

BOWERS MUSEUM

Bowers Museum Gallery Guide for Students (grades 7 & up) *Latitudes: Latin American Masters from the FEMSA Collection*

September 12, 2009 – January 17, 2010

Please print out this worksheet and bring it with you to the museum.

Exhibition Summary

Latitudes: Latin American Masters from the FEMSA Collection features paintings from a leading Latin American beverage company, FEMSA, which holds a prestigious collection of more than 1,000 modern and contemporary works of Mexican and Latin American artists. This thematic exhibition explores the 20th century art movements and styles of Cubism, Portraiture and Landscapes, Identity, Mexican Muralism, Surrealism and Abstraction, and includes works by many noted artists, including Leonora Carrington, Frida Kahlo, Wilfredo Lam, Roberto Matta, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Jesús Soto, and Rufino Tamayo. The exhibition is organized by FEMSA and has been traveling throughout South America. This show represents a collaboration between the Bowers Museum, FEMSA, and the Mexican Consulate, Santa Ana.

Geography

Below is a map showing the many countries of Latin America for your reference.



map courtesy of: <http://www.travelnotes.org/LatinAmerica/images/stham2.gif>

- I. A major theme in tying works in this exhibition together is *identity*. The artists showcased here are grappling with many aspects of their identities rather than simply attempting to focus on their identities as artists. Many are attempting to place themselves within the context of European art history while simultaneously endeavoring to realize their own unique vision. Additionally, many of the artists in *Latitudes* were from multiple cultures—some were of mixed ancestry and some lived both in Europe and in Latin America. As you go through the exhibition, keep this concept of identity in mind. Choose three to four works in which you

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find the concept of identity most explicit. What is the artist trying to say? What identities do you think the artist is grappling with? Why makes you think so? Write the answers to the above questions in the space below.

II. This exhibition is a showcase of Latin American artists. What does “Latin America” mean? Is it truly a definable concept or does it imply many things? If you believe it the latter, what are some of the things the concept of “Latin America” embodies?

III. **Cubism.** Look at *Él de Espanan (el azul angel)* by Diego Rivera. What do you think is the purpose of drawing this figure using the cubist language? List some of the recognizable elements of the painting.

IV. **Surrealism.** Look at the works in this section. Surrealism works feature an element of surprise, unexpected juxtapositions, and appear *non sequitur*. Surrealist works often have a dreamlike feel to them. Instead of depicted what actually is, Surrealist artists can often depict inner/mental landscapes. Compare Leonora Carrington’s *Step-Sister’s Hen* to Frida Kahlo’s *Mi Falda Cuelga Aqui*. How are they similar? Different? What perspective are we seeing the image from? What is the message or purpose of each?

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- V. **Abstraction and Informalism.** Abstract works are interesting because the viewer can choose to see whatever they want in the work. What do you see in Coronel's *Luna*? What aspects of the work lead you to that?
- VI. **Mexican Muralism.** Murals were works for the people. They were intended to tell stories or function as messages for the masses (including those in the population who were illiterate). David Alfaro Siquieros was a communist. Keeping this in mind, look at David Alfaro Siquieros' *Mujer Dormida* which was painted in 1947 following the Mexican Revolution. In your opinion, who is this woman? Is she someone he knows? What is the purpose of depicting her sleeping?
- VII. **Portraits.** Look at Lozano's *Rebozo Blanco*. Who is depicted in this portrait? Is it a real woman? What is notable about this portrait? Do you think it was commissioned by a specific person? Compare it to Montenegro's *Retrato de Gabriel Fernandez*. What is one major thing other than the gender of the subject that differentiates each from the other?
- VIII. **Landscapes.** Use of color is an important aspect of any painting. Colors can be warm or cool, and can contribute to the overall mood of a work of art. Compare the landscapes by Gamarra and Murillo. Look specifically at the artists' use of color. How are the two paintings different? How does the artists' use of color make you feel? Are they inviting or distant? Does one draw you in more than the other? Which one do you like more?

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- IX. **Please send us your answers to this last question via email at schooltours@bowers.org or via our page on Facebook.**

In conclusion, reflect on your visit. Have you ever been to an art museum before? Have you been to the Bowers Museum before? What did you like or dislike about *Latitudes*? What are your general impressions and comments?

We hope you enjoyed the exhibit, and hope to see you soon at the Bowers Museum!

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