

AFFA What's Up - February 2024



Greetings Friends, wishing you all a most Happy Valentine's Day. I have told you in the past that in Mexico, Valentine's Day is not only a day to celebrate love and your Sweetheart but also a day to celebrate friendship. So, in that tradition, I say to all of our dear friends, Happy Valentine's Day.

Originally, Valentine's Day was to commemorate the martyrdom of St. Valentine. His example of caring and love evolved into a celebration of romantic love.



Valentines from my vintage collection - my favorite, birds, of course.



Other Holiday Traditions

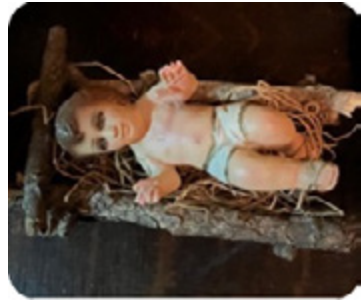
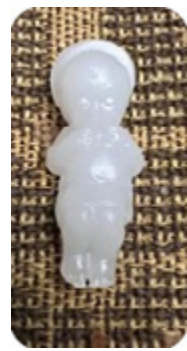
Día de la Calendaria

El Día de la Calendaria in English is known in the Catholic Church as the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus Christ. It commemorates the day when his mother, Mary, brought him to the Temple in Jerusalem for the first time, as described in the Book of Luke, Chapter 2, Verse 22-23 in the New Testament. The feast is one of the oldest celebrations in Christianity, dating back to at least the fourth century in ancient Jerusalem.

The feast day is celebrated around the world, with each culture adding its own traditions. While the feast day is fully rooted in Christianity, some Candelaria traditions in Mexico date back to before the arrival of Spaniards on the continent. The importance of tamales on Candelaria along with the beverage atole—both of which are made from corn—comes from the importance of maize to Indigenous Pre-Hispanic populations. In fact, in a surprising coincidence, even the date of Feb. 2 coincided with celebrations in the Aztec calendar to ask the gods for rain and a bountiful harvest.

Traditions of el Día de la Candelaria

Outside of attending church services, Candelaria is celebrated at home with a big family dinner, usually with tamales. The tradition actually begins a month earlier on Three King's Day when families eat the typical holiday cake called rosca de Reyes, which has a small figurine of baby Jesus baked into the dessert. The person who finds the figurine in their slice of rosca is in charge of hosting the Candelaria party in February—and providing the tamales.



This is my Baby Jesus from one of my nativities. The figure was made in Mexico and has glass eyes.

Another important custom in Mexico, particularly in areas where Catholic traditions run strong, is for families to own a doll-sized version of baby Jesus called Niño Dios, or Christ Child. The Niño Dios is first placed in the home Nativity scene on Christmas Eve and then given gifts on Three King's Day. On Candelaria, people dress up their Niño Dios and bring it to church with them, just as Jesus was believed to have been presented.

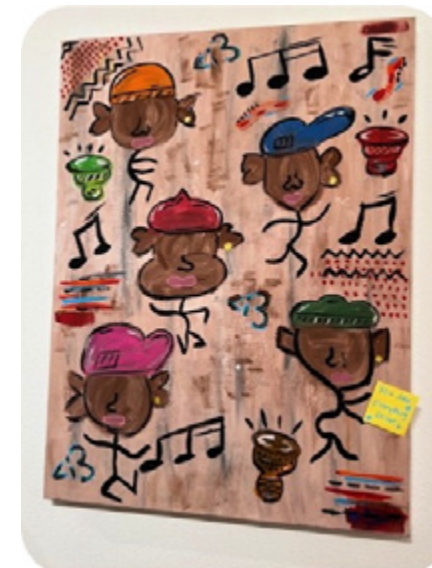
Celebrating Community Through the Arts and Dance

Audrey Selden, AFFA Board Secretary

African Americans and the Arts is the 2024 Black History Month Theme. The theme recognizes that artists have served as truth-tellers, change agents, and champions, using their crafts to uplift the race and inspire us. The Carver Museum ATX started its celebration of Black History Month on February 1 with an interactive art display and an African Dance Workshop. Artist Brandon Madyun spoke about his inspiration that sparked interactive paintings which encouraged the audience to take various messages and replace them with our sentiments. Dancer Imani Aanu had us form a community circle moving to the beat of drums and noting the importance of health, community, and culture. She then led an African dance workshop that celebrated Black History Month.



While at the Carver Museum ATX, we toured The African Impulse in African American Culture. This exhibit notes how Africans impacted African American culture, domestic crafts, and our love of liberty and democracy. Visit The Carver Museum as it celebrates African Americans and the Arts in February and throughout the year. <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/george-washington-carver-museum-cultural-and-genealogy-center>.



Barbara Chandler Collection

AFFA is pleased to announce the acquisition of a new collection of folk art from Barbara Chandler. Barbara now lives in Austin, but spent 15 years in Guatemala. While she lived there she collected beautiful huipiles and other examples of traditional weaving from weavers and artists in Comalapa, Antigua, Chinautla, Momostenango and other towns, as well as ceramics, and paintings. She has donated much of this collection to AFFA, including a painting by the esteemed Guatemalan artist, Oscar Eduardo Peren Chunal, whose work has been exhibited in the Museo Ixchel in Guatemala City. Currently the items are in the AFFA storage facility, waiting for sorting and organizing into archival boxes by the AFFA Acquisition committee, then they will be researched and cataloged by Hagan Barber, the AFFA curator. This careful documentation is standard procedure for all incoming donations of folk art.

Happening Now : Fantastical Flora

Join local Austin Artist Francine Funke on Saturday, 3/2 at 2pm at The Old Bakery & Emporium to learn about her artistic process and inspiration for the “Fantastical Flora” exhibition.



January 20th, 2024 - March 16th, 2024

The Fantastical Flora exhibition is a comprehensive exploration of the beauty of botanical forms, expressed realistically and in the abstract. It is a walk through nature, mystery, and introspection created by local artist Francine Funke.

<https://www.austintexas.gov/event/old-bakery-emporium-fantastical-flora-artist-talk-francine-funke>

Invitation to Share

In past editions, I have explained that because of my roots, many of the traditions and art featured in the newsletter are Mexican. That's what I know best. I have also asked if some of you would like to share some traditions and art from your heritage. I would be so happy to include a couple of paragraphs and photos that you might like to share. Send them to me at Twopenns@aol.com and I will include it in future newsletters.

Until Next Month

Be prepared for crazy weather. Keep an umbrella, a sweater and maybe even a coat handy.

Gloria Mata Pennington

Amalia Rodriguez Mendoza, President

Jim Huff , Vice-President/Treasurer Jim Huff

Audrey Selden, Secretary

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