

Educator's Guide

¡VIVA MÉXICO!

Heroes and Artisans

February 28, 2010 – January 2, 2011



EXHIBITION INTRODUCTION

¡VIVA MÉXICO! – Heroes and Artisans celebrates the 200th anniversary of Mexican independence (1810), the 100th of the Mexican revolution (1910) and the folk art traditions that colorfully and vitally express the nation's spirit. Just as the heroes of independence and the revolution were great artisans in crafting the nation's constitution, laws and institutions, so are its many artisans also cultural heroes, vibrantly perpetuating Mexico's historical memory and its distinctive, exuberant and vital artistic tradition.

Presented in collaboration with Centro Cultural Tijuana and the Mexican Consulate in San Diego, the exhibition continues through January 2, 2011.

Featuring works drawn from Mexico's federal patrimony and from Mingei International Museum's collection, ¡VIVA MÉXICO! — Heroes and Artisans reveals the vibrant creativity, imagination and artistic sensibility of Mexico through its folk art and introduces us to key events and people that shaped Mexico's history and culture. Included in the 105 objects on loan from

Mexico is a set of glazed and painted plates created in 1985 for the 175th anniversary of independence and the 75th anniversary of the revolution that commemorate the national heroes of these historic events. Among other exceptional objects in the exhibition is a monumental (more than six feet tall) abundantly ornamented, painted clay tree of life.

The exhibition is organized around three themes: **SEARCH FOR IDENTITY**, **DAILY LIFE** and **RELIGION AND FESTIVITY**. Artworks are grouped as Independence, Revolution, The National Shield, The Sacred and Profane, Trees of Life, Pottery Vessels, Skeletons and Masks. All of these themes express Mexico's cultural diversity.

GEOGRAPHIC CONNECTION



Mexico is located in North America and is a Federal Republic that comprises 31 states and a Federal District located in Mexico City, the seat of the Federal Mexican Government. Mexico shares its border with the United States of America, the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Mexico covers an area of 2 million square kilometers (the United States covers an area of 9.6 million square kilometers).

In terms of population, Mexico ranks 11th in the world. Mexico is a country with cultural and ethnic diversity. Many people from Central and South American countries like Argentina, Peru, Brazil, Cuba and Venezuela have settled in Mexico. "Pluricultural Nation" is the word used by Mexico's constitution to define its cultural diversity.

VOCABULARY

Artisan (*Artesano*) – a skilled worker who practices a trade using traditional methods; a craftsman.

Bicentennial (*Bicentenario*) – a 200th anniversary or celebration.

Centennial (*Centenario*) – a 100th anniversary or celebration.

Ceramics (*Cerámica*) – items that are made from clay or a similar material, often hardened by firing at a high temperature.

Clay (*Arcilla*) – a natural, earthy material that is made of fine-grained particles, often soft and moldable when wet and hard when dried or heated.

Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) – an annual celebration to honor and remember ancestors and family members who have passed away; families set up *ofrendas* (altars) with special foods, candles, incense and flowers to welcome their loved ones whose spirits return to visit.

Folk Art (*De Arte Popular*) – art that comes from the common people of a nation or region, usually reflecting their traditional culture, everyday customs, history or religion; items are often created or decorated by artists who did not receive formal education or training, but rather, learned from tradition or members in a family.

Hero (*Héroe*) – a person, real or mythical, who is recognized for acts of courage and strength, and is celebrated for great achievements.

Identity (*Identidad*) – the qualities and traits of being oneself and not another; characteristics that define oneself.

Independence (*Independencia*) – being free from power or control of others; on September 16, 1810, Mexico began fighting for their freedom from Spain.

National Emblem (*Emblema Nacional*) – an image that represents a specific nation or country.

Profane (*Profano*) – not relating to religion, holiness or spirits; not sacred.

Revolution (*Revolución*) – the overthrow of one government and its replacement with another; on November 20, 1910, Mexican peasants revolted against the rule of dictator Porfirio Díaz.

Sacred (*Sagrado*) – relating to religion, holiness or spirits.

Symbol (*Símbolo*) – a design, symbol or figure that represents, stands for, or means something else, either physical or not.

Transformation (*Transformación*) – the act of being changed in appearance, form, structure or character.

Tree of Life (*Árbol de la Vida*) – a general concept that illustrates that all things, people and animals on earth are related; in Mexican folk art, Tree of Life forms show religious and mythical ideas, often linking mankind to the supernatural, combining and relating these two worlds; can be used as candelabras to hold candles at weddings, churches and ceremonies.

TIMELINE

Pre-1519	Pre-Columbian Period – Many and varied complex cultures; 5 major civilizations emerged (Olmec, Teotihuacan, Toltec, Aztec, Maya), ultimately dominated by the Aztecs.
1519-1810	Colonial Period – Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire; area called “New Spain.” The Spanish influenced native culture, introducing horses and the Catholic religion.
1810-1821	Independence – Mexico fought for its independence from Spain.
1824	Mexico became a republic.
1910	Revolution – Mexican peasants revolted against the rule of Dictator Porfirio Diaz, who had organized a small group of people to control most of the country’s power and wealth, while the majority of the population worked in poverty.
1920s-1930s	Mexico’s Renaissance – period during which the government and public developed an increased interest in art and literature with the rise of influential artists such as Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco and David Alvaro Siqueiros. People began collecting and preserving folk arts in Mexico, and museums planned exhibitions around Mexican folk art.

EXHIBITION THEMES

Search for Identity

Two of the most significant events in the history of Mexico that have forged its identity as a nation have been the country’s independence from Spain in 1810 and its Revolution in 1910. These monumental events have created national **heroes**, a collective **identity** and a **national emblem** that give recognition to a shared past.

Daily Life

Mexican pottery today in its many regional forms still reveals two main sources: the **Pre-Hispanic tradition** of hand-built, unglazed but sometimes burnished or painted forms and the **European / Asian tradition** of wheel-thrown, glazed ceramics introduced by the Spanish. Both traditions have been used to produce a great variety of objects for **daily use**, ceremony and as folk art figures and ornaments

Religion and Festivities

Family, civic, national and religious **celebrations and traditions** form a rich background in the fabric of life of Mexico’s people, and they are also frequent subject matters for the nation’s folk artists. Many folk objects are representations of beings that link humankind to the supernatural. These include Trees of Life, Masks, Skeletons for the annual Day of the Dead festival and yarn paintings produced by the Huichol Indians.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What can art objects reveal about a people's history, culture or civilization?
- What is a hero? Who are some of the heroes in your life?
- What is a symbol? How can you interpret symbols found in various cultures? What kinds of symbols do we have in our own culture?
- What is a National Emblem?
- Why is it important for people to depict their history in their creations?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

Create a Personal Emblem

After a brief introduction to the VIVA MEXICO exhibition and the history of Mexico, discuss with students the meaning and significance of a National Emblem.

- Begin by introducing what an emblem is. Explain that an emblem is a sign, design or grouping of symbols that identifies or represents something. Ask: Have you seen an emblem before? What did it represent?
- Discuss the emblems representing the United States of America and California (below). Ask: What are the things, people or places represented? Why do you think emblems are important? How are they important to both individuals and a group of people?
- Show a representation of the national emblem of Mexico, represented by a cactus, eagle and serpent. How and why did these come to be incorporated in their national emblem? Tell the story of how this came to be (<http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/2829-art-and-history-the-national-emblem>). Explain that these items are significant in Mexican legend and history, which is why they are represented in the national emblem.
- Have students create their own emblems. Explain that they will be creating a personal emblem that tells a story about who they are without using words. Ask the students to think of symbols that represent who they are. Have students think about their interests, what is most important in their lives (family, friends, membership in a group), what they like to eat, what their favorite color is and what animal best represents them. For each of the items they list, have them draw a picture or symbol that represents that item or activity.
- Have students share their personal emblem, or post emblems around the classroom and have students guess which emblem belongs to whom.



Mexico



United States of America



California

IN PREPERATION FOR YOUR VISIT:

- Schedule a Museum visit and Docent-led tour through the Education Department
 - Email: ec-asst@mingei.org
 - Call: 619-239-0003 ext. 135
 - For more information, visit the Museum’s website at: www.mingei.org/education
- Discuss Museum etiquette:
 - Not touching the art protects it from damage and wear; refrain from touching objects in the Museum. A Museum Docent will point out any objects that may be touched.
 - Running and roughhousing in the Museum is both dangerous and distracting to others – instead, walk quietly, talk softly and listen carefully to the interesting information your Docent will share with you.
 - All food and drinks must be left at the front desk prior to entering the galleries.
- Explain to students that a Museum Docent will guide them through the exhibition. Explain that a Docent is a knowledgeable Museum-trained volunteer who will share lots of valuable information with them.
- Explain that Mingei International is a Museum of folk art, craft and design that shows work from all over the world, and that “Mingei” is a Japanese word that means “art of the people.”
- Use the Museum’s mission statement to encourage understanding:

Mingei International Museum is dedicated to fostering the understanding and appreciation of 'art of the people' (mingei) from all cultures of the world; this art shares a direct simplicity and reflects a joy in making, by hand, useful objects of timeless beauty that are satisfying to the human spirit. The Museum collects, conserves and exhibits these arts of daily life — by unknown craftsmen of ancient times; from traditional cultures of past and present; and by historical and contemporary designers.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY:

Discuss the exhibition and create a Huichol Yarn Painting

- Back in your classroom, have students share their observations and comments about the exhibition. Ask: What did you like especially? Was there anything you didn’t understand or wondered about? What caught your attention? Anything that troubled you?
- Review the Huichol Yarn Paintings from the exhibition using the images below. Ask: What symbols do they remember seeing? What do the students think the symbols meant? How many different colors of yarn were used? How do they think the yarn was applied to the background?
- Have the students create their own Huichol Yarn Painting.
- Materials:
 - Card stock

- Chalk
 - Elmer's Glue
 - Popsicle sticks
 - Assorted colored yarn
- Choose a piece of card stock. Draw a simple and large design on the front of the card with chalk, leaving enough room for a border. A detailed design may be too difficult to accomplish with yarn.
 - Plan the colors you will use for your entire painting. Students may want to outline their design with a contrasting or bright color.
 - To apply the yarn, squeeze a modest amount of glue onto the card and gently press the yarn into the glue with a popsicle stick or finger. The yarn can be applied and then slightly manipulated later. To get sharp edges, cut small pieces and then line them up at your desired angle. To get a curved effect, lay down the yarn and then gently push it with your popsicle stick. There should be no overlapping of the yarn; it is traditionally a two-dimensional painting. Continually clean your popsicle stick or fingers – you don't want the yarn to stick to you instead of the card.
 - Use one long continuous piece of yarn to outline the border first. This will contain your painting.
 - Outline your design next. Make sure you have enough room for all the elements you want to include.
 - Fill in your designs with the yarn.
 - Fill in the background with yarn.
 - When you are finished, the entire card stock should be covered with yarn. Look for small areas that are not covered and fill them in. Be careful not to place anything on top of the piece until it is completely dry.



Huichol Yarn Painting



Huichol-inspired student Yarn Painting

EXTENSIONS

Language Arts – (Elementary grade levels): Have students write about a specific tradition in their family or culture in a reflective journal entry. Have them discuss how this tradition has changed from the past, how it may be different each year, what is important about the tradition itself and what it means to them.

(Higher grade levels): Read literature of the Mexican Independence and Revolution, including works by Samuel Ramos, Ruben Dario and Octavio Paz. Discuss its significance in today's society.

Science – Investigate ancient pottery techniques discovered by Juan Quezada in his village of Mata Ortiz. Discuss where clay comes from and the scientific process and techniques used to create a ceramic object. What techniques were used to recreate the Casa Grandes Culture's lost ceramic process? What makes this different from other ceramic processes?

Social Studies – Study in-depth the history of Mexico, beginning from before its conquest, focusing on the significance and lives of prominent historical figures.

Explore the various pottery styles and regions of Tonalá, Yucatan and Oaxaca.

Discover the folk art of another region of the world. How is it similar or different from Mexican folk art?

Math – Discuss patterns and symmetry on the woven rugs hanging in the exhibition. Identify and discover geometric shapes.

Music – Study and share traditional music and instruments of Mexico. Make your own maracas. Study the different musical styles of Mexico.

Theater – Read *El Gesticulador (The Imposter)*, a play about the Mexican Revolution and its uncommon influence on a family, by Rodolfo Usigli. Create or write an abridged version to perform for an audience.

Dance – Explore and learn various styles of Mexican dance, such as *Jarabe Tapatio* (the Mexican Hat Dance).

Multi-Subject – Study Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) and construct an altar celebrating the life of a hero from the Mexican Independence or Revolution.

CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARDS

Kindergarten – Grade 2

Look at selected objects and identify basic lines, shapes/forms, colors, textures & values (**Visual Arts: K 1.3, Math: 1st grade: 2.1, 2.2, 2.4. 2nd grade: 2.1, 2.2**)

Have students describe the various mediums in the exhibition, such as clay, fiber, paper, yarn, etc. and describe their physical properties. (**Science: K 1a**)

Discuss symbolism and National Emblems. What are some of the various symbols and emblems in our everyday lives? (**History- Social Science: K.2, 1st grade 1.3; Visual Arts: K 5.3**)

GRADES 3 – 5

Discuss the use of masks in ceremonial dances and festivals. Ask students to talk about their own traditions and ceremonies. Is there specific clothing that is worn at these special occasions? (**Visual Arts:** 3rd grade 5.1)

Estimate the volume of a ceramic piece in the exhibition. Compare the size and shape to known volumes; confirm your findings through diagrams and explanations on paper. (**Math:** 3rd grade 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3; 4th grade 2.1-2.6; 5th grade 1.3, 2.1-2.6; **Science:** 3rd grade 5a-e; 4th grade 6a-d)

Choose an object from the exhibition and have students record their first impressions in a journal entry. Next, study the region in which this object was created. How does the knowledge of the culture in which the object was created change the student's feelings about it? Do they like it more or less? Does it have more meaning? (**History-Social Science:** 3rd grade 3.1; 5th grade 5.1; **English Language Arts:** 3rd grade 1.1-1.3; 4th grade 1.1-1.4); 5th grade 1.1-1.2)

GRADES 6 – 8

Describe how balance is effectively used in the rugs hung throughout the exhibition, keeping in mind symmetry, asymmetry and radial symmetry. (**Visual Arts:** 6th grade 1.4)

Have students give a report on one object of their choosing from the exhibition. Have them share their opinions of the items, such as its subject, function, material and effect. (**Visual Arts:** 7th grade 3.2, 8th grade 4.1)

Have students research the physical geography and cultural history of Mexico, compare and contrast their findings with that of the United States. (**History-Social Science:** 6th grade 7.7; 8th grade 8.4)

GRADES 9 – 12

Discuss in-depth the importance of history, culture and tradition as expressed in the art from the VIVA MEXICO exhibition. Analyze how a given material influences the meaning of a work of art. (**Visual Arts:** 9-12th grade 3.1, 4.1, 4.5)

Compare and contrast the art, history and culture of the Huichol Indians with other cultures that the students may be studying. Talk about the use of metaphor through images and symbols. Create a yarn painting inspired by the Huichol Indians using symbolism that has personal meaning for the students. (**Visual Arts:** 9-12th grade 3.1, 4.1, 5.2, 2.5, 3.3; **History-Social Science:** 10th grade 10.10)

Research how Mexico has developed as a country, beginning with its Pre-Columbian heritage to present-day. Study the cultural, geographic and economic triumphs and challenges in the region, and its influence on the country's history and growth. Compare and contrast your findings with another country in Latin America. (**History-Social Science:** 10th grade 10.10)

WEB RESOURCES

Mingei International Museum – www.mingei.org

Centro Cultural Tijuana - <http://www.cecut.gob.mx/>

San Diego's Mexican Consulate - <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/sandiego/>

Mexico History, Culture & Regions - <http://www.geographia.com/mexico/mexicohistory.htm>

Mexican Revolution -

http://www.emersonkent.com/wars_and_battles_in_history/mexican_revolution.htm

Dia de los Muertos - <http://latino.si.edu/DayoftheDead/>

Mexican Folk Art - http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/outreach/pdfs/mexican_folk_art.pdf.

Mexico Geographic Information –

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/country-profile/mexico-information-geography-history.html>

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