

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

Alters, masks and paintings are being displayed to honor and remember the lives of relatives

Mara Stine
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

A bilingual exhibit commemorating the Day of the Dead, or "Dia De Los Muertos," opens tonight at the Maude Kerns Art Center. The exhibit will include paintings, photography, lectures, a mask workshop and alters dedicated to the dead.

The exhibit opens tonight at 7 p.m. at the art center, which is located at 1910 East 15th Ave. The exhibit will continue until Oct. 30. A \$2 donation is recommended.

Susan Dearborn Jackson, curator of the exhibit, hopes the variety of art forms will appeal to a larger audience. For example, all written material in the exhibit will be in English and Spanish.

"The exhibit is a way to strengthen bonds of Hispanic and American culture," Jackson said. "We have such a long history and border that it's important to get to know each others cultures."

"The Day of the Dead is not another Mexican Halloween but a way to remember the lives of relatives and friends who have died," said Ricardo Vasquez, high school coordinator for MEChA, the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztlan. "It is to celebrate people who were in your life at one time so that we don't forget about them."

MEChA has constructed an alter dedicated to Cesar Chavez, a human rights activist famed for his involvement with Mexican farm workers.

"He has helped our people so much," said Elizabeth Lopez, MEChA's program coordinator. "We feel we owe him the alter as a way to say thank you."

Building alters dedicated to the dead is a traditional way of celebrating the lives of the dead. This tradition stems from the Mexican belief that "the dead can intercede with God on behalf of blessings for the living," Jackson said. "So you want to make the alters really nice."

"If the person liked tequila and cigarettes that's what you put on the alter," she said.

Another Day of the Dead ritual is for people to travel to the graves of loved ones to clean and put candles on tombstones. All-night vigils of prayer and communication with the dead occur. Children play while adults pray, talk and drink. Although many Americans may think the idea of spending the night in a cemetery is creepy, Vasquez said it is not.

"Death is not an evil thing," he said. "It's very spiritual."

When Vasquez goes to visit his father's grave, he said "it makes me



"Recuerdo," an oil on masonite work by Linda Marston-Reid, is one of the many pieces of art being displayed at the Maude Kerns Art Center in celebration of Dia de los Muertos.

COURTESY PHOTO

feel like he's there because he's there in my heart."

"Death in Mexican culture is not the end of life but the beginning of a second life," said Armando Morales, a University Spanish instructor who is lecturing at the event.

"In America we put a costume on death," he said. "The American culture does not want to confront death, but the Mexican culture welcomes death. It's a day of memory for the dead, to share with us our happiness and sadness."

Artists Jackson, Linda Marston-

Reid and Mitzi Linn will be featured at the exhibit. Morales will give a gallery talk tonight from 7 to 9 on Dia de los Muertos traditions.

On Oct. 11, the slide show "Death and Fiesta" will be given by Jackson at 7 p.m. A \$2 donation is suggested.

A mask-making workshop with Lynda Jasso-Thomas will take place on Oct. 20. It has a \$20 fee.

A fiesta including food and music will take place Oct. 28 at 7 p.m. For more information on the event, call the Maude Kerns Art Center at 345-1571.

Homemade tortillas make Casa Tol-Tec unique

This town is overrun with Mexican restaurants that serve the same dishes that all look and taste the same. It's rather boring.

But I found a Mexican restaurant that doesn't fit this mold. It's true, there is a place in Eugene to get good tacos and burritos that is unique.

Casa Tol-Tec looks rather ordinary from the outside. It's an old white house with green trim. A sign with the restaurant's name sits about as high as the roof. A piece of cardboard in the window reads "Open - 5 p.m."

Despite the dull exterior, the inside is full of life and hospitality.

Chili pepper decor spices up the curtains and doors. The waitresses wear chili pepper aprons and serve hot plates with pepper oven mitts.

But the best thing this restaurant has going for it is the food. You'll start by eating the best nacho chips you have ever tasted. They are crunchy and salty and, best of all, homemade.

The cook and owner is Sam.



TRISTA NOEL

asked if we had ever seen how tortillas are made. We hadn't, so he invited us to watch.

We were led into a toasty-warm room that smelled of steam and corn. Before us was a machine forming, carrying and cooking corn tortillas. Dough made of corn and water rotates around a cylinder forming tortillas. The tortillas then roll onto a conveyor belt to be cooked. They are then carried to waiting hands, which grab and stack the tortillas.

Every time I have eaten there Sam has come out to greet customers. Everyone knows him and he knows everyone, too.

Last weekend me and my guy happened to be the last diners at Casa Tol-Tec. Sam was talking to us and

We ate tortillas hot off the machine as Sam demonstrated how to roll taquitos. We both tried but, not being as adept as Sam, ate all our tortillas before succeeding.

The tortillas make the tacos and enchiladas at Casa Tol-Tec delightful. And for being so good, they are a real value. A combination plate with excellent rice and beans is about \$6.

Sam told us a lot of people don't know where he is, so I'll tell you. To get to Casa Tol-Tec, go down 6th Avenue like you are going to Valley River Center. Casa Tol-Tec is located just before the ramp onto Highway 105. Instead of going up the ramp, turn right onto Lawrence Street. Casa Tol-Tec is on the right. The address is 389 W. 6th Ave.

Don't miss this place. The food is top quality. And when you're eating, you almost feel like you are at home - that's how comfortable it is there. You won't find friendlier service. Casa Tol-Tec is a treasure.

Says Who?



Matt Bengtson

desk manager at Esslinger Hall, that guy who checks student body cards

■ **MOST RECENTLY SEEN MOVIE:** *The River Wild*
"It was really good. A lot of it was filmed in the town where I'm from - Grants Pass."

■ **FAVORITE BANDS RIGHT NOW:** Green Day and Smashing Pumpkins
"I just went to the Lollapalooza in the Gorge and saw them there. They were both great."

■ **BEST PLACE TO EAT IN EUGENE:** Pegasus Pizza
"I like the pizza and the beer - they have a great selection and atmosphere."