




Hector Duarte

El Día de los Muertos  
The Day of the Dead  
Oct. 27 — Nov. 29, 1987

A  
Celebration  
Presented  
by

The Mexican Fine Arts Center  Museum  
1852 W. 19th Street  
738-1503

*Paintings By:* Hector Duarte  
*Installation By:* Clay Morrison

The celebration of the 'Day of the Dead' has roots in both the pre-Hispanic religious rituals of the Indians of Mexico and in the Catholicism brought to Mexico by the Spanish Missionaries. Death played a very prominent role in the lives of the Indians of Mexico. Images of Death are found in the art of pre-Hispanic Mexico. Death was not something to be feared or dreaded; nor was it seen as something final. Instead, it was seen as a natural process of life. The Indians believed that during the journey after death, the souls of the dead needed food, drink, utensils, etc. to assist them through their journey. Excavated graves have demonstrated that offerings for the dead ranged from simple basic items to elaborate tombs with gold and jade offerings.

The Catholic traditions for this celebration date back to the mid-tenth century, when 'All Saints' Day' was first proclaimed by Pope Gregory IV. November the first eventually became the date for this celebration. 'All Souls' Day' (Nov. 2) was officially established by St. Odilo of France to offer prayers for the souls in purgatory. In Spain, many practices developed over the centuries involving the observance of this religious holiday. Some of the observances have similar counterparts in Mexican customs. The traditions of food, bonfires, and bell ringing are found in the observances of both countries. When Catholic priests encountered any Indian ritual that they considered pagan, they moved quickly to eradicate these practices. The famous chronicler of pre-Hispanic Indian history, Fray Diego Duran suspected that the Indians transferred their various offerings to the dead to November the 2nd in order to deceive the Spanish authorities into believing that they were converted to Catholicism.

'Day of the Dead' celebrations are held throughout Mexico with the states of Oaxaca, Michoacan, Chiapas, Yucatan, Tlaxcala, and Morelos having the richest history and most elaborate traditions.

The most common observances of this religious ritual include visiting the graves of deceased family members and having a picnic at the cemetery; creating an altar in the home where photographs of the dead relatives are placed upon the altar; selling children's toys with skeleton and skull images on them and making pastry with these same images.

In conjunction with the celebration of the 'Day of the Dead', the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum dedicates this exhibit to the preservation of this intriguing Mexican folk tradition.

La celebración del Día de los Muertos tiene sus raíces tanto en los rituales religiosos del México prehispánico, como en el catolicismo traído a México por los españoles.

La imagen de la muerte jugaba un papel muy importante en la vida del México prehispánico. En el monumental legado de los antiguos mexicanos se han hallado numerosas representaciones de la muerte, a la cual no se le consideraba algo temible, ni siquiera un final, sino un proceso natural de la vida.

Los antiguos mexicanos creían que para poder sobrellevar el viaje posterior a la muerte, el alma de los muertos necesitaba comida, bebida, utensilios, etc. Entre los hallazgos de las tumbas prehispánicas excavadas se han encontrado ofrendas a los muertos incluyendo desde artículos básicos hasta elaboradas ofrendas de oro y jade.

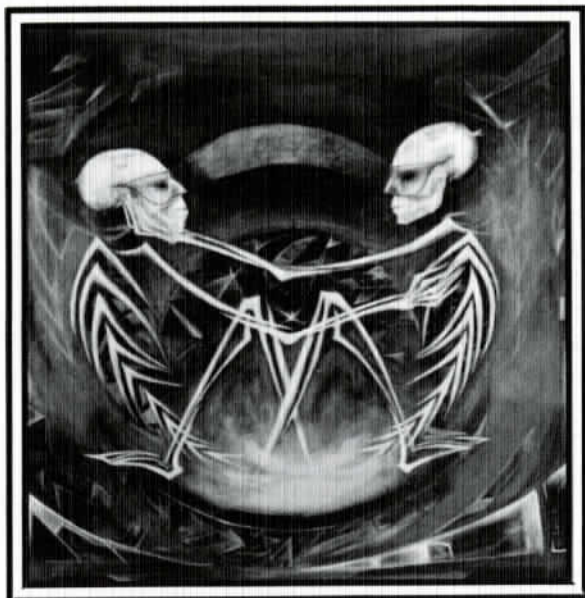
Por otro lado, la tradición Católica de esta celebración se remonta a mediados del Siglo X, cuando el Papa Gregorio IV proclamó por primera vez el Día de Todos los Santos. Posteriormente, el 1ro de Noviembre pasó a ser la fecha de esta celebración. El Día de Todas las Almas (2 de Noviembre) fue establecido oficialmente por San Odilo de Francia para rezar por las almas que están en el purgatorio. A través de los siglos, en España florecieron muchos rituales relacionados con esta celebración religiosa, algunos de los cuales tienen equivalentes similares en la tradición mexicana. Por ejemplo, la tradición de las ofrendas de comida, las hogueras y el repicar de las campanas se encuentran en los rituales de ambos países.

La fusión de los rituales paganos del México prehispánico, con la tradición católica del Día de todos los Santos en parte fue propiciada y observada por los sacerdotes católicos de la Nueva España. Estos, cuando se encontraban con rituales indígenas que les parecían paganos, rápidamente tomaban medidas para erradicarlos. En su famosa crónica de la historia de la conquista de la Nueva España, Fray Diego Durán apunta sus sospechas de que los indígenas transfirieron sus diversos rituales a los muertos al 2 de Noviembre, para engañar así a las autoridades españolas haciéndoles creer que su conversión al catolicismo había sido efectiva.

Las festividades del Día de los Muertos se celebran a través de todo México, sin embargo, los estados de Oaxaca, Michoacán, Chiapas, Yucatán, Tlaxcala y Morelos gozan de las tradiciones más ricas y elaboradas del país.

Los rituales más comunes de esta celebración religiosa van desde la visita a las tumbas de familiares fallecidos y las comidas en el cementerio, la instalación de altares en los hogares, donde se colocan fotografías y otros efectos personales de los parientes muertos, hasta la venta de juguetes en forma de esqueletos y calaveras y, por supuesto, el famoso Pan de Muerto.

En ocasión de la celebración del Día de los Muertos, el Museo y Centro de Bellas Artes Mexicanas desea dedicar esta exhibición a la preservación misma de esta inolvidable tradición que llega hasta la raíz de la dualidad de la cultura Mexicana.



Hector Duarte

### **HECTOR DUARTE**

Hector Duarte is one of the newest and most interesting of Chicago's Mexican painters. A native of Michoacán, he has been very active in the Chicago art scene since his arrival several years ago. Duarte has worked on several mural projects in Chicago including "Our Roots, New Horizons" (26th and Kostner) which was done in collaboration with Aurelio Díaz Tekpankalli and Alejandro Nava and the "Awakening of Humanity" at the Lakeview Learning Center (3310 N. Clark). He has also painted murals in Cuernavaca, Zacatecas, and in Michoacán. Duarte was a participant in the recent exhibition, "Barrio Murals" that was held at The Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum. The observance and traditions of 'The Day of the Dead' are of great significance to Duarte and he has been a strong advocate and promoter of this holiday.

### **CLAY MORRISON**

Six years ago, Clay Morrison designed, at the Hubbard Street Gallery, one of the most imaginative and spectacular 'Day of the Dead' installations ever done in Chicago. Morrison has a very keen interest in the folk arts of Mexico, especially in 'The Day of the Dead' traditions. Morrison's most recent 'Day of the Dead' installation was at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and it was very well received.

This 'Day of the Dead' exhibition is dedicated to Rafael Duarte, the father of Hector Duarte, who passed away while Hector was working on this exhibit.



# Day of the Dead Celebration

An Art Installation by  
**HECTOR DUARTE**

OCTOBER 21–NOVEMBER 29  
1987

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**MEXICAN FINE ARTS**

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**CENTER  MUSEUM**

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1852 W. 19th St., Chicago, IL 60608 (312) 738-1503

FREE ADMISSION

OPEN TUESDAYS–SUNDAYS 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

MONDAYS CLOSED



# Day of the Dead CELEBRATION

Paintings by  
**HECTOR DUARTE**

and Installation by  
**CLAY MORRISON**

Opening Reception-Sunday  
November 1, 1987  
6:00 - 8:30 PM

7:00-7:30 PM

Slide show presentation by  
**ROBERT LOESCHER**  
of the School of  
the Art Institute of Chicago

Exhibition runs through November 29

The MEXICAN FINE ARTS CENTER • MUSEUM  
1852 West 19th Street, Chicago IL 60608

*Calavera (skull)*, 1987 Acrylic on Canvas by Hector Duarte Photo - Don Ontiveros

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