



# LAUGHING SKULLS and DANCING SKELETONS

are some of the most iconic and vivid images associated with Day of the Dead festivities. *Day of the Dead Folk Art* showcases many examples of those skulls and skeletons, as well as variations on José Guadalupe Posada's traditional La Catrina, sugar skulls and *pan de muerto* from local Mexican markets, community sand sculptures and cemetery decorations, and original interpretations of traditional Day of the Dead imagery from contemporary Mexican folk artists.

\$19.99 U.S.



DAY OF THE DEAD FOLK ART

Mack & Williams



# DAY OF THE DEAD FOLK ART

Stevie Mack  
Kitty Williams



# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	7
Introduction	9
History of Festivals to the Dead	19
Skulls and Skeletons	25
José Guadalupe Posada	35
La Catrina	41
Market Art	51
Local Markets	51
Sugar Skulls	52
Skeleton Figures	54
Papel Picado	64
Pan de Muertos	64
Community Art	67
Ofrendas	67
Sand Paintings and Sculptures	76
Parades and Pageantry	84
Monos de Calenda	90
Cemetery Vigils	92
Contemporary Expressions	105





*FACING: Crafted from papier-mâché, this black-and-white skull is 16 inches tall. Careful observation reveals intricate black designs painted on a white background, while in some areas the palette is reversed and white designs are painted on a black background. The reversal of positive and negative space adds to the complexity of the symmetrical design. Bright pink plastic jewels embellish the eyes. Purchased in a market in Mexico City, this unsigned piece is from the collection of Nancy Walkup.*



*LEFT: Carved from wood and painted with bright contrasting colors, this skeleton sports a wide smile. Stripes of many colors decorate and differentiate the skeletal forms of the body.*

*BELOW: Eight members of the band gleefully entertain their listeners. Playing with abandon, the skeletal forms twist and turn in rhythm with their instruments. Carver Agustin Cruz Prudencio from San Agustín de las Juntas, Oaxaca, Mexico, expresses the important role of music in daily life as well as the concept of life after death. Carved from copal wood, the figures stand 6 inches tall.*



As the Day of the Dead becomes more popular and its influences extend beyond the borders of Latin American countries, artists everywhere are finding a growing audience with an appreciation for Day of the Dead-themed works. As a result, contemporary artists outside of the traditional cultures are increasingly exploring and reworking the imagery with their own unique visions. In this way, demand in the marketplace informs the artist and vice versa in an ever-widening circular process of creation.

Whether traditional or contemporary, the works of these artists help us all to appreciate not only the beauty, but the significance, of the fascinating celebration of the Day of the Dead.



*FACING: Agustin Cruz Prudencio from San Agustín de las Juntas, Oaxaca, Mexico, captures events of daily life in his work. The bridal couple (left) is a very popular subject for the Day of the Dead, promising a love so enduring it will last through all eternity. A young woman with her child on her back (right) walks to the market with a large basket on her head.*

*ABOVE: Manuel Cruz Prudencio, also from San Agustín de las Juntas, carved Catrina and her male companion setting out for a drive in their intricately carved and painted vehicle.*