



What's Up? December 2025

Message from the President

We've had a remarkable and very productive year! Thank you to everyone for your loyal support throughout the year. We proudly celebrated a successful 2025 filled with exhibits, events, and community partnerships. A heartfelt thanks begins with our leadership: Board members Jim Huff, Audrey Selden, Carol Hayman, Carmen Guerra, Charles Peveto, Janet Hutchinson, and Rosa Rios Valdez, as well as our immediate past president, Gloria Pennington. Special appreciation goes to Hagan Barber, who maintains our permanent collection and continues to hone his expertise in researching and learning about folk art. We are deeply grateful to our 2025 supporters who give their time, resources, and commitment to our organization.

This year's Holiday Party was a wonderful success!

The party was held at a new venue—the Neill-Cochran House Museum (NCHM)—with delicious bites from Licha's and Central Market.

Special thanks to Rowena Dasch and her staff for hosting us. Rowena gave a brief history of the NCHM to our guests, many of whom were first-time visitors. Earlier this year, we held a tour and were fascinated by the rich history of this special place, inspiring us to invite others to visit it.





Ana Carasco and Amalia Rodriguez Mendoza



Gloria Mata Pennington



Sarah Wimer

2025 Exhibits and Event Highlights

We were proud to have participated in several exhibits and events, including:

The African mask exhibit at the Georgetown Library



***Fiesta Reclamada* at the Cathedral, hosted by A3-Laura Esparza**

Support for the Peruvian artists exhibit at Link & Pin



A tour of Tito's Folk Art Gallery



An artist talk by Fidencio Durán at the Neill-Cochran House Museum to view his amazing murals



Showcased alebrijes at a park day event in San Antonio



Rotating folk art at IBC Bank



Our main exhibit at the JGallery at the JCC, which closes December 17th



Thanks to our partnership with the Visual Arts League of the JGallery.

Several of our Mexican masks and puppets are featured in the "Somos Uno" exhibition at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry at the University of Connecticut, which runs through March 2026.





Looking ahead to 2026

We are excited to announce plans for exhibits—including one at the Boerne Library in Fall 2026 for Hispanic Heritage Month/Día de Muertos, and in Spring 2027, an exhibit at the Neill-Cochran House Museum.

We continue to engage in arts advocacy. We held meetings with several County Commissioners to update them on our continued interest in the Corridor of Art, which is on hold pending repairs to the escalator. In addition, we submitted a letter of support for the new cultural arts department, AACME, to the City Council and met with its new director, Angela Means.

In the new year, we will be applying for city arts funding and seeking other funding opportunities. We continue to receive donations of folk art from collectors, and we are most grateful for their generosity.

Our Folk Art Museum of Central Texas website has had an astonishing number of online visitors—9.5 million at last count!

Thank you for being part of our organization and helping us celebrate and preserve folk art. We ask that you help recruit others to join us in growing our organization!

We look forward to an even more exciting 2026.

Thank you / Gracias!

Amalia Rodriguez-Mendoza
President, Austin Friends of Folk Art

Special Recognition

Every organization has someone who truly stands out. This year, that person is our Board Secretary, Audrey Selden. Audrey kept us organized and on track, always one step ahead. Her competence and attention to detail were evident in the Zoom meetings and transcription of minutes, but her contributions went far beyond administrative responsibilities.

Whether taking the lead on organizing our silent auction, photographing and pricing items, designing bid sheets, or creating event posters—she did the heavy lifting. She also

chairs our Strategic Planning Committee and donates generously both financially and with her time.

I could list countless examples of her contributions, but simply put, she is the nucleus of our organization.

My sincere thanks and deep appreciation to our board member and volunteer extraordinaire, Audrey Selden.



Alebrijes at Bulverde Oaks Nature Preserve

Austin Friends of Folk Art brought an explosion of color and imagination to the Fairy Houses in Nature workshops at Bulverde Oaks Nature Preserve in San Antonio, Texas. AFFA proudly displayed four stunning alebrijes, fantastical creatures bursting with color and creativity, from the Les and Miye Cohen Collection for children and families to enjoy.

AFFA volunteers Rosa Rios Valdez and Audrey Selden told the origin story of alebrijes. Long ago, artist Pedro Linares fell ill with a fever and dreamt of strange, beautiful creatures that were part real, part mythical, and chanted “¡Alebrije! ¡Alebrije!” When he recovered, Linares brought his dream to life using papier-mâché. These colorful folk art creatures were born. Later, artisans in Oaxaca, Mexico, began carving them from wood, continuing the tradition of bringing dreams to life.



The children and adults loved seeing the alebrijes, which included a fanciful monster that has snatched a bug, a large winged monster by Joaquin Hernandez Vasquez, a winged monster by artist Bill Mendoza, and an extra-large red and turquoise coyote by Luis Pablo Mendoza. Children and adults were inspired to color alebrijes and decorate the AFFA playhouse.

AFFA thanks Savannah Fox with Green Spaces Alliance of South Texas for collaborating with us to celebrate Mexican folk art, honor nature, and educate our community.



Message from the Editor

Greetings, Friends. The holiday season is upon us, so I will begin by wishing you—whichever you celebrate—a blessed Christmas or Hanukkah. At my house, we have always honored my family's roots with a Feliz Navidad. My main Christmas tree is decorated with my collection of Mexican dolls. Our gatherings with friends are celebrated with tamales and other Mexican foods, and our family lunch on Christmas Day always features my mole, made from a long-time family recipe.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast Day

I have a great devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, which I learned from my grandmother, who attended Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Galveston and belonged to the Guadalupanas Club. Years later, it became the church where Mel and I were married by a wonderful Oblate priest named Father George Green.



I have a wonderful collection of Christmas items, most of them vintage. However, what I consider one of my treasures is the nativity by Demetrio Garcia, son of the famous Josephine Aguilar. Each piece is so unique and full of character. I rejoice in seeing them each Christmas.

Holiday Party

The Friends of Folk Art gathered at the Neill-Cochran House Museum to celebrate the holidays with good company, good food, and, as always, a wonderful folk art auction that gave us an excellent opportunity to add to our treasures.

Until Next Month

As we prepare for the start of a new year, we rejoice in the wonderful report from the President and vow to continue our support for the Austin Friends of Folk Art. May the New Year be filled with blessings.

Dear Family and Friends,



This year my Season's Greetings come to you in the form of a little story about Baby Jesus, as he is well-known in Cuzco, Peru.



He is dressed in the local garb of a little boy, sensibly including a Panama hat. There is a thorn in his foot and tears are on his little cheek.

Cuzco people pray to him when they have a need or wish and the thorn stays in place until the prayer is answered.

May all your prayers be answered.

Blessed Holidays, Dagmar





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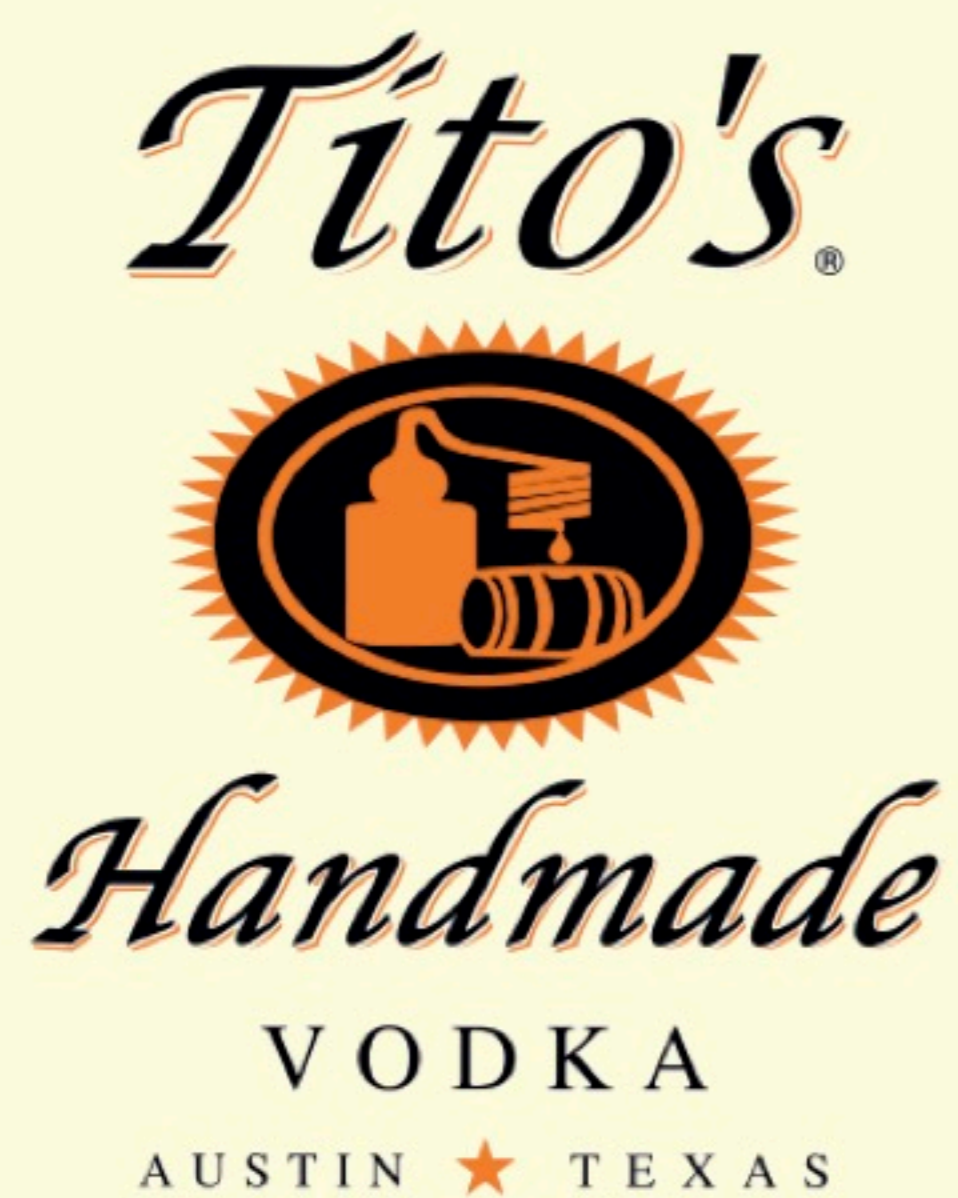
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