



IMAGINING MEXICO
EXPRESSIONS IN POPULAR CULTURE
SELECTIONS FROM AUSTIN COLLECTIONS

GALLERY GUIDE



January 29 - April 18, 2010

2009 - 2010

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WELCOME to Mexic-Arte Museum's 2010 Exhibition Season. This year nearly all of the Museum's exhibitions will address themes related to 2010: the Bicentennial of Mexican Independence and the Centennial of the Mexican Revolution.

The first exhibition of the season runs from January - April and is titled *Imagining Mexico: Expressions in Popular Culture* featuring artwork gathered by Austin area collectors over the last seventy years. These items were selected for their distinct artistic qualities and for their depiction of imagery and symbols related to these themes.

Through their shared interest in Mex-



ican popular art, Austin collectors established relationships with Mexican artists, and each other, building a network of friendship and support that also extends to the Museum and the larger Austin community. Their efforts, interests, and admirable dedication make this unique exhibition possible. We would like to acknowledge all of the collectors for their generous loans of art work.

The *Permanent Collection Exhibition* in the Entry Gallery displays items from the Museum's permanent collection that complement the main exhibit such as esteemed artist Carlos Mérida's serigraph print depicting regional clothing in Mexico and prints by José Guadalupe Posada.

Simultaneously, in the Back Gallery, the Museum is displaying a selection of Casasola Photographs. These photographs are the work of Agustín Víctor Casasola (1874-1938) who was one of the first photographers in Mexico to engage in photojournalism. His highly acclaimed work documented the turbulent political era in Mexico between the turn of the century and the 1930s.

What do the Anniversaries of Mexican Independence and Revolution Commemorate?

Stated briefly, Mexican Independence (1810-1821) recalls the fight to throw off Spanish rule of what was then called New Spain. Three hundred years of oppression led to a revolt of Indigenous and Mestizo peoples, brewing since Napoleon's conquest of Spain, and famously called into being by a Catholic priest named Father Hidalgo in Dolores, Guanajuato. Criollos (Mexican born Spaniards) had desired sovereignty, but Hidalgo's move, necessitated by early detection of their plot, changed the character of the revolt. Hidalgo called for the arrest of the exploitative Spaniards and the return of the land to the people. He later regretted that his actions led to the death of so many Spaniards, but

nevertheless became revered as the "Father of Mexican Independence." This war resulted in the death of 15,000 and injuries of nearly half a million Mexican people. September 16, the day of the declaration, is the day that Independence is commemorated.

One hundred years later, the Mexican Revolution was sparked because of discontent fomented by the vast inequalities between the rich and poor, and the thirty-five year dictatorial rule of Porfirio Díaz. Pressured into an election in 1910, Díaz allowed Francisco I. Madero to run, but then imprisoned him; upon his release he assumed the presidency. In the north Francisco "Pancho"

Villa, and in the south Emiliano Zapata, battled the Mexican government for control of their respective regions. The nation broke into many opposing factions, and guerrilla units destroyed large haciendas - land and inequality being primary issues in the struggle. Eventually Venustiano Carranza assumed the presidency and helped establish the 1917 Constitution, important for its land reforms meant to redistribute land from elites to the majority. At least a million people died as a result of the decade of fighting. November 20th is the day Madero denounced Díaz, declared his presidency, and called for revolution and is therefore marked as the official anniversary of the Revolution.

MEXICAN POPULAR ART

“Crafts in Mexico remain an essential part of life. They are found more often in markets than in galleries; they are a living tradition, not a nostalgic evocation of a vanished past. Enriched by the fusion of Old and New World materials, forms and techniques, Mexican crafts are at the forefront of popular culture” (Sayer, 8).

Much has changed, but much has also remained the same in the study of popular art since these words were written nearly twenty years ago.

The terms “Old World” and “New World” have fallen out of fashion, as scholars have re-centered their work searching for the voices of Mexican artists and their communities. Surely a new wave of scholarship is on the horizon as popular art continues to change, reflecting beloved tradition within the dynamically changing world it exists in.

Nevertheless, the point is still important that Mexican popular art is a living tradition. Popular artists stand at a popular societal and artistic junc-

ture which helps to connect the community with the past. Artisans carry on traditions, generationally pass down collective knowledge through their works, and provide vital, if often partial, self employment. While popular artists often rely on tradition in terms of both technique and aesthetics, there is also a history of influence and innovation to consider.

Sayer, Chloe. *Arts and Crafts of Mexico*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990.

What is Popular Art?

Popular art is an international phenomenon that reflects varied practices of artistic tradition and favors the local vantage point. According to its website, the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico contains “folk art, popular art, toys and textiles from more than 100 nations around the world.” As an international phenomenon, it is clearly an artistic practice with universal appeal; nevertheless, popular art has also been maligned.

“Popular art” is now favored over the term “folk art” due to perceived negative connotations emerging out of academic debates, associating the latter term with negative connotations regarding class and culture. The term “craft”, often used interchangeably with the other terms, is used to describe decorative arts defined by their utilitarian purpose and use of natural

materials such as clay, wood, glass, etc. The shift in emphasis is meant to challenge distinctions over “high culture” and “low culture” that lead to popular art being described as lesser in some fashion. Indeed, popular art has been highly influential in affecting major trends in the art world.

Popular art refers to art made by the popular classes: ordinary people typically without formal artistic training, and who often do other forms of labor to sustain their families, but who are eager to interpret and depict the world around them. It is art that is positioned within the economic divisions that mark the world of art making and art collecting. Generally speaking, popular art is not influenced by trends in fine art circles, but is rather an expression of cultural and community identity and aesthetics. In some expressions, popular art even offers

contemporary political commentary, often with a touch of humor, and there are many known and unknown master artisans whose work holds distinction and is highly valued by collectors.

For the artists, this work is typically part of a cultural tradition, one they make painstaking effort to learn and pass the skills on to other members of their community. From the brief histories of their lives shared in the impressive book *Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art: From the Collection Fomento Cultural Banamex* master artisans are shown to be artistic innovators worthy of attention and praise.

Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art: From the Collection Fomento Cultural Banamex. Mexico, D.F.: Fomento Cultural Banamex, A.C., 2003.

SELECTED TIMELINE OF THE HISTORY OF MEXICAN POPULAR ART

1500 B.C. - 1521 A.D.

Mesoamerican cultures flourished, and many of the symbols of later Mexican culture are formulated.

1556

Colonial authorities established guilds, restricting activities of indigenous craft makers, and directing their production away from traditional socioeconomic circuits to their markets.

1810 and beyond

After the War of Independence, craft guilds abolished and quality deteriorated. Professional organizations then founded to provide set standards, but most artisans remained in their own socioeconomic sphere and declined to join.

1880s - 1910

During rule of President Porfirio Díaz, the status of native crafts decreased as French style and modernization became popular.

1921

At the upper levels of Mexican society, awareness begins that its people's art is distinctive and important. Prominent artists such as Diego Rivera, Adolfo Best Maugard, Miguel Covarrubias, Xavier Guerrero, Roberto Montenegro, Jorge Enciso, Alfonso Caso, and Dr. Atl awakened the public, intellectuals, popular classes, and government to appreciation for the arts.

1921

(continued) First official exhibition in Mexico City, organized by Enciso,

Montenegro, and Dr. Atl, commemorated the Centennial of Independence and included pottery, lacquerware, glass, textiles, and more. Dr. Atl's pre-eminent book on the show, *The Popular Arts of Mexico*, was published.

1922

Mexican government promoted arts, sending a traveling exhibition from the centennial show to Argentina and Brazil, and another show to the United States and Europe.

1930s

The American Federation of Arts organized and sent a popular art exhibition to U.S. cities. Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts) in Mexico City holds a Folk Art Exhibition. Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas created the Regional Museum of Pátzcuaro.

1940

The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City, and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia produced a popular art show including representative pieces, opening the market and generating interest.

1950

Stronger measures taken to publicize and open national and international markets. The Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), helped establish the Consejo de las Artes e Industrias Populares (Council on Popular Arts and Industries) which founded the Museo Nacional de Artes e Industrias Populares (MNAIP). The Council created various regional museums.

1961

Creation of Fideicomiso para el Fomento de las Artesanías, a trust to foster popular art that became FONART in 1974.

1970s

Promotion and merchandizing of popular art elevated, facilitated by government policy and availability, leading to its widespread acceptance within Mexico.

1984

Mexic-Arte Museum founded in Austin, Texas and displays popular art in exhibits including nativity scenes, masks, toys and retablos over its 26 year history.

1987

Austin Friends of Folk Art founded in Austin, Texas. Mexican popular art stores help spread awareness, interest, and the possibility to collect art to a wider range of people.

2010

Exhibition *Artists Imagining Mexico: Expressions in Popular Culture* opens at Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, Texas.

Future

A Permanent Popular Art display is added to Mexic-Arte Museum to continue to educate and promote interest in the arts.

Source: Espejel, Carlos. *The Nelson A. Rockefeller Collection of Mexican Folk Art*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1986.

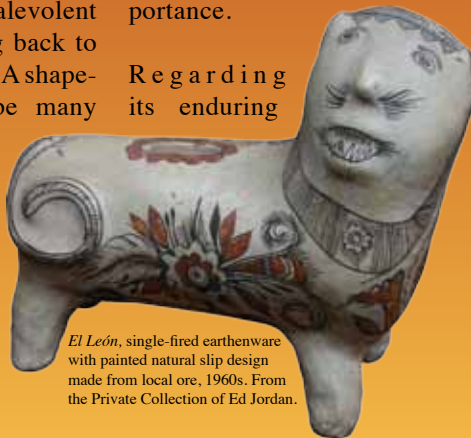
SELECTED SYMBOLS FROM THE EXHIBITION

Indigenous - Nagual

The Nagual, often seen in Mexican ceramic ware, is a creature with a dual nature - malevolent and benevolent - dating back to Mesoamerican culture. A shape-shifting Nagual can be many things - but always appears with human and animal characteristics. Naguales stole food and valuables from households, and sorcerer priests (Nauhalli) could transform into them. They were also

advisors to the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, such is the symbol's importance.

Regarding its enduring



El León, single-fired earthenware with painted natural slip design made from local ore, 1960s. From the Private Collection of Ed Jordan.

presence in art for an exhibit at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, Lenore Hoag Mulgren writes that, "the magic animals seen on pots [in Mexico] point to a personal dialogue manifest in clay." She calls this "the art of thinking in images" and compares it to poetry - the notion that we mediate culture by "placing disparate images and ideas together" which is what the focus on symbols in the exhibition is about.

Conquest - Malintzin (La Malinche)

Malintzin is an important figure whose recognizable image symbolizes the agony and contradictions of the Spanish Conquest. Known by the Nahuatl as Malintzin, and by the Spanish as Doña Marina, she interpreted for and later married Hernán Cortés. She appeared in the Florentine Codexes, books written by the Aztecs under Spanish supervision from 1540-1585.

José Clemente Orozco famously depicted her and Cortés in the nude clasping hands in a mural called "La Malinche" (1923-26) illustrating her con-

tinued significance as symbolic "mother of a mestizo nation". Writings about her as a "traitor" failed to mention that the peoples of Mesoamerica were not unified; and authors such as Octavio Paz, *Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), have been criticized for their sexist portrayal of her. More recently, her history has been revised by feminist scholars and artists such as Adaljiza Sosa-Riddell and Carmen Tafolla, thereby creating a more complex view of her as a woman who, facing dire circumstances, translated



Juan Orta Ortiz, *Malinche and Cortés Duality Mask*, wood, 1997. From the Private Collection of Robert Hollingsworth.

between cultures and survived the injustices of the Conquistadors.

SELECTED SYMBOLS FROM THE EXHIBITION

Colonial - Virgin of Guadalupe

In 1531 the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to a peasant, Juan Diego, on a hill in Tepeyac near Mexico City; however Church leaders were skeptical. When he returned seeking proof, the Virgin gave him a bundle of roses which he carried back in his tilpa (cape). Upon opening it the flowers fell, exposing her miraculously imprinted image. She thus became a powerful symbol of Mexican identity, distinguished by her resemblance to the Indigenous people of the Americas, and thereby easing the way for Catholicism's acceptance.

Some see the Virgin's veneration as a syncretic way of worshipping Tonantzin, the mother goddess

of the Aztecs, since the hill at Tepeyac where the Spanish built the Basilica of Guadalupe in the 17th century was atop the earlier site honoring this goddess. The Spanish, in their conversion process, were known to borrow from Indigenous beliefs in order to facilitate their conquest.

Additionally, it is believed the Virgin's name was invoked by Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla in the Grito de Dolores that helped launch Mexico's War for Independence; her image carried into battle by Hidalgo and José Maria Morelos after the former's execution during the War for Independence. Later, the symbol was used by Emiliano Zapata during the



José Guadalupe Posada, *El Grito de Libertad o Viva la Independencia*, chromolithograph, 1900. From the Mexic-Arte Museum Permanent Collection.

Revolution, and was also a prominent feature of the Farmworker's Movement in the United States led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta.

Nation - Mexican Flag

The Mexican Flag, known by its tri-color band of green, white and red and its coat of arms at the center, symbolically refers to the founding of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan. The Aztec (Mexica) people lived nomadically in the northern reaches of what became Mexico, and their leader, visited in a dream by the God of War Huitzilopochtli, was instructed to found their city on the site where an eagle perched on a cactus and holding a serpent was observed. On the island in the marshy lake in the Valley of Mexico, they established what became one of the largest cities in the



National Emblem: Eagle and Snake, broom straw assemblage. From the Private Collection of Jim and Kelly Luedeke.

world at the time.

While similar to the flag first used during Independence in 1821, the current flag was adopted in 1968. The colors on the flag also have symbolic meaning: originally the green signified independence, while white referred to religion, and red symbolized the union between the Americas and Europe. By the late nineteenth century, the meaning of the colors green, white and red shifted to symbolize hope, unity, and the blood of the nation's heroes.

TECHNIQUES AND PRODUCTION

HOW IS IT MADE?

Various approaches to the creation of popular art have been passed down from the Indigenous peoples of pre-Hispanic times and are fused with the techniques and modern technology of today's society. Some artisan groups prefer to keep solely to the traditional methods of their ancestors for aesthetic purposes, while others embrace the efficiency of modern equipment and material.

One of the most recognized forms of Mexican folk art is ceramics. Pottery is still often employed daily in the form of utensils for cooking, eating, and storage. Earthenware figurines and toys are also popular items, as are ceremonial vessels, jewelry, and musical instruments. Clay is sun-dried and ground, mixed with water, kneaded to remove air, and stored until it is ready to be used. Vessels are often made without a potter's wheel, but rather set on a rotating turntable surface, or cast in molds. After being burnished with a dry stone, vessels are painted, set out to dry, and then fired. Some earthenware or terracotta pots are left unglazed, as some artisans prefer to use traditional staining techniques.

Textiles, most commonly produced in the form of clothing, are

widely produced throughout Mexico. Most artisans depend on loom-weaving presently, as the tool is still appropriate for daily use. Even in some communities, spinning in pre-Hispanic fashion with a spindle and traditional fibers made from cotton or agave is still customary. However, some artisans prefer to rely solely on artificial dyes and silk and wool substitutes, like rayon and acrylic. Instead of sacrificing aesthetics for the convenience of modern material, those who employ new equipment embrace and utilize the materials' inherent qualities to create an entirely new aesthetic. The fibers, brightly colored with artificial dyes, are woven together to create surprising patterns and color combinations. Embroidery and crochet are also popular ornamentation techniques for fabrics,



Family of Pantaleón Panduro, *El escultor Pantaleón Panduro*, single-fired, hand and mold-made earthenware, painted and varnished. From the Private Collection of Ed Jordan.

especially clothing. Other popular forms of traditional folk art include woodwork, toys and figurines. Wood chests and trunks are carved, painted or lacquered, and inlaid with various metals depicting traditional animal, floral, or architectural motifs. Toys are often made from a wide variety of materials, including clay, wood, wax, papier-mâché, and cloth. Musical toys, dolls, puppets, and animals are popular, as well as Christmas nativity figurines and Día de los Muertos calaveras.

Although technique and material may be altered throughout the centuries, the demand for these handmade objects has not diminished. Not only are these items now collected by cultures and museums around the world, but are still used daily by Indigenous peoples.

CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF POPULAR ART

“Since the Mexican Revolution in the first part of the twentieth century, successive governments have consistently promoted the production and sale of indigenous arts in order to increase income in rural areas and aid in the creation of a national identity that fuses Indian and Spanish heritages. The demand for Mexican crafts in the United States is driven by buyer’s diverse cultural motives” (Chibnik, 9).

Oaxacan wood carvings are an interesting example of Mexican popular art as commodified craft. They are actually a more recent invention specifically for the tourist market. The styles of the crafts are very much driven by market demand. The papier-mâché sculptures of the Linares family also fall into this category - art that is popular but not of indigenous origin.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Mexican elites generally ignored indigenous crafts, adopting European ideas about “artistic merit.” However, after the Mexican Revolution politicians, intellectuals and artists began to praise the art of the people. By creating national symbols of identity, they hoped to draw the

Indigenous people into the sphere of the state. Promotion of native arts and crafts is motivated by economic concerns. Attracting tourists to Indigenous areas helps to sustain areas that might other-



*Eagle with
Serpent, Oaxaca,
wood. From the
Private Collection
of Jim and Kelly
Luedeke.*

wise suffer due to the capitalization of large-scale agriculture that threatens smaller farmers.

The state’s efforts to preserve indigenous art forms and promote sales are complex. For example, merchants find that transforming the crafts to meet the tastes of foreigners increases sales, however they move further away

from tradition. Tourists are also willing to buy crafts that are not part of a long held tradition, also transforming culture. According to prominent scholar Nestor Garcia Canclini, the commercialization of crafts creates stratification of communities, disrupting their solidarity by creating competition amongst artisans whom the state prefers to interact with individually. The process of turning artisans into wage laborers is another factor to consider in this complex meeting of culture and commerce.

With the rise of globalization at end of the twentieth century the market for tourist and “ethnic” art has increased. Such objects are seen as an important element of interior decorating, somehow less artificial than other items, and yet “ethnic arts” are often viewed as interchangeable. They are seen as complementary to modern design more so than a rejection of commercialization according to scholars.

Source: Chibnik, Michael. *Crafting Tradition: The Marketing of Oaxacan Wood Carving*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.

HISTORY OF AUSTIN FOLK ART COLLECTORS

Austin Friends of Folk Art (AFFA) was established in 1987 at a time of increasing interest in Mexican popular arts. While not the only such collectors, the organization made a significant impact on the local cultural arts scene by bringing in artists and creating one of a kind cultural events. In the view of Carol Blanchard, past president, "When we understand other cultures better, we understand ourselves better."



Photograph of Terry Hennessey and Gary Plank with Pedro Linares Sculpture. From the Private Collection of Terry Hennessey and Gary Plank.

Over its twenty-two years, they welcomed acclaimed popular artists such as David Linares and Josefina Aguilar, and held scholarly events on topics including: folk art in Latin America, the influence of Mexico's Indigenous cultures on colonial architecture

and town planning, and Guatemalan textiles. They also organized trips to Oaxaca to celebrate Day of the Dead, an excursion to meet artists in Guatemala, visits to the San Antonio Mission, to Santa Fe to see Southwest Indian art, and mural viewing in East Austin, to name only a few events.

Priscilla Murr, another past president described its goals, "We were founded upon principles of community - building within an educational context, and education has remained central to our purpose [and] that meant we could explore any avenues which interested us. We were soon defining folk art as any art by any folk."

For some, the desire to collect this art was simply seen as an offshoot of their lives in Austin - located near enough to Mexico to facilitate frequent trips and an appreciation for the simple beauty of Mexican popular art. However for others, the impulse can be situated within the unique context of Austin's cultural history. In a region

with a history of segregation, and often disdain of Mexico and its inhabitants, it was highly meaningful to engage with Mexico's art and artisans and be willing to be changed by the experience.

The distinction between the AFFA

and local stores selling folk art was something the group tried to keep clear - to maintain their educational focus and not just serve as supporters of local businesses. Nevertheless, Austin is exceptional in that it was able to sustain as many as thirteen folk art stores at one point. We are very fortunate to have such wonderful collections right here in Austin.

Also included is artwork by collectors who, while not official AFFA members, move in the same circles due to their shared interests. One such collector is Doug Rhodenbaugh, founder of a service learning group (The Pencil Project) that helps youth become aware of the value of community engagement, and connect with Guatemalan youth needing school supplies. An institution that also contributed is the Charles Moore Foundation whose namesake was a renowned architect and early collector of Mexican popular art. His home, which will be part of Mexic-Arte Museum's Homes of Austin Popular Art Collector's Tour for this exhibit, uses popular art not as decoration, but as part of the architecture.

Source: Hollingsworth, Robert. *Austin Friends of Folk Art: An Informal History 1987-2004*. Austin, Texas.

SPECIAL FOCUS:

AUSTIN ART COLLECTOR ED JORDAN

Ed Jordan is a member of Austin Friends of Folk Art as well as a dedicated supporter of MexicArte Museum. He contributes to the Museum in innumerable ways, and this exhibition would not be possible without his generosity, time, community connections, and ample knowledge and love of Mexican popular art. Over 150 of the objects on display belong to his notable collection, and his home will also be featured on the special Collectors Home Tour accompanying this exhibition.

One of Jordan's favorites is Mexican artist Herón Martínez Mendoza whose work he was first introduced to at Tesoros Trading Company, a popular art store here in Austin, in the 1990s. His enchantment with the artist's work led to his first purchases which kicked off his collecting. Jordan felt that Martínez was not as



Josefina Aguilar, *Clay Portrait of Ed Jordan*, low-fired clay, 2002. From the Private Collection of Ed Jordan.

appreciated within Mexico as he should have been, given that he would often find the artist's work broken or discarded in the shops he scoured for treasures on his many visits. However he managed to collect many significant pieces not only in Mexico, but in auctions, garage sales, and even at Goodwill stores here in Austin.

Herón Martínez Mendoza (unknown-1990) was a self-taught artist whose style changed much over the years - from his early "white period" to later more colorful productions. While most popular artists remain unknown, Martínez Mendoza is beloved by collectors, and appreciated for his whimsical and highly imaginative pieces. His works are held by many prominent museums including the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona and the International Folk Art Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and have been displayed internationally.

Collectors

Candy and Eric Becker
Tom Gilliland
Sharon Edgar Greenhill
and Jeff Sikora
Terry Hennessey
Robert Hollingsworth
Polly and Don Johnson
Ed Jordan
Harold Liebowitz
Roy Lozano's Ballet
Folklorico de Texas
Kelly and Jim Luedeke
Barbara von Merz

Charles Moore Foundation
Gloria Pennington
Gary Plank
Anna Prothro
Doug Rhodenbaugh
Maria Salinas
Pat Brown and David Stark
Teresa Tannert
Pat Tyler
Antonio Wehnes
Merry Wheaton
Jane and Manuel Zuniga



Herón Martínez Mendoza, *Tree of Birds*, single-fired earthenware, burnished, orange-slip wire, 1960s. From the Private Collection of Ed Jordan.

Artists:

Michael Earney
Emmily Arenas
Manuel Jimenez
Tita Griesbach

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Alcalá, Francisco, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Alberto Beltrán, Rafael Carrillo, and Carlos Pellicer, eds. *Lo Efímero y Eterno: Del Arte Popular Mexicano*. Mexico: Banco Nacional de Comercio Exterior, S.A., 1971.

A collection of photographs showcasing various popular Mexican art forms (ceremonial, religious, utilitarian, etc.) and how they are utilized. Also includes various texts describing functions of the art and cultural significance.

Bishop, Joyce M. "But Is It Folk? Defining the Field." *From the Inside Out: Perspectives On Mexican and Mexican-American Folk Art*. Edited by Joyce M. Bishop, Karana Hattersley-Drayton, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto. San Francisco: The Mexican Museum, 1989.

Dr. Bishop opens the collection of essays with a piece investigating, according to a series of guidelines or definitions, what constitutes "folk art" and "folklore." As an anthropologist, the author explores functions of the art, the learning processes involved, and the relationship between artisan and collector/tourist. By analyzing the relationships of people, the author examines closely associations between the class of craftsmen and those who evaluate their work.

Chibnik, Michael. *Crafting Tradition: The Making and Marketing of Oaxacan Wood Carvings*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.

Chibnik gives a history of Oaxacan wood carving and its contemporary relevance, and focuses on the economics of being an artisan and which mar-

kets are available. Includes images.

Espejel, Carlos. "Los Artesanos." *From the Inside Out: Perspectives On Mexican and Mexican-American Folk Art*. Edited by Joyce M. Bishop, Karana Hattersley-Drayton, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto. San Francisco: The Mexican Museum, 1989.

As a speaker at the conference, Espejel explores the lives of contemporary folk artists, and considers their future and welfare. He questions the use of such objects, their relation to personal use or community, and the definition of "artistic 'purity.'"

Espejel, Carlos. "Mexican Folk Art: A General Background." *The Nelson A. Rockefeller Collection of Mexican Folk Art*. Edited by Rain Blockley. San Francisco: The Mexican Museum, 1986.

Espejel explores the different methods of folk art and their authenticity. Government protection and influence over folk art is another issue the author addresses, as well as their role in the lives of folk artists and the economic consequences of being a traditional artisan. The book contains a wide variety of photographs of the Rockefeller collection.

Glassie, Henry. *The Spirit of Folk Art*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1995.

A compilation of images from the Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art and literature detailing folk art from around the world and its relationship with fine art, popular art, and primitive art.

Horcasitas, Fernando and David Hiser. "It's a Way of Life: Mexican Folk Art." *National Geographic* (May 1978): 648-669.

The author and photographer present folk art as a narrative of the artisans and their lives' work. Introducing various artisans who make their living creating toys, masks, and ceremonial objects, the article also explains in words and images the creative process. The author also touches on the economic repercussions for making one's living as a folk artist in Mexico, and the aspect of generations involved in it.

Oettinger, Jr., Marion. *Folk Treasures of Mexico: The Nelson A. Rockefeller Collection*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1990.

A selection of photographs from the Rockefeller Collection of Mexican folk art illustrating display arrangements and labels for the art.

Rothstein, Anya Leah and Arden Aibel. *Mexican Folk Art: From Oaxacan Artist Families*. Lancaster: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 2000.


Father and daughter share interest in Oaxacan art with readers; a guide for beginning collectors. Includes wide range of artistic mediums.

Sayer, Chloe. *Arts and Crafts of Mexico*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990.

An introduction to folk art and crafts of Mexico introduced by media. Includes information on textiles, ceramics, jewelry, toys, and ceremonial arts.

MEXICAN SYMBOLS

Use the key words to match the symbols to their definitions.



Eagle	A plant formally known as Agave which has many varieties. In some areas of Mexico the leaves are only suitable for making rope and cloth, while in others the sap can be used to make pulque, an ancient beverage.
Malinche	A typical musical ensemble that originated from the State of Jalisco, Mexico.
Death	A large cat, sometimes known as an Ocelotl.
Jaguar	A courting dance that was once declared the “National Folk Dance” of Mexico. The word roughly translates as “sweet syrup.”
Nahual	An ancient crop that has been a staple food in Mexico for centuries.
Devil	A term referring to a traditional horseman from Mexico.
Aztec	Mesoamerican peoples who made many artistic and architectural achievements.
Virgin of Guadalupe	An animal symbol on the Mexican flag.
Corn	Form-changer, sometimes an animal alter-ego.
Caiman	Holy Mother who was said to have appeared to a Mexican peasant in the year 1531.
Magüey	A theme that is widely used in Mexican folk art and traditional celebrations (calaveras represent this).
Jarabe	She served as the Indian interpreter for Cortés during the conquest.
Mariachi	A carnivorous animal with a spiny back; it was used as a metaphor for the mountains floating on the sea.
Charro	Representation of death and the underworld.

MAKE A MEXICAN SYMBOL FROM CLAY

Clay has been used for centuries by native artisans to create everything from pottery for cooking to figurines and jewelry. Here are two at-home clay recipes that are easy to make. One of them requires baking while the other needs to be heated over the stove. Ask a parent to help you make the clay and then form and shape it into a symbol of Mexico, or even a symbol of your own! Many symbols of Mexico include animals like the eagle, jaguar, and snake, while others are native plants and flowers. Geometric designs are popular in folk art, as are religious symbols such as the Virgin Mary. Use these ideas as inspiration to create your own popular art!



Castillo Family, *Insect Skull*, clay, 2000. From the Private Collection of Anna Prothro.

Cooked dough (self-hardening)

- 1 cup salt
- 2 cups flour
- 4 tsp. cream of tartar
- 2 cups cold water

Mix all dry ingredients in your cooking pot. Stir in cold water, mixing with your hands or a spoon. Cook on medium heat, stirring constantly until the dough looks like mashed potatoes or a firm ball. This dough can be molded and will air-dry in 12-36 hours. Paint when hardened.

Mixed Dough (oven-baked)

- 1 cup salt
- 3 cups flour
- 1 ¼ cup warm water

Add warm water to salt, stirring until the salt is dissolved. Add the flour and mix with your hands. Shape into a ball and use right away or store in refrigerator for one week. Cook at 250° F after you have formed your project. Small projects take 45-60 minutes. Paint your art form after it has cooled.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE REVOLUTION



Adelita with Soldier, photograph, 1905. From the Casasola Archive, Mexic-Arte Museum Permanent Collection.

Up until the Mexican Revolution in 1910, news photography consisted mainly of posed photographs of businessmen, politicians, entertainers, and nobilities. The Mexican Revolution was one of the most thoroughly photographed, providing pictures from professional and amateur photographers alike. Most simply wanted to make a living by capturing scenes of the action.

Questions

1. Who do you see in this photograph?

2. Who do you think took this photograph? A professional photographer? Another soldier?

3. How would you feel if you were the photographer? What would you be thinking?

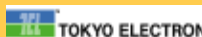
Just like the people who started taking photos during the Revolution because they were interested in what was happening, you can become a photographer too. Photography is all about composition, or how the objects are arranged in the picture. Considering composition in a photograph can make the image more interesting. If you have a camera, you can practice taking photographs of your own. Try placing your main subject in different areas of the photograph; take pictures from different angles, or try taking some pictures close up and some far away. Think about these questions when taking photographs: What is important to you? What would you want to remember, or want other people to remember, in a photograph?



THE OFFICIAL MEXICAN
AND MEXICAN AMERICAN
FINE ART MUSEUM OF TEXAS

We hope you have enjoyed this introduction to Mexican popular arts! What better way to begin 2010 than by taking time to reflect on these significant historic anniversaries and ask why we choose to remember them and how? While it remains to be seen if the year will hold any larger meaning for the Mexican people given the economic and political changes which we all endure from our particular places within the global economy, perhaps by taking a fresh look at popular art, and the ways in which it connects us, we will see ourselves as part of its story.

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