

Day of the Dead:

Art & Culture in the Americas

EDUCATOR GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 25 - DECEMBER 31, 2009

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- History of Day of the Dead
- What to know when planning your visit
- Projects for your students
- Day of the Dead resources

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Educator Guide

Dear Educator:

Contained in this packet is information we hope will be of use to you before your visit to the Everhart Museum for *Day of the Dead: Art & Culture in the Americas*. We have provided some background information about the holiday, the exhibit, and the tours available. We have also provided some activities you may want to use before and after your visit, in order to make your students' experiences more complete. Please feel free to contact the Interpretive Programs Department at any time at education@everhart-museum.org or 570.346.7186 if you have any questions about this guide, or your upcoming tour.

We look forward to seeing you at the Everhart!

Sincerely,

Terra Steele

Director of Interpretive Programs



Xolo Dog Vessel
Colima, Mexico
Ca. 1200-1500 CE

Introduction



Say Goodbye,
Mike Egan,
2009

*“Day of the Dead
is replete with
history, meaning,
symbolism,
spirituality, and
art.”*

All cultures create meaning to understand the nature of death and the afterlife. While losing loved ones can be a tragic event, remembering deceased family members and ancestors is an ancient tradition for peoples around the world. For many North Americans, death is a difficult subject to accept and discuss, sometimes considered morbid and tinged with darkness. However, for Central and South American cultures, the subject of death and the deceased is one that occasions a different perspective of honor, festivity, and colorful celebra-

tion. While grief over death is a constant, the peoples of Central and South America, and the Caribbean celebrate the Day of the Dead, or *El Día de los Muertos*, and their deceased in a variety of joyful and sacred ways.

The celebration of the Day of the Dead is replete with history, meaning, symbolism, spirituality, and art. The combined legacies of ancient civilizations, European colonial powers, and modern independent nations with ethnically diverse citizens create a global impact on how people see death, remem-

brance, and commemorations. The Day of the Dead celebrations featured here focus on Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Haiti, Martinique, and the United States. They demonstrate growing global consciousness of how one can remember the dead and their impact on the lives they touched. The cultures represented in this exhibit are also found in the diverse population of Northeastern Pennsylvania and serve to illustrate the common threads between the old and new immigrant traditions of this region.

Exhibit Overview



Frida Kahlo
Altar
Photo by
Nezka Pfeifer

This exclusive exhibit illustrates Day of the Dead as a celebration and remembrance of beloved people in the family and community. *Day*

of the Dead: Art & Culture in the Americas features contemporary art from nationally and internationally recognized artists, traditional folk

art, and the Everhart Museum’s Pre-Columbian collection. It touches upon the themes of history, traditions, and popular culture.

History of Day of the Dead

Day of the Dead celebrations can be traced back to the indigenous peoples of Mexico for as long as 2500-3000 years ago when they would hold month long festivals in August celebrating the souls of the deceased. The festivals were dedicated to the goddess *Mictecacihuatl*, known as “The Lady of the Dead”, who is represented by the modern *catrina* (female skeleton figure). The Aztecs and

other Mesoamerican peoples would keep skulls as trophies in their homes and would display them during the festival activities to symbolize death and rebirth.

Death has always played a significant role in the worshipping of gods and the performing of rituals of Mexico’s ancient civilizations. The Aztecs believed it was a blessing to die in childbirth, human sacrifice or battle because the per-

son would be assured of a desirable afterlife. When the Spanish Conquistadors arrived in Mexico, they deemed the celebration sacrilegious and changed the date of the celebration to coincide with the Christian holidays of All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day (November 1 and 2). The blending of European Catholic traditions and the Mexican native traditions formed the present day *El Dia de los Muertos* celebration.

“The Mexican people did not view death as an end of life, but rather a continuation of it.”

Traditions of Day of the Dead

Day of the Dead, or *El Dia de los Muertos*, is celebrated on November 1 and 2 by the peoples of Mexico, Central and South America and by Latinos living in parts of the United States and Canada to honor deceased relatives and friends. A common symbol of the holiday is the skull (*calavera*), which is represented in masks, sugar skull candy, and *pan de muerto* (a sweet egg bread made in various shapes). Beginning in October and running through the first week of

November, shop owners adorn their businesses with colorful wreaths, candles, crosses, silk flowers, *papel picado* (intricately cut tissue paper) and fresh seasonal flowers including marigolds and cockscomb that people can purchase to decorate altars with. These altars, or *ofrendas*, are erected to honor the deceased by decorating them with flowers, pictures, artwork and the person’s favorite foods and drinks. Many people believe that this celebra-

tion makes it easier for the souls of the dead to visit the living on these two days, so family members offer prayers to the deceased in the hope that they will hear them. Most people also visit cemeteries to place items next to graves that they have collected throughout the year in remembrance. The Mexican people did not view death as an end of life, but rather a continuation of it and they embraced death with lively and colorful celebrations instead of fearing it.

Day of the Dead in Popular Culture

The fascination with *El Dia de los Muertos* among tourists has been fostered by interest in the colorful and lively traditions and rituals celebrated by the Mexican people. Vendors selling decorated sugar skulls for consumption, intricate *papel picado*, costumed *catrina* figurines and Day of the Dead-themed artwork and murals have enticed visitors to learn more about this cultural event. The murals of Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco showcase the history and traditions of the Mexican people while forging the movement known as

the Mexican Mural Renaissance. The influential engraver, illustrator and artist José Posada created work that served a satirical and religious purpose. Thought to be his best work, his *Calaveras* were prints of skeletons outfitted in various costumes. He adopted *El Dia de los Muertos* as the theme of most of his works citing the use of skeletons as a metaphor for a corrupt society, making him a pioneer expressionist. Day of the Dead themed products are not limited to artwork alone, many books, articles of clothing and forms of entertainment

such as video games and movies have honored the celebration. The Ray Bradbury novel, *The Halloween Tree*, features an explanation of the holiday as part of a worldwide tradition. A computer game developed in 1998, *Grim Fandango*, challenges the player to make their way through *The Land of the Dead* safely. The sleepwear company, Nick and Nora, also marketed a line of Sugar Skull pajamas decorated with bright colors and traditional Mexican costumed sugar skulls.



Polygonal Vessel
Colima, Mexico
Ca. 200 BCE—
200 CE

Implications for Northeast Pennsylvania

With the ever growing Latino population in NEPA, an interest in their traditions and customs will serve as an educational tool to help those unfamiliar with the culture and their celebra-

tions. Because the celebration of *El Dia de los Muertos* may be new to some people in the community, this exhibit aims to educate and stimulate thoughts and ideas about this cele-

bration. The cultural contributions of the Latino community have helped foster an awareness of cultural diversity within NEPA.

Tour & Workshop Information

Tours led by experienced educators are available to groups, between September 28 to December 22, 2009, Monday, Thursday & Friday between 9:30 and 3:30, and must be scheduled at least three weeks in advance. Cost is \$6.00/student for temporary exhibit tour & workshops. A Pre-visit guide is included in the fee. **For more information, to schedule a tour, or to join our educator mailing list, please call 570.346.7186 or email education@everhart-museum.org.**

Grades K – 4: *Calavera Customs!*

Students will discover the fantastic traditions of El Dia de los Muertos! This tour and workshop will utilize the students' imagination and early literacy skills in their creation of their own calavera mask and poem.

PA Standards 1.3, 1.6, 8.4, 9.1, 9.2, 12.1

Grades 5 – 8: *Ancient Aztecs to Modern Celebrations*

Explore the history of El Dia de los Muertos and how it became the holiday we know today, with an emphasis on the Aztec and Spanish influence, as well as the holiday's traditions. Students will create their own short story and illustration in the workshop.

PA Standards 1.4, 7.1, 7.3, 8.4, 9.1, 9.2, 12.1

Grades 9 – 12: *Sacred Ancestors*

Through touring *Day of the Dead* and *Everhart Around the World* exhibits, students will explore sacred traditions of several cultures. They will create *papel picado* and consider their own customs in a short writing workshop.

About Your Visit

Hours

Tours are available Mondays, Thursdays, or Fridays between 9:30am and 4:30pm. Week-end tours are also available.

Parking

Buses can drop off school groups at the lot to the right of the museum, and may park there for the duration of the tour. Groups are asked to use the front entrance. Elevator access is available at the rear of the museum.

Arrival

Upon arrival, the group leader will check in at the Front Desk. Please have students assembled into pre-arranged groups. Please time your arrival as closely as possible to your tour time; ten minutes early is ideal. Classes that arrive late may receive an abbreviated lesson. A group arriving more than 30 minutes late may not receive instruction or a tour.

Group Size

A group consists of at least 15 persons, and is limited to approximately 120 students. We recommend children in your group wear distinctive nametags including the school's/ organization's name and youth's name.



Skull Mask,
Heather Martyak

About Your Visit cont.

Chaperones

The price for guided and self-guided gallery visits includes one adult per five students. Additional adults must pay the regular \$5 admission charge. Adult chaperones must attend to the group at all times and are responsible for maintaining discipline and order within their group. Chaperones are asked not to bring younger children with them.

Lunch

Unfortunately, there is no available eating facility in the museum. Nay Aug Park has pavilions with picnic tables available for groups. Please ask us when scheduling, and we will place a request with the Scranton Parks Department for you. This request is not a guarantee of reservation until the Parks Department notifies us. Following that notification, we will confirm with you. If students bring bag lunches, we will hold them until lunchtime.

Museum Shop

The Museum Shop offers children's merchandise such as postcards, Everhart memorabilia, art supplies, and toys. Please make students aware that sales tax will be added to their purchases. Gift Bags are also available for \$2/student. Please reserve these when scheduling your tour.



*Grampa Pacheco:
Who Died When I Wasn't
Even Thought Of,
Stephanie Pacheco, 2009*

Book a Tour

All guided and self-guided groups must make advance reservations. To schedule your visit, please contact the Everhart Museum Interpretive Programs Department during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 9-5pm) at 570.346.7186. Reservations are made on a first-come, first served basis, and should be made no less than 2 weeks in advance of your visit; allow five to six weeks if you are planning to visit from April to June. Please have several alternate dates and times in mind. We recommend you allow an additional half-hour if your group intends to visit the gift shop.

When you call, you will be asked for the following information:

- School name, address, and phone number
- Teacher's name
- Type of Tour
- Preferred date(s) and time(s)
- Grade and age of students
- Group size and number of chaperones
- Class needs (wheelchair, second-language, etc.)
- Gift shop visitation or Gift Bag Reservation
- Pavilion reservation

Confirmation

All groups will receive written confirmation within 10 days after their reservation is made. Please review the confirmation and notify the Interpretive Programs Department of any necessary changes.

Cancellations

If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call the Interpretive Programs Department as soon as possible so that other groups on our waiting list can be contacted. Groups that do not show for scheduled tours will be assessed a \$25 fee.

Payment

Payment in full for all guided and self-guided visits is requested on the day of your visit, and may be made by check, credit card, or cash upon check-in. Please give the cashier an exact count of all children and adults in your group. Payment includes admission for the rest of the day.

Self-Guided Tours

Teachers interested in taking their classes on individual self-guided tours of the Everhart Museum may do so during regular public hours (M, Th, Fri, 12-4pm) and for regular admission (\$3/student, \$5/adult). Due to possible conflicts of time and space, self-guided tours are asked to follow the same reservation procedure as scheduling any other group visit.

Everhart Outreach

Please contact the Interpretive Programs Department for outreach opportunities.

Day of the Dead Community Altar

The Everhart Museum has included a Community Altar in its exhibit. This ofrenda is designed for the use of visitors coming to see the exhibit, and who would like to leave something in remembrance of someone they loved. Your class is welcome to do the same!

Prepare items for the community altar before you visit! Your class is welcome to bring objects to place on the altar in memory of an ancestor or someone connected to them. Please note we cannot accept perishables, and the items will not be returned. Suggested items include photographs or copies of photographs, poems, drawings, etc.



Everhart Museum Community Ofrenda

Vocabulary for Day of the Dead



Live Catrinas

Photo by Nezka Pfeifer

Día de los Muertos: Day of the Dead; a traditional Mexican holiday held November 1st to November 2nd that honors Mexico's ancestors. The people of early Mexican civilizations believed that the souls of their loved ones returned each year to celebrate with them. The holiday is a festive time of remembering and rejoicing.

Altar de muertos: the offering that family and friends prepare for their dead loved ones. They could be made in the home or in the cemetery.

Calavera: a skull, also a slang term for "daredevil." Skulls and skeletons are used in many forms of artwork, toys, and mini-shadowboxes found throughout the holiday.

Careta: mask worn by dancers to scare away the dead at the end of the celebrations.

Catrina: a fabulously dressed skeleton, usually used sarcastically to represent that no matter how wealthy a person is, all are going to die at some point.

Ofrenda: an offering; refers to the goods set out on the altars. It usually consists of a photo, prayer candles, pan de los muertos, sugar skulls, papel picado, incense, water, and beer

Papel Picado: cut tissue-paper decorations used to decorate

Pan de los muertos: bread of the dead.

Introductory Questions

Have you ever heard of Day of the Dead?

What is it or what do you think it might be?

When are these holidays celebrated? **November 1 & 2**

Where are these holidays celebrated? **Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Haiti, Martinique, Bolivia, Brazil, & Columbia**

Does Halloween and Day of the Dead have anything in common? **The time of year; believed to be a time when the veil between the worlds of the living and the dead is thinnest.**

What symbols do we associate with each? **Skulls, masks, skeletons, etc.**

How are these holidays different? **Hallowe'en, a festivity in which spirits return to enjoy the land of the living, has its roots in the Celtic holiday of Samhain on October 31. In their essence the two holidays are quite different: the Day of the Dead invites specific familial spirits to return to the celebrate with their living relatives while Halloween is a time when all manner of malevolent and mischievous spirits return to haunt, spook and curse the living.**

Pre- and Post- Visit Activities



**Pisac Familia
Michael
Robinson-
Chavez**

The following are examples of activities you and your students may be interested in. Each activity can be adapted to

specific grade levels. Also included are additional resources or websites where you can find further information about each activity. Following this section are website resources,

as well as links to several webquests. It may be of interest for you to ask your students search for answers to either a webquest, or questionnaire you have created, while they are at the Everhart Museum exhibit.

Ofrendas come in many forms! Simple, expressive, wild, traditional... each created with someone specific in mind.

Design an ofrenda

Design an *ofrenda* for someone you know who has past away: a family member, friend, pet, neighbor, or celebrity.

- Materials: Shoe box and any or all of the following: poster paint, glitter, sequins, glue, photograph or drawing of the subject, found objects, scissors, foam board, cardboard, modeling clay, paper scraps, tissue paper, pencils, markers, string or yarn, fabric, ribbons.
- Directions: paint or paper the inside of the shoe box; decorate the exterior; place a photograph or draw a picture of the person inside the box and decorate the back wall; make paper flowers out of tissue paper

Resource: <http://www.firstuniv.org/docs/dayofthedead.pdf>

Skeleton Puppets

- Materials: Craft foam or lightweight mat board approximately cut into 4 pieces (arms & legs), 1 piece (body), and 3 pieces (head, hands & feet), pencils, tacky glue and glue brushes, scissors, paper fasteners, 1/8" wooden dowel - 18" long, masking tape, sequins, feathers, pom-poms, fabric scraps, buttons, pipe cleaners, foil or patterned paper, yarn, markers.
- Directions: Each student chooses a color of craft foam or mat board to work with. Explain the way that the cut pieces are designated for different body parts. Have the students lay out their foam pieces accordingly to the skeleton form. The students refine the body part shapes by drawing on them with pencil and then cutting away the portions they do not need. Attach the body parts with paper fasteners, overlapping the foam pieces and piercing them with the fasteners. Students can articulate knee, elbow, waist and other joints by cutting the shapes and then using paper fasteners to attach different sections. When the body has been assembled, use glue to adhere the decorative elements to the foam. Let dry. Attach at least one dowel to the back of the skeleton puppet with masking tape. Some students may want to attach dowels to the hands or feet as well.

Resource: <http://www.internationalfolkart.org/eventsedu/education/muertos/skeletonpuppets.html>

*Paper flowers
represent
marigolds, a
traditional offering
placed on an altar.
It is said the scent
of the marigold
helps the souls find
their way home.*

Easy Paper Flowers

- Materials: multicolored tissue paper, green pipe cleaners, scissors
- Directions: Take four to five sheets of the tissue paper and layer them (if you want multicolored flowers, use different colors). Cut into 8-inch squares. Keeping the sheets layered, take one set of squares and fold it like an accordion so it looks like a thin rectangle. Take the end of a pipe cleaner and twist it around the center of the rectangle. With the stem pointing straight down, gently pull up one layer of tissue into the center. Pull up the remaining layers, one by one. Repeat for the other side of the flower. Once all the layers are pulled up, fluff them in place to look natural. Continue making more flowers with the remaining stacks of squares.
- Tips: For sturdier stems, wrap two pipe cleaners together. Cut smaller or larger squares to change the size of your flowers. Add more layers for thicker flowers or less layers for thinner ones. For a shiny effect, dip the top edges in white glue and then dip in loose glitter. Glue a pin on the back of a flower for a fluffy lapel decoration. Make smaller flowers and string them together as garland.

Resource: http://www.azcentral.com/ent/dead/articles/dead-crafts_paperflowers.html

Reverse Glass Painting

- Materials: Cheap small frames, assorted acrylic paints, thin paintbrush
- Directions: Take apart the components of the frame and set the piece of glass on a flat surface. Using the liner brush and black paint, draw a skull on the glass. Let dry. Now paint on flowers and other decorations and let dry. Paint the entire face with white paint. Let dry and put the frame back together.

Resource: http://www.azcentral.com/ent/dead/articles/dead-crafts_glasspainting.html

Printmaking

- Materials: pencil, paper, linoleum block, transfer paper, linoleum carving tools, block printing ink, smooth surface for ink (ie: glass), brayer, porous heavyweight paper, spoon for burnishing
- Directions: Sketch a simple, high contrast design on a piece of paper. Once you are happy with the design, sketch it directly onto the linoleum block. Using the linoleum-carving tools, begin to carve by removing the negative space. Squeeze a small amount of block-printing ink onto a smooth surface, brayer the ink into a smooth layer. Use the brayer to roll just enough ink onto the carved linoleum block to cover the positive spaces. Place the paper on the inked block, once in place be careful not to allow the paper to shift. Use a large spoon to burnish the paper. Gently peel the paper off the block and allow to dry

Day of the Dead Webquests

The following are some existing webquests for students to discover more about Day of the Dead. The Everhart Museum did not create or design these webquests. The Museum is providing them as examples, and educators may decide to use them, or create their own.

- **Adaptable to many grade levels:**

<http://its.guilford.k12.nc.us/webquests/dayofdead/dodead.htm>

<http://www.bestteacherusa.net/diadelosmuertos/index.html>

- **Intended for Middle School:**

<http://www.rockwood.k12.mo.us/itech/webquests/su2003sec/whitaker/webquest.htm>

- **Intended for High School:**

<https://mail.lakotaonline.com/~tamera.terndrup/webquests/dayofthedeath/index.htm>

Additional Web Resources

<http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/3099-mexico-s-day-of-the-dead-resource-page>

<http://www.azcentral.com/rep/dead>

http://www.nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org/nmma_education/edu_classroomguides.html

<http://www.mexic-artermuseum.org/education/dell-edu/home.html>

<http://www.acabtu.com.mx/diademuertost/hollowsday>

<http://www.mexweb.com/muertos.htm>

<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~rjsalvad/scmfac/muertos.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/foodancestors/>

<http://wwwmexconnect.com/mex/feature/daydeadindex.html>

*Thank you for
your interest in
our Day of the
Dead: Art &
Culture in the
Americas
exhibit. We hope
you enjoy your
visit with us!*

EVERHART MUSEUM

NATURAL HISTORY, SCIENCE & ART

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Experience something new today!

The Everhart Museum is the largest public museum in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The Museum is located in Nay Aug Park in Scranton. The Everhart exists for the benefit of the public; to foster knowledge, exploration, and appreciation of natural history, science, and art with emphasis on northeast Pennsylvania's unique heritage.

Our changing exhibit schedule features a range of visual artworks, historic and contemporary, as well as exhibitions on loan from other prominent institutions.

2010 brings Art of the Brick:

LEGO® Sculptures by Nathan Sawaya!

2010 will bring more exciting educational opportunities! Join us in exploring the 3-Dimensional world of sculpture, architecture, engineering, and machines! On view starting February 4, 2010 until May 2, 2010, the Everhart Museum will offer exhibit tours and programming based on this temporary exhibit.

The Art of the Brick will focus on the wonderful creations by New York-based artist Nathan Sawaya using the popular LEGO® building block as an art medium. The exhibit will feature 30 works created solely

from standard LEGO® bricks over the period 2002-2007 with several new ones created specifically for this exhibit; nearly one million colorful LEGO® pieces were used to create his



Tyrannosaurus Rex
Nathan Sawaya
2008

whimsical and awe-inspiring sculptures. Sawaya's ability to transform this com-

mon toy into something meaningful to capture action and movement enables him to elevate child's play into fine art. Artist Nathan Sawaya has been featured on "The Today Show," "Late Night with David Letterman," and "The Colbert Report." His works are on display in major museums across the country. Partial underwriting for this exhibit is provided by The Oppenheim Foundation. For more information on the exhibit, contact the Everhart Museum at 570-346-7186 or email: general.information@everhart-museum.org.