended the SLUG (Society for the Legitimization of the Ubiquitous Gastropod) coronation for at least 15 years. She needed no convincing to compete once she developed her persona.

Santa Frida Babosita, the patron slug of arts and culture, sports a slug-version of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo’s unibrow, and her special talent is painting self-portraits, like her namesake.

Babosita means “little slug” in Spanish, further strengthening Babs’ ties to her Mexican heritage.

In addition to the talent, costume and Q&A portion of the competition, bribes have long been a part of winning the SLUG queen crown. As Old Queen Sluginsky said, “Bribing for little stuff is a thing you should do, but bribing for big stuff is an ethical dilemma.”

Andrade has known the old queens long enough to bribe them with delightful precision. Bribes included an art-making party, a cocktail night and handmade jewelry, among other things.

Andrade went to great lengths to win the SLUG crown. “To me it just really emanates the eclectic and creative part of Eugene that I feel very connected to,” she says. “It’s a fun way to keep us community minded.”

As SLUG queen, Andrade also wishes to bring Centro Latino Americano to Eugene’s attention. This organization is a “bilingual cultural agency dedicated to the empowerment of the Latino community in Lane County,” according to its website.

Andrade says she loves that celebration is essential to Mexican culture. She animatedly describes her visits to Mexico, where the people publically rejoice in everything, even things our culture ignores, such as death.

She hopes Eugene will heed the call to celebrate the mundane. “Art is bound in the everyday,” the queen’s campaign materials proclaim.

“People want hope. We need something to celebrate. Art is a place where we unite the culture we’re born into with the culture we create as a community and celebrate it!” Andrade says.

She says her platform is to “raise awareness of all the different ways we express ourselves and how important they all are.” Andrade regularly encounters these different modes of expression in her work with OSLP.

OSLP helps adults with developmental disabilities integrate into the wider community. It manages four programs: residential, for adults needing constant care; supportive living, for adults living independently; employment, for finding jobs and volunteer work; and arts and culture.

The arts and culture holds classes in music, dance, culinary arts and visual arts that are open to people of all abilities. The visual arts workshops take place in the studio at the Lincoln Gallery.

Andrade used to teach the open studio class, where independent art making of all kinds occurs. Now she serves as developmental director of OSLP, meaning she raises funds and awareness by partnering with organizations in Eugene.

For example, OSLP partners with a local karate studio to host its all-abilities dance classes.

Andrade beams as she recounts her experience watching a non-verbal person laugh for the first time in years in response to a new art medium. Art is a necessary outlet for alternative self-expression, she says.

OSLP seeks to break down the barriers between people who don’t have disabilities and the members of their community who do. Andrade affirms that making art right next to someone who cannot speak is powerful.

Shared experiences like these keep people coming back to the arts and culture, as students or volunteers, she says. Creating bridges between community members is what Andrade is all about.

Andrade suggests that those who want to get involved with OSLP visit an art exhibit, observe a studio class or go to [artsandcultureeugene.org](http://artsandcultureeugene.org).

The new SLUG queen’s passion on behalf of her disabled community and her Latino community promises that she will use her title to unify Eugene. ■

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