Día de los Muertos: Nuestras Historias, Our Histories

**Ofrenda Workshops**

Throughout the month of October join the artists in a series of art-making workshops. Learn about the history and traditions of Día de Los Muertos and create works of art that will be place on the exhibited Ofrendas. These workshops will be hosted at the Ford Resource and Engagement Center in the Mexicantown Mercado and will be free. For more information on all of the above, please call Erika Villarreal Bunce, Living Arts Director of Programs at 313.841.4765. This program is generously made possible in part by the Michigan Humanities Council

Location of Workshops: Ford Resource and Engagement Center, Mexicantown Mercado 2626 Bagley Detroit, MI 48216 To register, call (313) 841-4765 Cost: Free

**Artist: Kia Itchel Arriaga**

**Saturday, October 22**

Workshop 1: 10:30-11:30am, Art Room, *Sugar Skulls, Papel Picado*

Workshop 2: 12:00-1:00pm, Art Room, *Sugar Skulls, Papel Picado*

**Sunday, October 23**

Workshop 3: 10:30-11:30am, Art Room, *Paper Flowers, Milagros, Retablos*

Workshop 4: 12:00-1:00pm, Art Room, *Paper Flowers, Milagros, Retablos*

**Friday, October 28**

Workshop 5: 4:00-5pm, Art Room and Atrium, *Installing the Ofrenda*

**Making SUGAR SKULLS**  
Sugar skulls is a traditional art form in Central and Southern Mexico. They are used during the Day of the Dead Celebrations. The skulls are used to decorate home altars made as memorials to dead relatives. Sugar skulls are decorated with colored icing and metallic papers. Sometimes the name of the deceased is written with icing on the forehead of the skull. As part of the Day of the Dead Celebration people prepare ritual foods and special treats, including sugar skulls, to honor their ancestors. These are placed on Ofrendas dedicated to the loved ones that passed away.

**Making RETABLOS**

The Retablo was an art form that flourished in post conquest Mexico and then ultimately, with the introduction of inexpensive mediums such as tin, reached its pinnacle of popularity in the last quarter of the 19th century. The word “retablo” comes from the *Latin Retro Tabulum*, meaning “behind the altar”, which is where they were placed. Often painted on rectangular sheets of tin, they illustrate holy images such as Christ, the Virgin Mother, or one of the many Christian saints. An appreciation for retablos as an art form was fostered in the 20th century due, in large part, to the efforts to some of the great Mexican artists who collected them. Diego Rivera praised retablos as a true and unique expression of Mexican culture. Frida Kahlo, more than any other artist, used the form of the retablo as a compositional device in her own works. This tradition continues today, both as an expression of devotion and as an artistic and cultural phenomenon.

**Making FLORES DE PAPEL**  
Since ancient times, the symbolism of flowers has been an important part of cultures around the world. Flowers accompany us in important events through our lives: births, graduations, holidays, sickness and eventually death. During the Renaissance, nature was seen as a reflection of the divine. Flowers, for its symbolism have been irresistible to artists, those who have chosen to give their parts specific messages.

Flowers are one of the elements that characterize and give color to the celebration of the Day of the Dead. The petals are scattered on and around the altar, and the combination of the petals and colors make a decoration characteristic of this celebration. Flowers are a fundamental element of the Día de los Muertos festivities.

**Making MILAGROS**

(also known as an[*ex-voto*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex-voto) or*dijes* or*promesas*) are religious folk charms that are traditionally used for healing purposes and as[votive offerings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Votive_offering) in[Mexico](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexico), the southern[United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), other areas of[Latin America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_America), and parts of the[Iberian peninsula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iberian_peninsula). They are frequently attached to altars, shrines, and sacred objects found in places of worship, and they are often purchased in churches and cathedrals, or from street vendors.

Milagros come in a variety of shapes and dimensions and are fabricated from many different materials, depending on local customs. For example, they might be nearly flat or fully three-dimensional; and they can be constructed from gold, silver, tin, lead, wood, bone, or wax. In Spanish, the word*milagro* literally means miracle

**Artist: Erin and Monte Martinez with Alberto Ramirez**

**Thursday, October 6**

Workshop 1: 5:30-7:00pm Education Hub, *Clay water vessel*

**Thursday, October 13**

Workshop 2: 5:30-7:00pm Education Hub, *Clay Candleholder*

**Thursday, October 20**

Workshop 3: 5:30-7:00pm Education Hub, *Paper Flowers*

**Thursday, October 29**

Workshop 4: 5:30-7:00pm Education Hub, *Papel Picado*

**Saturday, October 29**

Workshop 5: 3:00 – 5:00 pm Education Hub,  *Mask for Dance Offering*

**Workshop 1: To the East… *(Clay Water Vessel)***

In the Aztec tradition, Tlahuitzlampa (East) represents the Element of Water and the Force of Creativity. In the first portion of this workshop, participants will begin learning an Aztec dance that honors Water, led by Aztec Dancer Alberto Ramirez. In the second portion, participants will decorate a clay cup for holding water in remembrance of an ancestor, with artists Erin and Monte Martinez. Both the dance and the water cup will be offered during the October 29 Dia de Los Muertos ceremonial celebration at the FREC.

**Workshop 2: To the South… *(Clay Candleholder)***

In the Aztec tradition, Huitzlampa (South) represents the Element of Fire and the Force of Will. In the first portion of this workshop, participants will begin learning an Aztec dance that honors Fire, led by Aztec Dancer Alberto Ramirez. In the second portion, participants will create a clay candle holder in remembrance of an ancestor, with artists Erin and Monte Martinez. Both the dance and the candleholder will be offered during the Dia de Los Muertos ceremonial celebration at the FREC on October 29.

**Workshop 3: To the West… *(Paper Flowers)***

In the Aztec tradition, Xipetotec (West) represents the Element of Earth and the Force of Transformation. In the first portion of this workshop, participants will begin learning an Aztec dance that honors Earth, led by Aztec Dancer Alberto Ramirez. In the second portion, participants will create paper marigolds in remembrance of an ancestor, with Erin and Monte Martinez with support from artist Gloria Rosas. Both the dance and the marigolds will be offered during the Dia de Los Muertos ceremonial celebration at the FREC on October 29.

**Workshop 4: To the North… *(Papel Picado)***

In the Aztec tradition, the Mictlampa (North) represents the Element of Wind and the Force of Genetic Memory. In the first portion of this workshop, participants will begin learning an Aztec dance that honors Wind, led by Aztec Dancer Alberto Ramirez. In the second portion, participants will create papel picado (cut paper flags) in remembrance of an ancestor, with artists Erin and Monte Martinez. Both the dance and the papel picado will be offered during the Dia de Los Muertos ceremonial celebration at the FREC on October 29.

**Workshop 5: All of My Relations…*(Mask for Dance Offering)***

This workshop is a culmination of the previous four. In the first portion of this workshop, participants will practice the Water, Fire, Earth, and Wind dances with Aztec Dancer Alberto Ramirez in preparation for their offering at the Dia de Los Muertos ceremonial celebration at the FREC on October 29. Additionally, they will decorate a papier mache skull mask to be worn during the ceremonial dance offering, with artists Erin and Monte Martinez.