

Bringing Mexico to Your Community!

Margaritas Restaurants concept is based on bringing Mexico to New England. We make frequent trips to local artist communities in Mexico in search of authentic hand-carved furniture, folk art and décor for each Margaritas restaurant. During those trips we come in contact with many talented artisans. We have a wonderful way to share that experience with our community. We invite Mexican artists into our restaurants and local schools! This provides a unique opportunity for us to share our knowledge of Mexico, and for the community to meet outstanding Mexican folk artists. The artists share their techniques, lecture on life in present day Mexico and provide an interactive experience for students and teachers.



Efraín Fuentes and Silvia Gomez Folk Artists from Oaxaca, Mexico

Efraín Fuentes and Silvia Gomez are from San Martín Tilcajete, Oaxaca, Mexico. Their tiny village is situated in a valley not far from the ancient Zapotec ruins of Monte Albán and Mitla. Many of the families in the village carve whimsical figures out of wood. Their inspiration comes from the twisted wood itself as well as religious, decorative and traditional designs. This marks the second tour for Efraín and Silvia who represent the new generation of carvers and painters from this magical village in Oaxaca. This new generation of carvers and painters are not only continuing their family and village traditions, but they are incorporating ancient Zapotec designs and new sculptural concepts. Efraín in particular enjoys the challenge of carving complete sculptures from the same piece of wood in addition to the traditional method of nailing several pieces of wood to complete the sculpture. Silvia spends hours each painting intricate designs on the carvings. Typically the painting process takes longer than the carving. Their pieces are collectors items and they constantly work on commissions and ingenious new pieces that are one of a kind masterpieces.



A bus on the road from Oaxaca City passes by San Martín Tilcajete. The tiny village is now famous for the carvings produced by talented folk artists.



Efraín Fuentes and Silvia Gomez in front of their home, he carves and she paints.

A FAMILY TRADITION



Epifanio and Laurencia with their popular carved and painted armadillo figures.

Epifanio Fuentes, his wife Laurencia Santiago Hernández, and their children are all carrying on the tradition of carving and painting beautiful folk art creations. Epifanio learned to carve from his father Zenon Fuentes, who carved simple wooden toys and animals for his young children. Years later Epifanio developed his own style of carving and married Laurencia. Her imaginative and detailed painting designs further propelled the artistic output from the Fuentes family. As their children grew up, all of them, boys and girls helped out and eventually grew into artists themselves. For years Margaritas has sponsored tours for Epifanio and Laurencia. The artists displayed the art work from their whole family. Each member has perfected their skill and their sculptures are sought after by collectors. Zeni, Epifanio and Laurencia's eldest son, is a talented carver in his own right whose

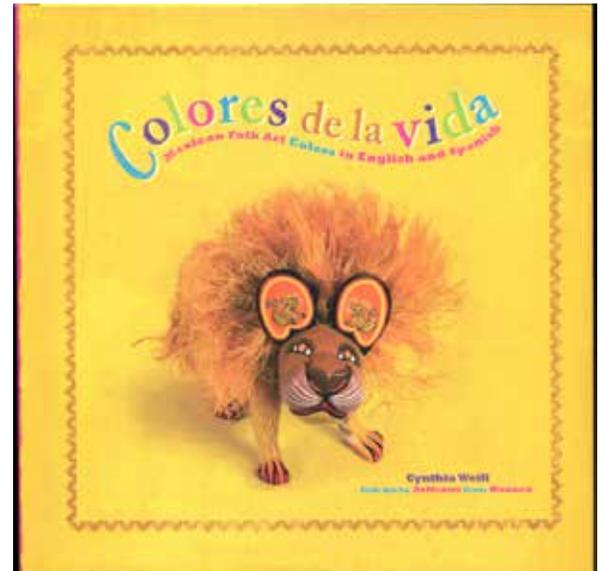


Epifanio carves with his tree sons.



Rubi still paints her figures at her parent's house, notice the colorfully painted walls.

favorite pieces are lions, armadillos and giraffes that he both carves and paints. Decorative painting is extremely important to him, a portion of the creative process with which his wife Reyna, sometimes assists him. Efraín is a cheerful young man who delights in his carved creations. Cats are his favorites, although armadillos bearing their young and mermaids run a close second. The eagle, frequently seen in the fields of Efraín's pueblo where farming is done, has been one of his favorite animals since childhood. The youngest of the talented lineage of carvers in this family, Iván makes a host of animals, including giraffes, cats and coyotes, with facility and dexterity. Rubí Perla won many contests for her decorative painting of "The Lion," a collaboration between Rubí and her husband, Efraín Broa Vergara, who did the carving. With talent and dexterity she decorated the piece, using tones of mustard and red, as well as "hair" made from ixtle (a fiber that comes from a cactus plant) – a signature decorative feature of her family. Julia began painting at the young age of eleven, by helping her parents in the family workshop. Julia went on to study art at the prestigious Bellas Artes of Oaxaca, a feat that no other artist of note from the three traditional carving villages has achieved. Like her other sisters, Magaly grew up painting with her mother and sisters. She is the youngest of the daughters to continue the family tradition.



Bilingual children's book with a "Fuentes Lion" featured on the cover.

ARTIST PRESENTATION

On the day of their visit, Efraín will demonstrate how to find a shape in wood and turn it into a lively figure from his imagination. Silvia will also demonstrate her unique painting method. Throughout the day as students watch the artists work, all phases of the process will be shown. A display of crafts from their workshop will be exhibited to show the variety of work produced by this talented family of artisans.

A video portraying the family at work in their village in Mexico will also be shown. The purpose of this day-long visit is to expose students to this neighboring country and present various facets of life in present day Mexico. This experience will allow them to meet and talk with award-winning Mexican artisans and learn by observing the artists at work while sharing their stories through question and answer sessions. At the end of the day Efraín and Silvia will present a finished sculpture to the school. The piece will remain as a lasting symbol from these skilled artisans from Oaxaca, Mexico.

All sessions will be led by Pat Picciano, Margaritas Education Outreach Coordinator and translator for their visit. Pat has lived in Mexico and apprenticed with Mexican wood carvers, beginning in the 1980's. Pat has led numerous presentations on Latin American craft. Over the past 25 years he has visited schools, universities, museums and libraries allowing thousands of people to observe and marvel at talented artisans as they demonstrate their unique talents.



Students get a closer look at the artists and their carvings.



Artists demonstrate in the school art room.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- * Consult school librarian for books about Mexico and folk art.
- * Spend class time studying Mexico.
- * Have students identify Spanish words they may know.
- * Learn some Spanish words or greetings.
- * Discuss some of the differences between the United States and Mexico
- * Discuss activities involved when traveling to other countries.
- * On the day of the artist's visit observe the display of crafts.
- * Prepare questions for the artists.

SITE PREPARATION FOR GUEST ARTISTS

- * Provide a suitable space for artist(s) and exhibit, such as a multi-purpose room, large classroom or open area to accommodate 50-75 students(or more). This is for all Lecture/Demonstrations
- * Provide a table 2' x 8' and 3 chairs
- * Schedule no more than 5 45 minute sessions (4 hours total contact time)
- * You may videotape all activities for future reference



-SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION-

MEXICO-Mexico is a colorful country inhabited for centuries by ancient civilizations. Since the arrival of the Spanish, the country has blended ancient ritual with European tradition, and the present day country reflects the combination of these two influences. This mixture of pre-Colombian and Hispanic cultures is most evident in the variety of folk art, still being produced in Mexico.

- What are some examples of Mexican culture that you can identify?
- Even though we share a common border with Mexico, why do you think our countries and cultures are so different?
- In what ways has Mexican culture influenced our own?

FOLK ART-Folk Art is the result of the merger of people, tradition and materials, it records the interaction of human beings with each other and with their culture. Folk Art represents the work of individuals who are connected to communities. This program presents the country of Mexico by observing community based artisans; whose life and art are intertwined and nourished by tradition. Many of the crafts produced by folk artists include wood carving, ceramics, basket making, weaving, embroidery, metalwork, etc.

- Can you give some examples of crafts or folk art you've seen?
- What are some of the ways of learning a craft?
- Have you seen hand made crafts from Mexico before?

MEXICAN VILLAGE LIFE- As you may know, much of Mexico is still rural with many cultural ties to its indigenous past. The more isolated the village, the more traditional customs prevail. Agriculture, family and religion dominate activities in many small villages throughout Mexico.

- Can you locate Mexico on a map? Oaxaca?
- What kind of climate does Mexico have? How might that affect agriculture?
- How is village life in the United States different from Mexico?

MEXICAN PEOPLE- Up until the arrival of Europeans, the western hemisphere was inhabited by indigenous cultures. Many great civilizations flourished in what is present day Mexico. The Aztec and Mayan civilizations are the most well known. Our artists' ancestors were Zapotec, and existed before the Aztecs. Their village has been inhabited for around 2,000 years.

- How far back can you trace your family?
- What are some indigenous tribes in the United States? What Native American tribe(s) lived in your area?
- Can you identify Indigenous contributions to our culture?

MULTICULTURALISM- This program focuses on the exploration into the life and traditions of another culture. Our American society is made up of people from various cultural origins. The guest artists will also reveal that their cultural origins are equally diverse.

- What might be some reasons for cultures to mix and influence each other?
- Why is it important to learn about other cultures?
- Can you trace the cultural origins in your family?

VOCABULARY

ojo- eye
boca- mouth
nariz- nose
frijoles- beans
tortillas- ground corn patty
hijos- children in the same family
nino- child
muchacho- boy
muchacha- girl
toro- bull
madera- wood
herramienta- tool
machete- large heavy knife
casa- house
artesanía- folk art, craft
pintura- paint

pueblo- village, people
comida- food
fiesta- party, festival
campo- field
campesino- field worker
maestro- teacher, master craftsman

Buenos días- Good morning
Buenas tardes- Good afternoon
Como está Usted?- How are you?
Que pasa?- What's happening?
De donde viene Usted?- Where are you from?
Hasta luego- Until then; later
Hasta la vista- See you later

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Oettinger, Marion Jr. The Folk Art of Latin America, New York. Dutton Studio Books (Penguin Group). 1990

Sayer, Cloe. The Arts and Crafts of Mexico. San Francisco. Chronicle Books. 1990

Barbash, Shepard. Oaxcan Woodcarving-The Magic in the Trees, San Francisco. Chronicle Books. 1991

OAXACA INSPIRED BOOKS:

Dream Carver- by Diana Cohn and Amy Cordova

The Woman Who Outshone the Sun- by Alejandro Cruz Martinez

Colores de La Vida- Cynthia Weill

WEBSITES:

<http://www.visitmexico.com/en/oaxaca>

<http://www.fofa.us/>



OAXACAN INSPIRED ART ACTIVITIES



Geometric tile patterns on the walls at the ruins of Mitla, the ancient Zapotec site outside of Oaxaca City.



A close-up of a pattern painted by Silvia and her family.



Younger aged students can make a line drawing of their own imaginary creature. Use colored markers or crayons to fill in the space with contrasting colors and designs.



Older students combine sculpture techniques and painting in a multi-session project. Use newspaper and masking tape to make an armature of the figure. Next cover the armature with papier mache. Once the papier mache is dry, apply a coat of Gesso (a water based white primer). Now you are ready to paint Oaxaca style!



Use hot glue to assemble your creation with found objects and/or small off-cuts of wood. Apply a coat of Gesso, let it dry and paint away! Add yarn or other fibers if you wish.