

~ Paper Maché Alebrijes ~ Whimsical Animals



Objectives

- **Gain appreciation of the folk arts of Mexico**
- **Develop problem solving skills in designing an animal - and constructing armature**
- **Develop skills in paper maché and painting**
- **Use pattern to enhance the surface**
- **Write a story about your alebrijes**

Oaxaca History

- **Oaxacan Wood Carvings** are a magnificent expression of Mexican Folk Art. The talented carvers of *Oaxaca* create, entirely by hand, wonderful sculptures made from copal wood and their ingenious shapes with amazing patterns and colors have captivated collectors world wide.
- These remarkable wood carvings are also known as *alebrijes* for their similarity with the fantastic paper creatures made in Mexico City. For centuries the inhabitants of the *Valley of Oaxaca* and in particular the *Zapotec* civilization carved splendid wooden sculptures that are now in museums or adorning colonial churches.

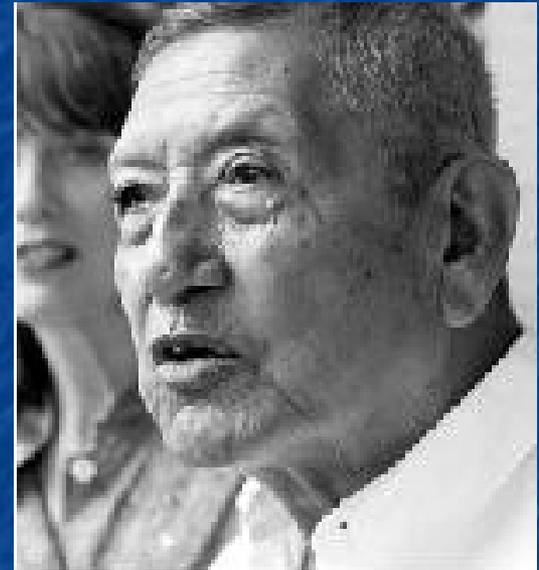
Where is Oaxaca, Mexico?



- Oaxaca is the name of both a state in Mexico and that state's capital city.
- The city of Oaxaca is located in the Oaxaca Valley in the Sierra Madre del Sur Mountains.

The Legend

- **As the modern legend goes, it was *Manuel Jimenez* who popularized this craft. He is considered the great master of *Oaxaca* wood carvings, and it was his work that was first noticed by traders and collectors of Folk Art. His success inspired others to follow in his foot steps.**
- **Nowadays there are many talented master wood carvers in *Oaxaca*, particularly in three villages: *Arrazola*, *San Martin Tilcajete* and *La Union*.**



Creation and Imagination

- **Using the soft wood of the copal tree abundant in the area, they carve with machetes and knives, beautiful figures that they later paint in brightly colored designs.**
- **Through their never-ending creativity and imagination, wood is transformed into mermaids, wild animals, fantastic creatures, masks, and angels! It is fascinating to see how each artist has developed a unique style. Their work is being recognized by collectors, and is being presented in galleries and museums through out the United States and other countries.**









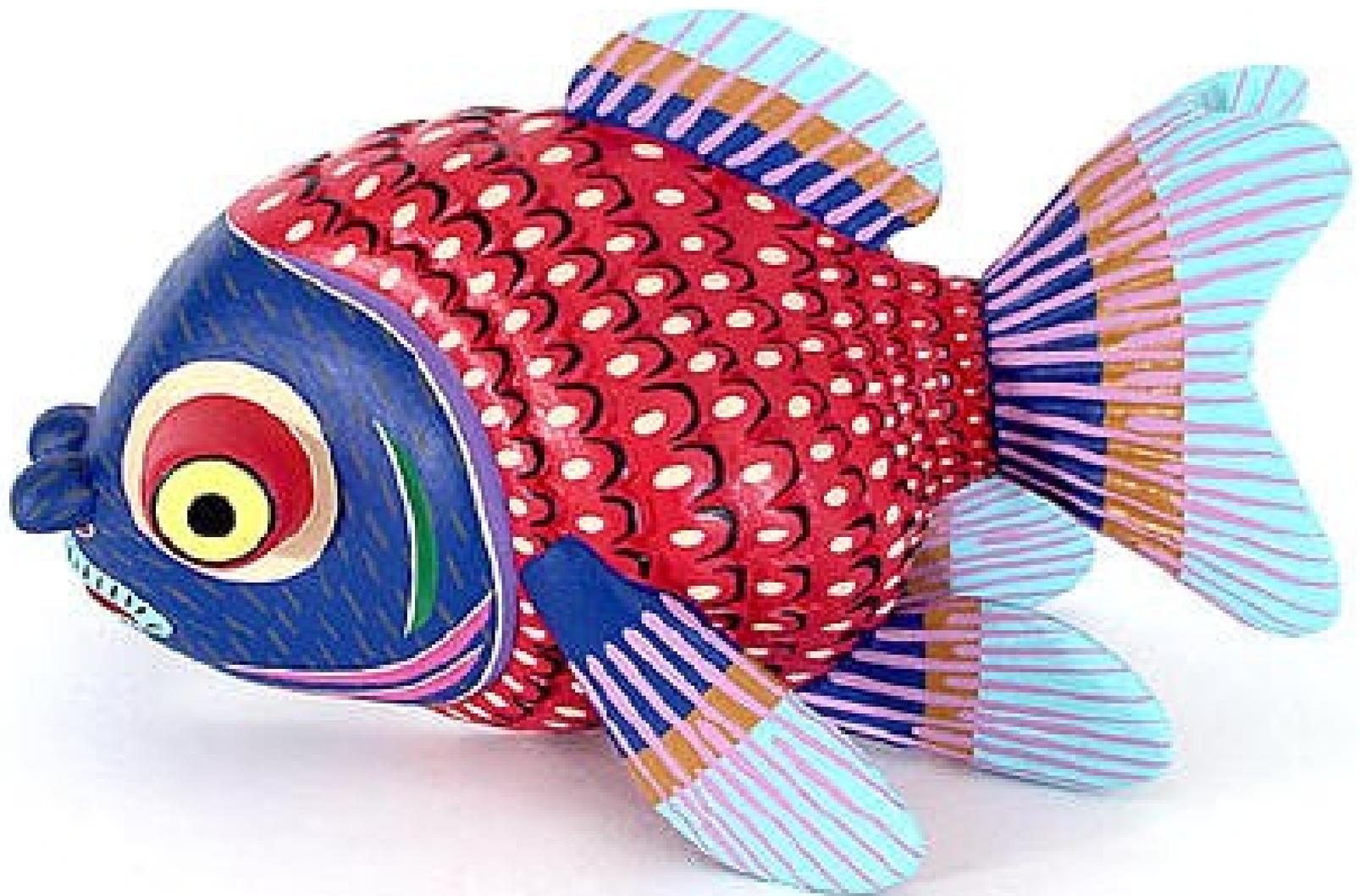










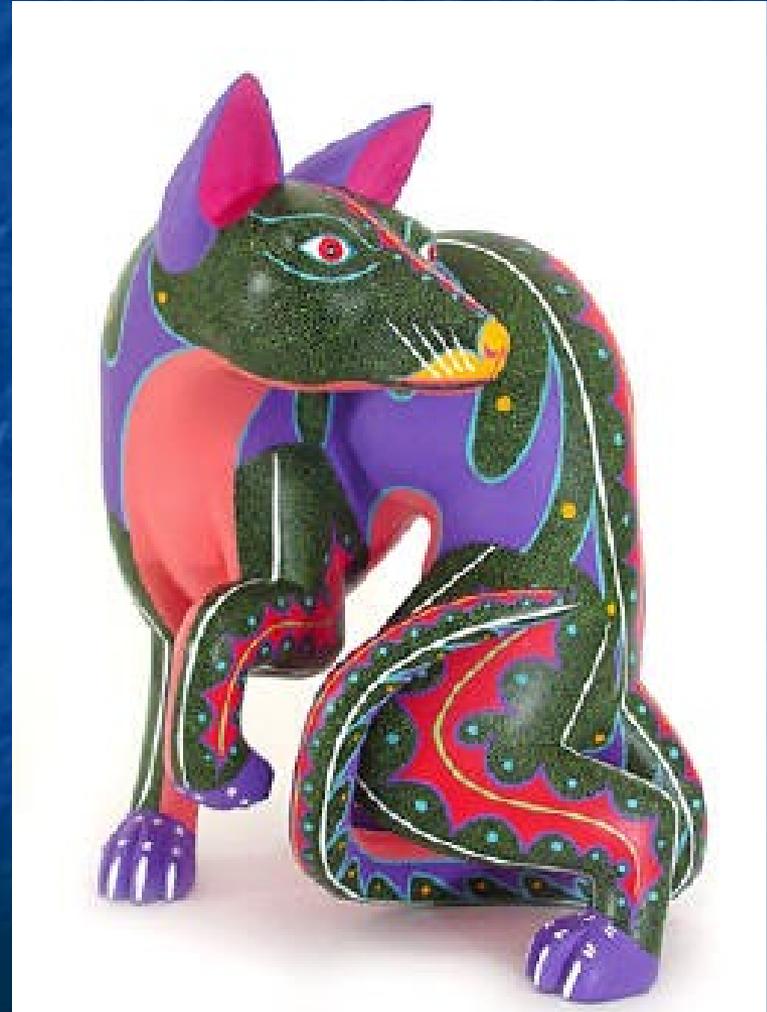






Materials

- **Wire**
- **Wire cutters**
- **Masking tape**
- **Newspapers**
- **Paper mache paste**
- **Paper pulp**
- **Elmer's glue**
- **Acrylic paint**
- **Brushes**
- **Sharpie markers**



Procedures

- **Select any animal of your choosing – or design your own Alebrijes (imaginary animal). You may make an imaginary animal, as many of the carvings of Oaxaca are mythical creatures.**
- **Build armature, paper maché, and paint.**
- **Write a short story about how your animal obtained a certain characteristic. Have your story have a moral message (build personal character - tell about human virtues - such as sharing, working together, helping others, doing your best, etc)**

Armature

- **Make a wire armature (this is like a skeleton) for your sculpture. One wire down center of body, two wires bent for legs. Maximum size for your sculpture will be 9" x 18" x 10". Each of you will cut off a piece of wire long enough to go from the head to tail of your animal. Note: You will only need 2 wire pieces for the legs (if animal has four legs) - longer than twice the length of leg. The leg pieces have to be long enough to loop around the "back bone" wire. Length depends on how long the legs are. The legs wires are taped onto the back bone wire. Once the wire is taped - start rounding out body with wads of newspaper.**

Paper Maché

- Paper maché with small pieces of torn newspaper. Paper maché is another craft of Mexico and Oaxaca.
- Apply a second coat of paper maché - allow to dry. Elmer's glue may be mixed in with paste to give harder finish. Eyes and other features may be built up with paper pulp. Work on your story while paper maché is drying. Make an illustration of your animal (use the colors and patterns of your illustration for your painting plan).

Painting and Decorating

- **Paint a base coat of acrylic paint - base coat must be only one color. Allow to dry.**
- **Embellish with pattern - you may use Sharpie markers and other tools to create patterns.**



Story

- **Finish your story and illustrate it with watercolor markers and/or colored pencils.**



Student Examples

