

## *El Caballo: The Horse in Mexican Folk Art*

Mexico possesses a rich history of popular art that reaches more than 2,000 years into the past. Today in villages, towns, and cities throughout Mexico, people continue to fashion art that expresses their deeply rooted traditions. *El Caballo: The Horse in Mexican Folk Art*, on display from March 3 through April 14, 2005 in the lobby of Cuero State Bank, 121 E. Courthouse, Cuero, TX celebrates this enduring legacy through a variety of ceramics, metalwork, paper art, sculpture, and other works of art.

*El Caballo* is comprised of objects from several genres of traditional Mexican folk art: metal, ceramics, paper, and wood. Some of these objects are created by an identifiable artisan, while others have been produced in a community of artisans, largely for local consumption and frequently for no cost. This exhibit is meant to highlight the talented artists and broad variety of folk arts in Mexico.

*El Caballo* opens at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 3, with a reception at 4:30 p.m. and a lecture from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Cuero State Bank Community Room. The lecture will be, "The Return of the Centaur: Spanish Horsemanship in Mexico," conducted by Mr. Bruce Shackelford. Mr. Shackelford works as an independent consultant, researcher, and writer working on projects dealing with the history of the trans-Mississippi American West and North American Indian art and Culture. The lecture is funded by Humanities Texas, and is sponsored by the Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum, Cuero Cultural & Heritage Foundation, and Cuero Chamber of Commerce. The exhibit can be seen Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and admission is free.

Each object focuses on the horse, an animal that holds special prominence in Mexico. Since the introduction of the horse to Mexico by the Spanish, the horse and rider theme has been popular among Mexican folk artists; many of the heroes and saints of Mexico, including Zapata and Santiago, are portrayed on horseback. Today, with their long history as ranchers and cowboys, Mexicans rank among the best equestrians in the world.

In addition, Mexican artisans produce some of the world's most exciting and creative examples of art made for common people. Using whatever materials are at hand, they fashion an array of utilitarian, ceremonial, and decorative objects. While most of these creations are regional, even local, in concept and design, they have in common a distinctly Mexican character that gives them a sense of national identity.

*El Caballo* is curated by Robert Cugno and Robert Logan, directors of the Media Gallery in Garnett, Kansas, and toured by ExhibitsUSA. The purpose of ExhibitsUSA is to create access to an array of arts and humanities exhibitions, nurture the development and understanding of diverse art forms and cultures, and encourage the expanding depth and breadth of cultural life in local communities. ExhibitsUSA is a national division of Mid-America Arts Alliance, a private, non-profit organization founded in 1972.

The Hands-on Experimental Learning Project (HELP) is a four-year project specifically designed to assist small and midsize museums in Texas with professional development. HELP, a program of Mid-America Alliance in partnership with the Texas Association of Museums, is made possible through the combined vision and generosity of The Brown Foundation, Inc., of Houston; The Don and Sybil Harrington Foundation; Houston Endowment, Inc.; The Meadows Foundation; the Texas Commission on the Arts; and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership, and a lifetime of learning.