

Folk Art from Oaxaca

Eight Artists, Eight Voices



Folk Art from Oaxaca

Eight Artists, Eight Voices



**MARSHALL M. FREDERICKS
SCULPTURE MUSEUM
SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY**

June 23 - September 28, 2017

JAMES PEARSON DUFFY DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY

**WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY**

October 27 - December 15, 2017

Foreword

Located in southwestern Mexico, Oaxaca (pronounced wah-HAH-kah) is the country's most "artsy" cultural state, where folk art is made and sold in numerous venues in Oaxaca City and in the surrounding valleys and villages.

When my husband and I traveled to Oaxaca for *Día del los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) celebrations in November 2015, it was to share the ultimate holiday experience with our longtime friends Evelyne and Bob Lundberg, who live there a few weeks out of the year. The people of Oaxaca honor and celebrate their dead on *Día del los Muertos*. Bright gold marigolds (*cempasuchil*) and red cockscombs are seen everywhere—being sold by vendors along roadsides, surrounding altars that people construct to honor their dead, at gravesites in cemeteries, in the *zocalos* (town squares), and in churches and cathedrals.

In addition to participating in Day of the Dead celebrations, our friends took us to the homes and studios of several artists who work in wood and clay. We visited a young ceramist, Fernando Félix Peguero García, in the town of Santa María Atzompa. He shares a small home with his parents and a gallery and studio with his artist mother Leticia García Blanco. The relationship between son and mother was noticeably one of mutual respect and admiration. Both artists were creating stunning clay pieces that are fired in a large kiln in the middle of a small courtyard outside their gallery and home. I was enchanted by the familial love I witnessed in that environment.

On another day, we traveled to the small town of Yanhuitlán, where we spent a few hours in the home and studio of Maricela Gómez and her artist husband Manuel Reyes. The brightly painted and impeccably clean house was filled with their artwork, as well as that of their young son and daughter. While we were partaking of a delicious lunch that Maricela had prepared,



A typical "Day of the Dead" altar at a gravesite in Ocotlán.
Photo: Paul E. Duffy

a busload of visitors from the U.S. arrived and were invited to join us. A table for eight quickly became a much longer table for twenty. I fell in love with both Maricela and Manuel and their children and bought three works of art from them.

Clearly, I was smitten—both by Oaxacan folk art and by the artists, with their gentle ways, love of life, and intuitive, creative nature. On my return to the states after a week in Oaxaca, I was confident that an exhibition of folk art by some of the artists I had met would be well received at Saginaw Valley State University and by Great Lakes Bay Region residents.

I immediately presented the concept for an exhibition of Oaxacan folk art at the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum to board member Jim Jaime, who said he thought it was an excellent idea and he would help raise funds to ensure its success. SVSU President Don Bachand and Provost Deb Huntley agreed and encouraged me to proceed.

I was fortunate over the next few weeks to discover a bright, articulate woman who agreed to be the exhibition curator. Alejandra (Alex) Muñúzuri is a graphic designer and tour guide in Oaxaca. A few months later I was on a plane traveling back to Oaxaca to meet with Alex, who was fervent in her quest to introduce me to other artists whose work she knows well. The artists respect and trust her, which I witnessed firsthand when we visited their studios.

On my first day back in Oaxaca, Alex, Evelyne Lundberg, and I traveled by car several miles from the center city to the small town of San Antonio Arrazola. The last couple of miles were on a very narrow and bumpy dirt road, and then we were at the home of Mario Castellanos Gonzalez, a woodcarver and painter, and his artist wife Reina Ramirez Carrillo, who paints the carved animals. Their welcome was warm and enthusiastic, and the wonderful designs and precision of their painted carved animals were breathtaking.

I felt myself getting more and more excited as we traversed the countryside of Oaxaca. Every artist's studio was unique in size and decor. Some of the studios were attached to a home but consisted of a separate outdoor entity, with no walls and a tin roof, and were filled with natural light and the fragrance of indigenous plants and flowers. Other studios were a room in the family house or in a separate small building, always with a courtyard.

Neftalí Martinez Villanueva lives and works in a rainforest environment in the valley of Ayutla Mixes. He belongs to a cooperative of carvers called Tribús Mixes. Some carvers are students who work when they can, while others work at their art full time. Neftalí's hand-carved *alebrijes* (dream fantasies) are made from twisted branches of the *copalillo* tree, which grows on the hills around the valley. The fragrance of the wood is sweet, and Neftalí explained that it is easy to carve when it is green. In several outdoor studios in this amazing rainforest compound,

where exquisite bird songs and other sounds were plentiful, high-school age students were carving and painting *alebrijes* in all sizes, from very small to quite large, each one exquisite in shape, color, and complexity.

Our final stop was in San Martin Tilcajete to visit the studio of Giovanni Melchor Ramos, a woodcarver and decorative painter who told us he is "influenced by Surrealism" and whose favorite artist is Salvador Dali. Giovanni says that the new pieces he has created for this exhibition combine the traditional and the surreal. In his small family home, Giovanni's artist mother Maura Ramos Zarate and his artist father Jesús Melchor Garcia carve and paint small wooden animals. I was so taken with the delicacy and beauty of these small figures that I purchased several to bring back for the Museum Store.

For the past year, both curator and artists have worked diligently to prepare work for this exhibition. Following a three-month stay at the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum, *Folk Art from Oaxaca: Eight Artists, Eight Voices* will be on display in the Elaine L. Jacob Gallery at Wayne State University in Detroit from October 27 to December 15, 2017.

I am hopeful that everyone who sees this work will respond to it as enthusiastically as I have.

Marilyn L. Wheaton
Museum Director



Marilyn Wheaton, center, with local women during Day of the Dead celebrations in downtown Oaxaca
Photo: Paul E. Duffy

On behalf of the James Pearson Duffy Department of Art and Art History of Wayne State University in Detroit, we are pleased to present *Folk Art from Oaxaca: Eight Artists, Eight Voices* at the Elaine L. Jacob Gallery (ELJG), from October 27 through December 15, 2017.

Folk Art from Oaxaca is a significant contribution to the internationally themed 2017–18 exhibition season at ELJG. This season was curated to showcase diversity in mediums, art-making processes, and cultural influences; it also includes installation works from Korea, printmaking works from Poland, and international mixed-media works on loan from galleries in New York City.

This unique exhibition serves the mission of the gallery by exposing our audience to international artists, curators, and artworks and thus offering a means by which we can become educated in another culture while recognizing that culture's links to our own. The importance of experiencing these works in person, being present with them in the same space and time, rather than being limited to viewing the works only through images in print or other media is invaluable for our students, faculty, and staff, as well as for the Detroit community at large.

The authenticity of these artworks from Oaxaca invites some of our guests to observe a culture that is specific to their own background, while allowing others to gain new experiences of a world with which they may not be familiar. The exhibition coincides with the department's community outreach programming, which includes Southwest Detroit, a Latinx-based



Tom Pyrzewski
Photo: Laura Makar

community that actively embraces art programs that are influential to the city. The concept for this exhibition is thus consistent with the educational mission of the Department of Art and Art History at Wayne.

We are grateful to be able to host this exhibition and thankful for the collaboration of Marilyn Wheaton, Director of the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum, at Saginaw Valley State University in Saginaw, Michigan, and the exhibition's curator, Alejandra Muñúzuri of Oaxaca, Mexico.

Tom Pyrzewski
Director of Galleries and Special Programming
James Pearson Duffy Department of Art and Art History
Wayne State University, Detroit

Curator's Statement

My love for Oaxaca began in 1979 on an amazing trip that planted the seed of something to come in my life. When I finally returned in 1997, I knew I wanted to live and experience everything Oaxaca had to offer. So I made the move from Mexico City to the *pueblo* of San Agustín Etla, where I have made my happy home. In the last nineteen years I have involved myself in many projects, mostly things related to art and design, but in later years I have been offering private tours of Oaxaca. These tours give me the opportunity to share my love for Mexico—its traditions, gastronomy, art, and culture. My job has allowed me to immerse myself in the lives of many amazing families of potters, woodcarvers, and weavers, which is how I came to be involved as the curator for this beautiful exhibition titled *Folk Art from Oaxaca: Eight Artists, Eight Voices*.

To my surprise, I was recommended by a friend, Evelyne Lundberg, who reached out to me with the idea of helping to create an exhibition of Oaxacan artists for the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum in Michigan. I was very excited to be invited to collaborate and make this dream a reality. I met with the director of the Museum, Evelyne's longtime friend Marilyn Wheaton, on a trip she made to Oaxaca in July 2016. We hit it off right away. We planned our week's agenda, and off we went to visit the artists I thought would be a well-deserved fit for this show. Marilyn had met several of the artists in 2015 when she visited Oaxaca and she loved every one of them. So we started the journey to making it happen.

It is no coincidence that Oaxaca is so magical. It is a land that is evocative of MesoAmerican history, of a civilization that goes back some 5,000 years. Oaxacans cherish their heritage, conserving such traditions as the "milpa" crop-growing system and the crafts of pottery and carved wooden masks. Oaxacan artists today are keeping alive the **ancient** and the **now**.

Oaxaca is unique. It is the state of Mexico with the greatest biodiversity and indigenous complexity, with sixteen different ethnic groups that have kept their traditions and language alive through time. We are very glad to share this history in an exhibition that shows how culture can survive against all odds—how a transcendent heritage can evolve into new art forms of great vitality and beauty.

Half of the exhibition consists of the newest form of Oaxacan folk art, *alebrijes*. In the past, woodcarving was mainly devoted to making masks for traditional festivals, parades, and carnivals. Although Oaxacan woodcarvers still make masks, sometime in the 1960s many carvers began making these fantastical creations, which are now recognized as characteristic of the region.

The other half of the exhibition is devoted to pottery, a craft as ancient as food and textiles. The ceramic works thus take our imaginations back in time as the four artists share with us a craft that embodies a history passed down through many generations.

Each artist in this show is committed to their art form, for some it is a family affair, others work with and for their communities. I am very pleased to be sharing this experience with such amazing artists. I have met all of them through my tours and am greatly enamored by their talent and hard work.

These are the artists invited to this show:

Mario Castellanos and **Reina Ramirez** produce one of a kind *alebrijes* in their hometown of Arrazola. Everyone in the family has a specific task, whether it is carving, painting, or sanding. The production of each piece is a family collaboration. Mario is a member of the EcoAlebrijes Sustainable Association, founded in 2003, which promotes the reforestation of the *copal* tree, the main material for carving these amazing images.

Giovanni Melchor is a solo (unusual) *alebrije* carver and an emerging young artist from San Martín Tilcajete. Like many Oaxacan artists, he learned how to carve from his father and how to paint from his mother. He is the grandchild of one of the founders of the *alebrije* movement in Oaxaca.

Tribús Mixes is a cooperative founded by the Martínez Villanueva brothers, Noel and Neftalí. The project invites young girls and boys from different villages around the state of Oaxaca to do residencies and learn the art of woodcarving and painting, combined with the option to finish high school and go on to university. The residency takes place in the beautiful Martínez Villanueva home in Viguera. The Martínez brothers have supported the program for over twenty years with their beautiful woodcarvings, which represent a full spectrum of animals found in the state of Oaxaca. The Mixes are one of the sixteen indigenous groups in the state but the program invites youngsters from other communities, as evidenced in the exhibition.

Fernando Peguero and **Leticia Blanco** (his mother) share a love for clay and for telling stories. Fernando, a young emerging artist from Atzompa, has taken his art to another level, breaking away from his village tradition of making utilitarian pots. These ideas he originally learned from his mother, who is well known for her clay figure sculptures. Fernando has clearly taken it a step further and is constantly exploring diverse styles.

Manuel Reyes and **Maricela Gómez** also found their passion in clay and each with their unique styles share with us their personal stories. Santo



Alejandra Muñúzuri
Photo: Marion Jackson

Domingo Yanhuitlán is their inspiration and their homeland, and its amazing history and dramatic landscapes are represented in their work.

This exhibition is about the sharing of transcendence, death, seeds, color, earth, water, and personal stories. In the end, this art that communicates culture and history invites us to travel to beautiful lands as well as to understand the endurance of Oaxaca and its people through time.

This is Oaxaca—ancestral, unique and magical.

Alejandra Muñúzuri
Curator

Why Folk Art? Why Oaxaca? . . . and What Is Folk Art Anyway?

An idea is simply an idea, and anyone can have one. It is the artisan who must use his talents to give it life. People can spout great ideas all day long, but most of them never leave the cantina.

—Jaime Santiago, woodcarver, La Unión Tejalapan, Oaxaca¹

To a first-time visitor, Oaxaca's historic Zocalo (central plaza) is a cacophony of color and movement—strains of Mexican music, pastel-hued colonial buildings, the squealing laughter of children feeding pigeons and chasing escaped balloons, energetic vendors hawking sweet corn and ice cream from small pushcarts and others moving hopefully through the crowds with armloads of hand-woven *rebozos* (traditional shawls), bark paintings, and other souvenirs. Bustling with energy both day and night, the Zocalo is ringed by open-air restaurants and bars, where friends meet to relax and absorb the lively scene. Narrow cobbled streets extending outward from the Zocalo entice visitors with an array of shops, art galleries, museums, and tourist agencies, and lead eventually to more distant plazas dominated by stately Catholic churches built during the Spanish colonial era. Nearby markets are crowded with tight labyrinths of narrow stalls, where vendors—mostly from the countryside—offer home-grown produce (corn, squash, beans, peppers, garlic), racks of fresh meat, salsas, chocolate, breads, fresh tortillas (and even roasted grasshoppers!), as well as handcrafted items of many sorts—woven rugs, embroidered shirts, brooms and baskets, clay water jugs and cooking pots, tin *milagros* (religious symbols of prayer or thanksgiving), toy trucks and dolls, wooden spoons and wooden saints, and animated vignettes of the tiny wooden skeletons associated with Mexico's popular festival, *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead).

Even small rural municipalities throughout the

state have their own specific “market day,” when local vendors congregate to offer produce and local handcrafts to those from other villages who come to buy or barter—and to socialize in the cantinas. Local markets have been forums for the exchange of goods and ideas since before the Spanish Conquest. Archeological evidence suggests that when nearby Monte Albán served as the civic and ceremonial center of the powerful Zapotec empire (ca. 500 BC–750 AD) indigenous farmers and artisans lived, not at Monte Albán, but in small villages in the surrounding valleys and mountains, where they eked out a meager living by farming and paid tribute to the Zapotec ruling elite with corn and beans and handcrafted goods. Archaeologists speculate that the present-day practice of individual communities specializing in a single art form (weaving, pottery, basketry) likely developed centuries ago during the height of the Zapotec civilization.

Today, Oaxaca is known internationally for the energy and creativity of its contemporary folk art. Handcrafted objects are readily available in markets and from street vendors—and, in recent years, in upscale boutiques and galleries as well. The Spanish term for “folk art” is *arte popular* (popular art) and refers to artworks made by ordinary people, usually those from lower economic classes who have little formal education and are viewed as being on the social and political margins of the larger society. Their art is inspired primarily by the traditions, needs, and values of their own communities, not by trends in the wider national or international art world.

Typically, folk artists use simple hand tools and make their art from locally available materials, such as clay, wood, grasses, and animal hides. Folk artists generally do not think of themselves as “artists” but rather as artisans or craftspeople who have developed their skills through years of hands-on practice in their community, often within their own family group. For centuries, the indigenous and *mestizo* (mixed heritage) artisans of Oaxaca have augmented subsistence farming by making objects of utility, beauty, and meaning for use in their communities—elegantly crafted clay cooking pots and storage jars; flat low-fired clay *comals* for making tortillas; rugs and *rebozos* that are woven with hand-dyed yarns to form intricate designs evoking ancient Mesoamerican symbols; toys and whistles; and ceremonial objects, such as wooden masks and fantastic papier-mâché effigies for civic and religious celebrations.

Throughout the colonial period and during the century following Mexico's achievement of independence in 1821, the artistry of Mexico's folk artists was essentially overlooked by the country's wealthy and powerful, who typically had little regard for the poor and looked to Europe as the arbiter of culture and taste. After the Mexican Revolution (1910–20), however, new leadership established a system of public education, initiated policies of agrarian and cultural reform to benefit the country's rural poor, and sought to establish a new and vibrant national identity based on Mexico's own distinctive history and culture. In promoting a new, lively image of Mexico, the government promoted pride in both the highly developed ancient civilizations of Mexico and the modern echoes of this rich history in the colorful celebrations and folk arts of Mexico's diverse and creative indigenous people.

Efforts to promote international trade and tourism were intertwined with the promotion of a vital new image of Mexico. National and regional museums were established showcasing contemporary indigenous art along with artifacts from Mexico's ancient cultures; exhibitions of

Mexican art were circulated within the country and abroad; and muralists such as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros were commissioned to create large public murals celebrating Mexico's ancient civilizations and modern history.

By 1950, road improvements and the completion of the Pan-American Highway through Mexico opened the country to travel and tourism, making the once-isolated state of Oaxaca in the far south of Mexico accessible to visitors who were attracted to its pre-Columbian archaeological sites and its rich indigenous heritage. Within a decade, Oaxaca had become a popular destination for artists and art collectors as well as tourists. In Oaxaca City hotels and restaurants opened, as did tour agencies, shops, and galleries, and folk artists began to realize new opportunities for selling their work to entrepreneurs who maintained business contacts with tourists and international art dealers.

Traditional Oaxacan art forms have persisted into the early twenty-first century. In addition, a distinctive new form of folk art—intricately painted wood carvings commonly known as *alebrijes* (dream fantasies)—evolved in the late 1950s and has become so popular as to be almost synonymous with Oaxacan folk art.

The eight artists whose work is included in this exhibition all work within Oaxacan folk art traditions—four in ceramics and four in the popular new tradition of painted wood sculpture, which has antecedents in ceremonial masks and toys. Even as these artists work within Oaxacan folk traditions, each artist is, in some way, expanding the boundaries and challenging the limits of folk art. At least three of these eight artists, Fernando Peguero, Manuel Reyes, and Giovanni Melchor Ramos, have attended art school and have gained some perspective on art history and international artistic trends. Many have traveled in Mexico and the U.S. and have experienced the art of other cultures and other times.

Certainly, all of these artists have more contact with a larger world than did Oaxacan folk artists even a generation ago. In this exhibition, we see the expanded view of these innovative artists as they reach out to and interact with a wider world, while their sensibilities remain formed by tradition and their feet are still firmly planted in the dusty soil of the central valleys of Oaxaca.

Marion Jackson
Con/Vida – Popular Arts of the Americas
Detroit, Michigan



Marion Jackson
Photo: Barbara Cervenka, O. P.

^T Quoted in Shepard Barbash, *Oaxacan Woodcarving: The Magic in Trees* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993), p.37.

Eight Artists, Eight Voices



Curator Alejandra Muñúzuri, front row left, and the eight artists, 2017

Leticia García Blanco



Prizes/Acknowledgements

2016: Honorable Mention, 40th National Prize in Ceramic Prizes. Tlaquepaque, Jalisco, Mexico.
2015: 1st Place, Ceramics, 5th Contest, "Popular Oaxacan Toys," Oaxaca, Mexico.
2015: 1st Place, Contemporary Ceramics, 39th National Prize in Ceramics, Tlaquepaque, Jalisco, Mexico.
2007: Great Prize, 32nd National Contest, "Popular Art 2007," Mexico.
2005, 2001, 2000: 3rd Place, National Contest, Mexican Nativity Sets, Mexico.
1991: 3rd Place, Natural Clay Ceramics, State Contest, "Traditional Ceramics of the Central Valleys of Oaxaca," Oaxaca, Mexico.

Exhibitions

2015: "Our Villages/Towns, Our Identities," State Museum of Popular Art, Oaxaca, Mexico.
2012: "Great Masters of the Popular Art of Oaxaca," San Pablo Cultural and Academic Center, Oaxaca, Mexico.
2011: "Great Masters of the Popular Art of Oaxaca," Washington, D.C.
2009: "Genuine Artist of Oaxaca, Second Edition," Chicago, Illinois.

Courses

2010: Second National Conference for the Adoption of Glazed Pottery Free of Lead, Course taught by Lic. Eduardo Berrocal López (Sub director of Social Programs), Puebla, Mexico.
2002: Workshop, "Comercialización de Artesanías/Crafts Merchandising," taught by Dr. Rochelle Beck, Harvard University, Casa de la Mujer, Oaxaca, Mexico.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My goal for this exhibition is that through it the people of Michigan will meet Leticia Blanco. I am grateful for the opportunity to show part of my culture--the customs and traditions of Oaxaca. I wish the show every success.

Mi propósito es que la exposición sea todo un éxito y que por medio de la exposición puedan conocer a Leticia Blanco en Michigan. Es muy importante esta exposición porque gracias a esta oportunidad puedo mostrar parte de mi Cultura, las costumbres y tradiciones de Oaxaca.



Leticia García Blanco
Guardián de las Penumbas (Guardian of Darkness), 2016
 Ceramic
 24 x 11 x 9 inches



Leticia García Blanco
La Ofrenda (The Offering), 2017
 Ceramic
 21 x 10.5 x 10.5 inches

Fernando Félix Peguero García



Education

2014–15: Bachelor in Plastic and Visual Arts, Graphics Specialization, Fine Arts School, Benito Juárez Autonomous University, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Prizes

2015: 2nd Place, 35th “Benito Juárez” State Prize for Popular Art, Oaxaca, Mexico.

2014: National Prize for Youth, Distinction in Artistic Expression and Popular Art, Mexico.

2011: 1st Place in Ceramics and Scholarship for Training, Friends of Oaxacan Folk Art and the State Museum of Popular Art, Oaxaca, Mexico.

2010: 1st Place, 34th National Exhibition, “Ceramics 2010,” Tlaquepaque, Jalisco, Mexico.

Exhibitions

2016: “Manos y Alma de Oaxaca/Hands and Souls of Oaxaca,” National Museum of Popular Cultures, Mexico City.

2015: “Curanderas de los Cuatro Vientos/Healers of the Four Winds,” State Museum of Popular Art, Oaxaca, Mexico.

2014: Final Exhibition (Bachelor in Plastic and Visual Arts), Benito Juárez Autonomous University, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Courses

2015: “Introduction to High Temperature Ceramics,” given by ceramist Claudio Jeronimo, Rufino Tamayo Plastic Arts Workshop, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Cultural Exchanges

2016: Kidseum, Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California.

2015: Brooklyn Friends School, The Chapin School, Little Red School, Packer Collegiate, and City Country School, New York City.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My hope is that my paintings will cause people to think about extreme poverty and pollution as problems that affect the world. I am interested in showing how discards and trash can be used imaginatively and creatively to create new perspectives on recycled materials. My purpose in my ceramic work is to show part of my ideology, my essence, while embodying the customs and traditions of Oaxaca, as well as the beauty of nature.

Mi Propósito es que las personas reflexionen por medio de mis pinturas sobre la pobreza extrema y la contaminación que son problemas que afectan a nivel mundial. Me interesa mostrar que con la basura podemos realizar todo lo que nos permita la imaginación y creatividad dándole otra perspectiva a estos materiales reciclados. Mi propósito en la cerámica es mostrar parte de mi ideología y mi esencia. Sobre las costumbres y tradiciones de Oaxaca, así como la belleza de la naturaleza.



Fernando Félix Peguero García
El Inframundo (The Underworld), 2016
 Ceramic
 20.5 x 6.5 x 6.5 inches



Fernando Félix Peguero García
Nostalgia, 2014
 Paint, mixed woods
 38.75 x 29 x 4 inches

Maricela Gómez



Prizes

2003: 3rd Place, "Benito Juárez" State Prize for Popular Art, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Exhibitions

2016: "Manos y Alma de Oaxaca Esplendor de Muchos Pueblos/Hands and Souls of Oaxaca: The Splendor of Many Towns," National Museum of Popular Cultures, Mexico City.

2014: "Un Taco de Ojo Erotismo Popular/A Delight to the Eye: Popular Eroticism," National Museum of Popular Cultures, Mexico City.

2007: "Un país sin maíz/A Country without Corn," Museum of Natural History, Mexico City.

2005: "Obra La Tierra Maravillosa/The Wonderful Earth," Cultural House Huajuapán, León, Mexico.

2005: "4th Encounter of Women of Light and Images," San Luis Potosí, Mexico.

Courses

2006: Workshop Facilitator, Festival "DOC Alfonso Tirado," Alamos, Sonora, Mexico.

2004: Taught ceramic courses, Mixteca Alta Tlaxiaco.

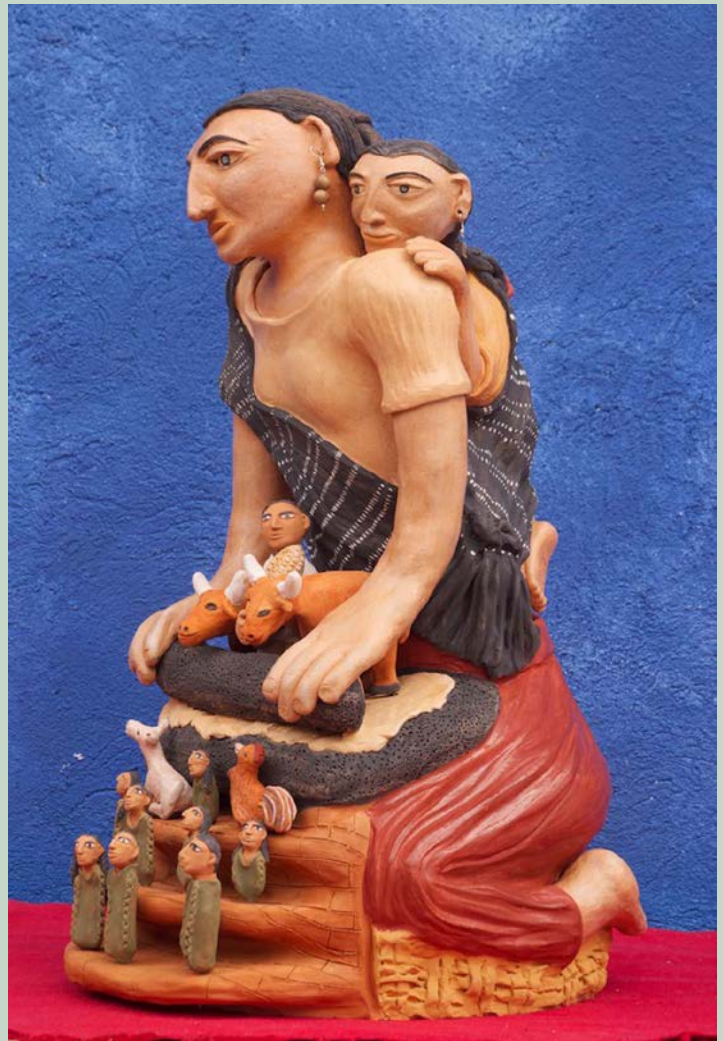
ARTIST STATEMENT

For me it is a great pleasure to be able to share this space with my countrymen. My country is endowed with great cultural diversity in its popular art and we are happy to contribute to that—building dreams, sharing the experiences and stories that since childhood have forged our existence. We are the carriers of a millennial-long heritage of working in clay, and it is my great joy to create work that embodies the narrative of my childhood and the magical environment of Yanhuitlán—my land, my roots, my past, my present.

Para mi es un enorme gusto el poder compartir este espacio con mis paisanos, dotados de gran diversidad cultural en el arte popular, aportando y construyendo sueños, mostrando vivencias e historias que desde la niñez forjaron nuestro existir, además de ser portadores de una herencia milenaria en el trabajo con el barro, de reencontrarme y tener la dicha de permanecer creando mi obra con una narrativa de mi niñez y entorno mágico, como lo es Yanhuitlán, mi tierra, mi raíz, mi pasado y mi presente.



Maricela Gómez
Mujer con Florero (Woman with Vase), 2017
 Oaxaca Clay
 27.5 x 12 x 15.75 inches



Maricela Gómez
Los Hijos del Maiz (Children of the Corn), 2017
 Burnished Clay
 22.75 x 12.25 x 15 inches

Mario Castellanos Gonzalez and Reina Ramirez Carrillo



Education

1992: Mario started carving wood at the age of eighteen

1989: Reina started painting learning from her uncle Gerardo Ramirez.

Exhibitions

2008: World Forum of Crafts, Monterrey City.

Museum of Folk Art, Mexico City.

Chamber of Deputies, Veracruz City.

Courses

2008: Citizen training, New Becal, Reserve of Calacmul.

Cultural Exchanges

2009: Community exchange, San Jose University, San Jose, California.

2009: Art demonstration, Kingston High School, Kingston, New York.

MARIO'S ARTIST STATEMENT

My purpose in exhibiting my work in such a prestigious museum is to make known the art and culture of our people and to let the world know we have artists who, although not well known by name or reputation, have nevertheless been a central part of "art" in Mexico for more than twenty-five years—and also that visitors to the show will understand the sentiment embodied in each work and grasp that making them took a lot of time—hours, days, weeks, sometimes months.

El proposito de exhibir las obras en tan prestigiado museo es para dar a conocer el arte y cultura de nuestro pueblo y que las personas conozcan que habemos artistas que talvez no somos muy conocidos por un apellido o legado, pero que existimos en el medio del "arte " ya con mas de 25 años, Y ademas que las personas se enteren que en estas obras hay mucho tiempo (horas, dias, noches y meses) y sentimiento plasmados en cada una.



Mario Castellanos and Reina Ramirez

El Vuelo del Buho (The Flight of the Owl), 2016

Wood, paint

28.75 x 19 x 14.5 inches



Mario Castellanos and Reina Ramirez

Pulpo (Octopus), 2016

Wood, paint

15 x 8.75 x 10.75 inches

Manuel David Reyes Ramírez



Exhibitions

2014–15: "Teachers of the Popular Art," Chapala, Jalisco, Mexico.

2014: "Un Taco de Ojo Erotismo Popular/A Delight to the Eye: Popular Eroticism," National Museum of Popular Cultures, Mexico City.

2009: "Humanitas Pintores Mixtecos," Museum of Oaxacan Painters, Oaxaca, Mexico.

2005: Museum of Popular Art, San Bartolo Coyotepec, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Courses

2004: Taught ceramics courses to children, Mixteca Alta Tlaxico, Oaxaca, Mexico.

1999: Serigraphy Workshop with Francisco Lastra and artists Roger Vangunten, Rafael Cudura, and Juan Soriano.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I see my artistic expressions as testimonies, as metaphors, as thoughts that reveal my heart and identity. I am always creating art with innovative nuances that arise from my experience and change through time. I have learned new techniques to help me reconstruct my own dreams and needs, as well as to express my feelings and ideas, which come to me like the wind or the rain and are inspired by the splendid icon of the *Mixteca grafía* that surrounds us on the top of the mountains. We feel overwhelmed at this opportunity to share our work, not just with our Oaxacan countrymen but with the people of Michigan, who we hope will understand this range of forms as representative of the different paths of dignity to be found in the different communities of Oaxaca, and indeed throughout Mexico, which every day form our inspiration and mold our future.

El propósito es que deseo aportar mediante mi expresión artística testimonios, metáforas, y pensamientos. Así como revelar mi corazón e identidad, la cual no ha dejado de crear arte, siempre con matices innovadores. A través del tiempo y la experiencia he aprendido nuevas técnicas así como a reconstruir mis propios sueños y necesidades de expresar mis sentimientos e ideas, que vienen como el viento o la lluvia, cubiertas con esta espléndida icono grafía mixteca que nos rodea en lo alto de las montañas. Por otra parte, nos sentimos halagados de poder compartir tanto con nuestros paisanos oaxaqueños como extranjeros estas diferentes expresiones. Esta gama de manifestaciones que marcan la transformación de las formas como los diferentes caminos de dignidad encontradas en las diferentes comunidades de Oaxaca y del resto del país, que cada día moldean nuestro devenir y nuestra inspiración.



Manuel Reyes Ramírez

Mano Blanca con Pajaros (White Hand with Birds),
2017

Burnished Clay

20.75 x 15 x 6.75 inches



Manuel Reyes Ramírez

Cabezas (Heads), 2017

Oaxaca Clay

14.5 x 13.25 x 10.5 inches

Giovanni Melchor Ramos



Education

Painting, Drawing, Composition, Esthetics, and Philosophy, Rufino Tamayo Plastic Arts Workshop, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Prizes

2014: Honorable Mention, Wood Carving, Rufino Tamayo Plastic Arts Workshop, Oaxaca, Mexico.

2012, 2014: Honorable Mention, Wood Carving, Mexican Nativity Sets, Mexico.

2011, 2013, 2016: Honorable Mention, Decorative Painting, Friends of Oaxacan Folk Art and State Museum of Popular Art, Oaxaca, Mexico.

2005: 1st Place, Decorative Painting on Wood, San Martín Tilcajate, Ocotlan, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Exhibitions

2014–15: "Wood Carving Exhibition – Young People Creating Mexican Popular Art," Mexico City.

2012–15: "Annual Collective Drawing and Painting Exhibition," Rufino Tamayo Plastic Arts Workshop, Oaxaca, Mexico.

2012: "Points of Encounter," Oaxaca, Mexico.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I am a craftsman who has seen my father and grandfather do this all my life. I learned their trade and, based on their teachings, I have tried to develop a style of my own. The themes of my work are somewhat surreal and fantastic; in my art I can realize my whims without harming anyone and this is an incredible thing to be able to do in the world today. But beyond expressing myself, the purpose of my works is to captivate people, to capture them within the space of each creation. I like to do things that are unusual in this field and thus to provoke subtle insights in those who appreciate my work. I would like to thank the exhibition organizers for supporting us and enabling more people to know the popular art of Oaxaca. Enjoy the works!

Soy un artesano que he visto a mi abuelo y mi padre hacer esto toda mi vida, y aprendí el oficio de los dos, basándome en sus enseñanzas trato de desarrollar un estilo propio. El tema de mi obra es un tanto surrealista y fantástico, donde puedo hacer y deshacer a mi antojo sin perjudicar a nadie y eso es increíble en el mundo actual. El propósito de mis obras mas que expresarme es cautivar a las personas, atraparlas en el espacio de cada creación, me gusta hacer cosas que se ven poco en este ramo y provocar pequeñas emociones en quien aprecia mi trabajo. Gracias por apoyarnos y hacer que mas personas conozcan el arte popular de Oaxaca, que disfruten las obras.



Giovanni Melchor Ramos
Perfect Alchemy (Alquimia Perfecta), 2017
 Wood, paint
 16.25 x 11 x 11 inches



Giovanni Melchor Ramos
Ocelot Dalí, 2017
 Wood, paint
 10.25 x 10.25 x 6.75 inches

Tribús Mixes, a cooperative founded by brothers Neftalí and Noel Martinez Villanueva



Neftalí's Vitae

Education

1991–93: Public Accounting, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (not completed).

1989–90: General Medicine, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (not completed).

Exhibitions

2016: Organizer and author of the exhibition "Tribús Mixes," Huizache Arte Vivo de Oaxaca, Mexico.

2010: 2nd place in the elaboration of the "alebrije iguana dragón" titled POCGLEMONG (three-headed dragon).

2009: Participation in the night of "alebrijes monumentales" in Mexico City.

Neftalí Martinez Villanueva, right, and assistant artisans

Courses

2014: Decoration of "alebrijes" Workshop, Santa Magdalena Tiltepec Community, Santo Reyes, Nopala, Oaxaca, Mexico.

2013: Painting and Carving of Wood Workshop, San Juan Teotalcingo Community, Santiago, Choapam, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Cultural Exchanges

2009: Oaxacan Artists, Educational Program, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Fort Worth, Texas.

2009: Family Day: A Celebration of the Hispanic Month, Grand Canyon, Arizona.

NEFTALI'S ARTIST STATEMENT

From the hands of the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca—the Mixes, Chinantecos, Chatinos, and Zapotecos—come these magical carved and decorated works. These artisans use crooked sticks of cedar, willow, pine, and aguacatillo to create artworks that speak of the spirit. Full of color and mystery these works arise out of the people's centuries-long coexistence with the surrounding salvific forests, where the colors of heaven are mixed with those of nature. This wonderful range of chromatics gives light to the imagination of Tribús Mixes in barely worked, incredibly plastic forms that capture Oaxaqueña legends. These works are expressions not only of one of the most ancient cultures of Mesoamerica but also of these artists' intimate coexistence with nature, to which they continually return to feed their spirits and to find their various ways of existing.



German Palomeque Jahan from Oaxaca's Cuenca de Papaloapam Region
Elefonte (Elephant), 2017
Wood, paint
18 x 9.5 x 12.75 inches
Photo: Geoffe Haney

Las manos de los Mixes, Chinantecos, Chatino y Zapotecos; plasma su magia en el tallado y decorado de las artesanías de palo torcidos, cedro, saus, pino y aguacatillo, logrando bellas formas que hablan de su espíritu lleno de color y misterio. La convivencia de los siglos con los bosques selváticos, en donde los colores del cielo se mezclan con los de la naturaleza creando una gama de matices que dan luz a la imaginación de Tribús Mixes, plasmándose en líneas y formas hábilmente trabajadas, logrando como resultado bellas representaciones del mundo y la leyenda Oaxaqueña. Ponemos al alcance del mundo entero la sublime expresión plástica de una de las culturas más antiguas de Mesoamérica conjugada con su íntima convivencia con la naturaleza de donde continúan alimentando su espíritu y encontrando sabiamente su forma de existir.



Carved by **Victor Martinez Herrera** from Oaxaca's Valles Central Region
Decorated by **Yesenia Alavez Ruis** from Oaxaca's Costa Region
Zorra Roja (Red Fox), 2017
Wood, paint
15 x 8 x 7.5 inches
Photo: Geoffe Haney

Acknowledgments

The *Folk Art from Oaxaca: Eight Artists, Eight Voices* exhibition would not have occurred but for my longtime friend Evelyne Lundberg. Thank you, Evelyne, for your passion and intuitive feelings about these artisans of Oaxaca and for introducing me to them. Appreciation is also owed to Bob Lundberg, whose patience in navigating miles and miles of rough terrain to get me to the artists' studios throughout Oaxaca will not be forgotten.

I am grateful to my colleague Marion (Mame) Jackson for her story-telling essay about the art of Oaxaca and the work of these eight indigenous artists; to Alejandra (Alex) Muñúzuri for the way she nurtured her relationship with these artists during the year in which they created the masterpieces that would be shipped north of the border to Michigan; and to Tom Pyrzewski at Wayne State University for the enthusiastic way he embraced the exhibition concept when I presented it to him. I would also like to thank Victor Chagoya Magallan, a talented photographer who lives in Oaxaca and spent time shooting the artists and their work, providing many of the photographs for this catalog.

SVSU President Don Bachand, Provost Deb Huntley, and Executive Director of Communications and External Affairs Linda Sims were supportive of my goal of bringing this unique artwork to the University. SVSU Controller Steve McPherson was a gentle bulldog in his efforts to make sure the curator's and artists' honorariums arrived at the appropriate Western Union offices in Oaxaca in a timely manner.

Special thanks to Cindy Newman Edwards for her copyediting of the catalogue, and to Jannette Hermina, a specialist in the SVSU English language program, for her language translations.

Very few exhibitions would be possible without

financial support from friends. My debt of gratitude extends to the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Saginaw Community Foundation, Merrill Lynch, Victor Aviles, Nexteer Automotive, Jim Jaime, the Jury Foundation, Michigan Pipe and Valve, Coco Loco Mexican Grill & Bar (Jose Costilla), and Kathleen Chantaca-Kubczak. Your collective generosity made this exhibition possible.

Marilyn L. Wheaton



Saginaw

community foundation



Credits

Photographers

Barbara Cervenka, O.P.
Paul E. Duffy
Geffe Haney
Marion Jackson
Victor Chagoya Magallan (all photos in catalogue unless otherwise noted)
Laura Makar

Writers

Marion Jackson
Alejandra Muñúzuri
Tom Pyrzewski
Marilyn L. Wheaton

Catalogue Design

Andrea Ondish

Translator

Jannette Hermina

Editor

Cynthia Newman Edwards



**MARSHALL M. FREDERICKS
SCULPTURE MUSEUM**

**SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
7400 BAY ROAD, UNIVERSITY CENTER, MI 48710
MarshallFredericks.org**