



San Antonio  
Museum  
of Art

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**For immediate release**

**San Antonio Museum of Art to Open New Installation of Latin American Popular Art,  
Reflecting A New Approach to the Interpretation and Presentation of the Genre**

**On View September 12, 2020**

**San Antonio, TX—August 12, 2020**—On September 12, the San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMA) will open a freshly re-envisioned installation of works from its expansive, 8,000-work Latin American Popular Art collection. The presentation is the first major reinterpretation of the collection since 1998 and marks an important transition from a more traditional ethnographic exploration of the works to one that is centered on shared human histories and experiences. This includes the shift toward using “popular art” rather than “folk art” to describe the collection, as a more faithful translation of the Spanish term for the genre and one that embraces a wider array of Latin American material culture. The new installation, and the broader reexamination of the collection, are being led by Lucía Abramovich, Associate Curator of Latin American Art, who joined the museum in June 2019.



SAMA’s Latin American Popular Art collection first garnered international recognition several decades ago, when the Museum received two important gifts of art: the Nelson A. Rockefeller Mexican Folk Art Collection and the Robert K. Winn Folk Art Collection. Over the past thirty-five years, the Museum has continued to grow the collection, making it among the most in-depth and varied public collections of Latin American Popular Art in the United States. SAMA is also home to extensive collections of pre-Columbian art, colonial Latin American art, and modern and contemporary Latin American art, allowing for robust study and presentation of Latin American art through time and across culture and experience.

The new Latin American Popular Art gallery will feature approximately 140 works of art, including paintings, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, masks, and toys, among other objects.

While prior presentations have focused on more traditional thematic such as the utility, ceremonial use, and decorative aspects of the objects, the new installation will explore the works within and across artistic trajectories, as part of living traditions, and as relevant to ongoing and contemporary aesthetic and social dialogues. Among the specific themes included are “Life, Death, and Faith,” “Legacies of Craftsmanship,” and “Evolving Representations,” which includes an exploration of the manifestation of gender and Latin American popular culture more broadly. The gallery will also include context and background on the development of the collection at SAMA, framing it within broader discussions on the collection and study of Latin American art. To encourage engagement and to embrace the diverse population of South Texas, all of the didactic materials will be presented in both English and Spanish.

“Popular Art refers to artwork that is made by and for the people. As such, any exhibition of this work must explore and reflect the complexity of experiences that yielded it, from the response to colonization, to the sacred and communal traditions passed through generations, and to creative engagement with contemporary social and political circumstances. The reinstallation of our collection captures some of these motivations and contexts, while also highlighting the incredible artistry and craftsmanship of the works,” said Abramovich. “With the re-opening of the gallery, we look forward to both connecting with our community and inspiring further study and discussion of the ongoing significance and relevance of this genre.”



The presentation will feature objects from the prior installation that have strongly resonated with visitors and become beloved works of the community, including a sculpture of a crane made in 1930 from a hollowed gourd, from Olinalá, Guerrero, Mexico, and a ceramic figure of a woman made in 1978 by the renowned Oaxacan artist Teodora Blanco Núñez. The installation will also embrace works that have not been on public view for an extended period of time, including several *Trees of Life*, a series of non-binary “fantastic figures” made by an artist in Barcelona, and a *charro* saddle from the collection of Nelson Rockefeller Jr., as well as works that are outside of traditionally understood notions of popular art, including a silver stirrup from the eighteenth-century Andes, which might typically be categorized as colonial art, and painted ceramics and lacquered gourds from Tonalá, Jalisco, Mexico, which were intended for sale and export rather

than the community use with which popular art is associated. Finally, the new gallery will include more contemporary works, such as a series of *Tablas de Sarhua* (wood panel paintings) from Ayacucho, that convey the violence of Peru’s civil unrest, which escalated in

the 1980s. Together, these works capture the trajectory and ongoing significance of the genre into the present moment.

**About Lucía Abramovich:**

Lucía Abramovich joined the San Antonio Museum of Art as Associate Curator of Latin American Art in June 2019. Previously, she served as a Curatorial Fellow for Spanish Colonial Art at the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) (2013–2016), where she focused on the research and digitization of their colonial Latin American art collection. She has also worked at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian, in their Office for Latin America. From 2017–2018, she taught as an Instructor of Record at Tulane University, where she received her PhD in 2019. Dr. Abramovich has received several grants to support her doctoral and curatorial research and has presented her work at conferences and symposia in the United States and Latin America.

**About the San Antonio Museum of Art:**

The San Antonio Museum of Art serves as a forum to explore and connect with art that spans the world’s geographies, artistic periods, genres, and cultures. Its collection contains nearly 30,000 works representing 5,000 years of history. Housed in the historic Lone Star Brewery on the Museum Reach of San Antonio’s River Walk, the San Antonio Museum of Art is committed to promoting the rich cultural heritage and life of the city. The Museum hosts hundreds of events and public programs each year, including concerts, performances, tours, lectures, symposia, and interactive experiences. As an active civic leader, the Museum is dedicated to enriching the cultural life of the city and the region, and to supporting its creative community.

For information about upcoming exhibitions and programs, please visit:

<https://www.samuseum.org>

Captions:

Miguel Linares, *Skeleton Street Vendor*, Mexico, ca. 1965 , Papier-mâché, paint, wire, and cord, The Nelson A. Rockefeller Mexican Folk Art Collection, 85.98.591

*Crane*, Olinalá, Guerrero, Mexico, ca. 1930, The Nelson A. Rockefeller Mexican Folk Art Collection, 85.98.664

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