

# Tucson Museum of Art celebrates major gift with Oaxacan Folk Art from the Shepard Barbash and Vicki Ragan Collection

✘ **Exhibition showcases selections from one of the nation's premier collections of Oaxacan woodcarving and ceramics**

**Tucson, Arizona** – Tucson Museum of Art and Historic Block (TMA) examines how art transformed as Oaxaca's artisan towns evolved in *Oaxacan Folk Art from the Shepard Barbash and Vicki Ragan Collection*, scheduled for October 3, 2019 to August 9, 2020. The exhibition will open with a free community celebration on Thursday, October 3 from 5–8 p.m.

The exhibition includes more than 100 wooden carvings and clay sculptures created in the state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico. Subjects include festival and market scenes, Bible stories, a variety of animals, and mythical and fantastic figures. The exhibition is organized by Tucson Museum of Art and curated by Kristopher Driggers, Schmidt Curator of Latin American Art.

Writer Shepard Barbash and photographer Vicki Ragan collected more than 1200 pieces of folk art since the 1980s, building one of the nation's premier collections of Oaxacan woodcarving and ceramics. In March 2019 they donated their collection to Tucson Museum of Art in order to keep the artwork together and allow it to tell the story of artistic and social transformation in Oaxaca.

“For thousands of years, artists in Oaxaca have created images reflecting how they see their world. Some of that history persists, but the woodcarvings in the Barbash-Ragan Collection

are special in that they represent a bold new tradition,” said Driggers. “These artists shaped their creations to fit their own interests and local contexts. The works they produced are imaginative, clever, and darkly humorous.”

As these artforms came to prominence on the international art market, conditions in local towns were transformed by new economic prominence and by greater contact with an international community of dealers, collectors, scholars, and others.

According to Driggers, “Visually, Oaxacan folk art is exciting—the works in this exhibition do not shy away from bold color, from brilliant surfaces, or from unexpected shapes. But just as importantly, the Barbash-Ragan Collection shows us that Latin American folk art can be both highly experimental and deeply in touch with the context in which it is made.”

Two public programs have been scheduled in conjunction with the opening of the exhibition:

- Opening celebration (October 3, 5–8 p.m.). Live music by guitarist Eduardo Costa, dances by Ballet Folklórico Arizona (5:30 p.m.), and a pop-up shop by La Syrena Barrio Books as well as art-making, gallery activities, and a cash bar. Free admission.
- Collector’s Conversation (October 5, 2 p.m.). Join Shepard Barbash and Vicki Ragan in conversation with Senior Curator Dr. Julie Sasse as they discuss their passion for collecting Oaxacan folk art and share interesting stories about the artisans they befriended. Free for members/included with paid admission. RSVP required as space is limited.

*Oaxacan Folk Art from the Shepard Barbash and Vicki Ragan Collection* is presented with support from TMA’s Latin American Art Patrons.

The 2019/2020 Exhibition Season at the Tucson Museum of Art is generously sponsored by Joyce Broan.