

About Alebrijes



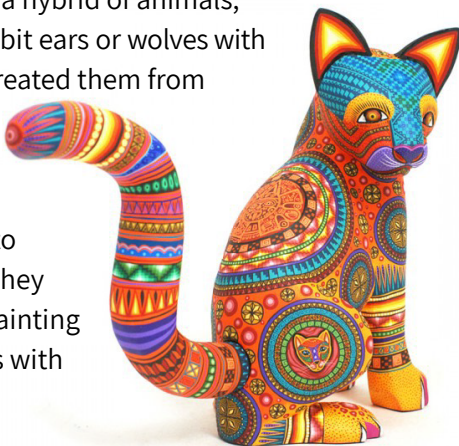
Alebrrije were developed by craftsman Pedro Linares Lopez, pictured on the right. He developed them while living in Mexico City where he was already creating papier-mâché crafts like piñatas and judas.



What are alebrijes? Alebrije were created by cartoneros, or papier-mâché crafter, Pedro Linares Lopez. Linares's father passed the craft down. lived in a neighborhood in Mexico City and created piñatas and judas (Paper-mâché figures of Judas filled with fireworks and burnt as part of Holy Saturday).

One story is Linares had a dream while ill. In his dream, there were strange mythical creatures that called themselves "alebrije." Lopez began to create the creatures from his dream. Another more likely story says he was hired by a local painter to decorate for a masquerade party. The painter asked for "Alebrijes," which Lopez concocted from the painter's description.

The word Alebrije means "imaginary" or "fantasy" so these figures are a hybrid of animals; dragons with rabbit ears or wolves with antlers. Linares created them from papier- mâché but today some artists use a soft wood to carve alebrijes. They are finished by painting intricate patterns with vibrant colors.



How did alebrijes become so popular? Eventually, a gallery owner discovered Linares's work. This brought him to the attention of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, well-known Mexican artists. The craft of alebrije became even more rooted after a documentary was created on Linares and the artform. Linares was honored with Mexico's National Arts and Sciences Award in the Popular Arts and Traditions category in 1990, two years before his death. His family has carried on the family tradition and is still creating alebrije.



Examples of Pedro Linares Lopez's alebrije, left and above.

About Alebrijes cont.

Vocabulary

alebrije- brightly colored Oaxacan- Mexican folk art sculptures of fantastical creatures. The first alebrijes, along with use of the term, originated with Pedro Linares Lopez.

cartoneros- papier-mâché craftor

papier-mâché- a malleable mixture of paper and glue, or paper, flour, and water, that becomes hard when dry

piñatas- a decorated figure of an animal containing toys and candy that is suspended from a height and broken open by blindfolded children as part of a celebration.

Judas- Large papier maché figures of Judas, often represented as a devil, formerly burned, are now almost always blasted apart by fireworks in Mexico as part of Holy Saturday.



Examples of Judas, above.