

Purdue University Galleries

Educational Ideas and Activities 2004-2005

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José Guadalupe Posada: My Mexico

10/25/04-12/05/04 Stewart Center and Ringel Galleries

Collection of works by Mexico's most famous artist and cultural icon, from the University of Hawaii at Manoa Art Gallery



Did you know?

- José Guadalupe Posada was born on February 2, 1852 in the state of Aguascalientes, situated in central Mexico and one of Mexico's smallest states. The environment is described as having "innate beauty" and is artistically rich.
 - Growing up, Posada helped his father in the fields and his uncle in a pottery factory.
 - Posada began creating art while helping his schoolteacher brother, Cirilo, and was said to be largely self-taught.
 - Posada had an impressive work ethic; it is estimated that he produced over 20,000 engravings.
- Posada learned lithography when he became an apprentice to Pedroza, a publisher and printer, in his print shop where Posada first depicted political satire.
 - Posada was influenced by native, pre-Columbian art as well as other contemporary printmakers. Posada then greatly influenced many, including Mexican artists such as José Orozco and Diego Rivera.

In the Gallery suggestions for questions and focus

Standards 11 and 12 are met by physically going to the gallery and discussing the space and the people who set up the exhibition

Focus on Subject Matter- standards 1, 2, 3, 4

- In the exhibition catalogue, *José Guadalupe Posada: My Mexico*, from the University of Hawaii Art Gallery, the prints are separated into 7 distinct areas:
 - **The Porfiriato** based on the 35 year regime of Porfirio Díaz whose fruitful presidency only benefited the wealthy minority.
 - **Hojas Religiosas** (Religious Handbills) depicting Catholic subjects matter such as Christ, Mary, and saints with explanation text on reverse.
 - **Calaveras** depicting skeletons often in a playful way and portraying heroes, politicians, and common man, often associated with Día de la Muerte.
 - **Sensational Crimes** emphasized unusual crimes, and the text often included a moral lesson.
 - **Disasters** included depictions of earthquakes, fires, and floods which were thought to be punishments for the evils of mankind.
 - **Corridos** which depicted wandering singers, often with the lyrics, who sang about bullfighters, brave men, bandits, the opposite sex, and tales of the revolution.
 - **Games and Popular Literature** depicted Mexican games and children's books.

Choose an image. Under what category might it be placed?

Focus on Illustration- standards 1, 3, 4, 5

- Some of Posada's prints were broadsides or broadsheets, which are mass produced flyers on a single sheet of newsprint. This technique of printmaking allowed for mass communication to large numbers of people. Can you find any examples of a broadside? How are they different from the other prints?
- Posada depicts calaveras, or animated skeletons, to express the transience of life. What other signs or symbols does Posada use?
- The text which accompanies the images is in Spanish. Discuss the text if you are able to translate. Otherwise, figure out the content based on the meaning of the illustration.

In the Classroom *standards 7, 8, 9, 10*

The Posada: My Mexico exhibition has a number of areas for lesson plan consideration. Some points of departure:

- Theme Prints Create a print based on one of the seven themes of subject matter, as described above.
- Create Calaveras Use a model skeleton (or real one!) for inspiration and reference. One way for primary aged students to create three-dimensional skeletons is to use cornstarch dough: Roll dough into head, two arms, two legs, and body. Attach each part with coiled copper wire. Let dry. Add details with black paint. Older students could use other sculpture methods, such as papier mache.
- Astronomical Phenomenon One of Posada's prints depicts the appearance of Halley's Comet in 1910, one hundred years after Mexico gained independence from Spain. Create a print or drawing based upon the skies such as a comet or eclipse with its effect on the community or student's family.
- Create a Board Game Posada depicted Mexican board games. Research traditional Mexican board games such as la Factura. Create your own board game utilizing a strong graphic composition.
- Mexican Folk Art Mexican crafts and folk art had an influence on Posada. Look at examples of textiles, toys, metalwork, jewelry, and paintings. Create original artworks inspired by these examples, such as silver repoussé ornaments or prayer card holders made simply of aluminum food trays drawn on with dulled pencils on magazines and colored brightly with permanent markers.

Interdisciplinary Connections *standard 13*

- The Mexican Revolution began in 1910, but had been brewing since the beginning development of Mexico due to the rift between the poor and the wealthy. Research the government of Mexico, especially during the time of Posada. How did General Díaz increase the tension between the wealthy and the poor?
- To get a flavor of Mexico, obtain authentic recipes and food from Mexican grocers and bakeries. According to one internet source, even the sweetmeats embraced the color and form of folk arts.
- The exhibition falls during Dia de la Muerto, or Day of the Dead. Research the holiday. Create offrendas, papel picado, sugar skulls, dough skeletons, and paper flowers.
- Utilize community resources for primary source information on Mexican traditions and culture.

Selected Bibliography

Arts and Crafts of Mexico, by Chloe Sayer. Chronicle Books, San Francisco; 1990.

Wonderfully illustrated text of traditional Mexican crafts, such as textiles, Dia de la Muerte toys, and pottery

José Guadalupe Posada: My Mexico, from the University of Hawai'i Art Gallery, Department of Art, Honolulu; 2001

Exhibition catalogue with images and explanatory text

Websites:

<http://mati.eas.asu.edu:8421/ChicanArte/index.html> Chicana and Chicano Space thematic, art education resource by Arizona State University, with lessons and information on Posada in the "Protest and Persuasion" unit

<http://muertos.palomar.edu/posdad.htm> Great site on Posada, with images and links to other Posada sites, such as the Posada Museum

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2253/> A lesson on "Five Artists of the Mexican Revolution" from ArtsEdge geared toward 9-12

<http://www.mexonline.com/index.htm> MexOnLine site, which has information about Mexican culture, history, maps, and holidays

<http://www.azcentral.com/ent/dead/> Excellent site for the Dia de los Muertos, Day of the Dead, including teacher resource packet.